

Come to Jesus

By [Ryan Dueck](#)

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I was part of a conference call recently with a number of young-ish pastors in our denomination where we were talking about Jesus' prayer in John 17 that the his followers would be "one." Anyone with even the most cursory understanding of church history will know that, well, we haven't exactly done so well with this little ideal of Jesus'.

Indeed, we might be forgiven for laughing out loud at the idea that there could be such a thing as a unified church—especially from where we sit, 500 or so years downstream of the Protestant Reformation, swimming in the murky seas of the postmodern, post-Christian, post-everything, hyper-individualist, ultra-consumerist West where the (individual) customer determines what they prefer, where oneness is often thought to be not only *impossible*, but even *immoral*. How could we dream of imposing a *single* ideal upon all our wonderful, and deeply cherished individuality?!

And even leaving aside the reality of the existence of different denominations, what do we make of the bewildering variety of views *within* this or that individual group. The Mennonite church that I am a part of, for example, is not very large in the grand scheme of things. Yet even within our little expression of the church there is a full range of positions on every hot-button issue out there, whether it's human sexuality, climate change, controversial theological topics like the nature of the atonement, universalism, etc.

What, in the midst of all this mess, could *possibly* make us one?

The answer, of course—the only answer there could ever be, the Sunday School answer to every important question—is Jesus.

But that sounds a little too easy, doesn't it? *Which* Jesus? Whose *understanding* of Jesus? Which *interpretation* of Jesus' teaching? Saying "Jesus is what makes us one" doesn't really solve much, does it?

Well, yes, actually. I think it does.

A question I have been thinking about over the last few days is this: Can we allow people to come to Jesus for their own reasons? Reasons that we do not necessarily admire or embrace?

Can I allow former evangelical superstar pastor (and current Oprah acolyte) [Rob Bell](#) to come to Jesus with his confused (and confusing) amalgam of pop-psychology and weirdly irritating “who can *really* say what the word ‘Christian’ means?” [faux-intellectual humility](#)?

Can I allow the guy who walked in the door the other day and invited me to an uber-masculine Mark Driscoll-ish type local event aimed at manly men to come to Jesus? Can I shut my mouth while he talks endlessly about spiritual warfare and how Satan is at work behind every negative thing in his life? Can I be ok with his understanding of Jesus as a mighty warrior against the forces of darkness in his life?

Can I allow people to come to Jesus primarily to reinforce their own political or moral views, to justify their own preferred sins and self-understandings? Can I allow people to focus endlessly on a selectively accessed portion of his teachings while pretty much ignoring some of the harder things he says, some of the more “otherworldly” things he says? Can I allow people to squeeze Jesus into agendas that they embraced elsewhere?

Can I allow people to come to Jesus because they are looking for a social club? Because they are needy and relationally dysfunctional? Because they’re obsessed with various end-times scenarios? Because they have a need to be right in every area of their life? Because they like four part harmony? Because they don’t know what else to do? Because they like church potlucks?

Can I allow people to come to Jesus selectively, partially, inconsistently, stupidly, pitifully, half-heartedly, self-interestedly, consumeristically, individualistically, desperately, lamely, liberally, conservatively, selfishly, sinfully?

Can I allow people to come to Jesus for the *wrong* reasons? Reasons that I don’t like or agree with?

Can I accept that *I* come to Jesus for the wrong reasons? Reasons that others don’t like or agree with?

Can I realize that whatever oneness in Christ might entail, whatever it might demand, wherever it might lead us, it *cannot* require that everyone who comes to Jesus must do it in exactly the same way and with exactly the same motivations and the same cognitive content in their brains as I do? Can I realize that Jesus invites us and deals with each of us exactly *as we are* and *as we come*? Can I accept that the ways in which Jesus moves and shapes us *after* and *as we come* might look different for different people at different times and different places?

I think that I can. And that I *must*.

If I can't—or, more accurately, if I *don't* or I *won't*—then “oneness in Christ” will inevitably degenerate into “oneness in my particular *understanding* of Christ.” And that's not a terribly reliable foundation for oneness.

Come to Jesus. Yes, for this is the One who holds his church together. This is the *only* One who can, the only One who ever could.

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