

Even as he feels his faith expanding, evolving, maturing, the young man struggles to know the real Jesus. Something stirs within him. His Savior will not permit him to rest on the easy glide of spiritual adolescence. He is left unsatisfied—and, oddly, embarrassed—by the popular, insubstantial idea of faith.



The Actual Term

Knowing Him

More Than Just Belief

HE HAS COME FAR ENOUGH ALONG TO REALIZE that faith is more than just believing that Jesus was real. Admittedly it is sufficient, albeit infantile, to believe only that Jesus was the Son of God who died for one's sin and rose from the grave.

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:8-10

That is a belief initiated by the Spirit, but left withered and malnourished in the cradle. It shows up on Christmas and Easter and nods its head in solemn agreement with the proceedings, but is otherwise a faithful disciple only of this temporal time and place.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly.

1 Corinthians 3:1-3a

For the young man it is not enough to believe that there was an historical person named Jesus of Nazareth who was born, lived thirty-odd years, then died. That is the sincere but sterile belief of the historian struggling to be respectful of faith, while restricting his analysis to established, documented facts. It is polite, but spiritually barren.

Has this been the extent of his faith so far? Is this all that Jesus is to him—a golden key, stashed in an old cigar box and buried in the back of his closet, permitting him eventual entrance into heaven? Has he been subsisting on thin gruel, instead of feasting on a seven-course meal?

Now there is the deep hunger, the unvoiced yearning to know not just that Jesus *was*, but to know that He *is*—to know the *actual* Jesus.

No Less Real

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

Colossians 2:6-7

There are days when I am impatient with my shallow faith. I long for a more substantial relationship with my Lord. Substantive belief begins with the historical Jesus, moves from there to faith in His redeeming, substitutionary sacrifice upon the cross, but then, ideally, progresses on to daily living with the *actual* Jesus.

ac·tual (ak'choo wul -shoo-) *adj.* [ME. <LL. *actualis*, active, practical < L. *actus*: see ACT] 1. existing in reality or in fact; not merely possible, but real; as it really is. 2. existing at present or at the time —SYN. see TRUE.

By human senses Jesus remains invisible to me. It is true that He dwells in tangible, resurrected form alongside God the Father, but since I still dwell upon the soil of this earth, He may as well be spirit, for I experience Him much in the same manner as I experience the third member of the Godhead: the Holy Spirit.

Still, this makes Him no less real—no less actual. Just as the ministry of the invisible Spirit is tangibly real to me, so is the presence and work of my Savior—the invisible Christ. There have been moments when the

consolation of Jesus has been as tactile as the embrace of a loved one, as pleasantly real as enjoying coffee with a friend, as intimate as sharing laughter and tears with my wife. At such times I may feel the Spirit working within, but it is the face of Jesus I “see” when the hand of God is upon my life.

That is the actuality of Christ.



In my moments of deepest struggles and joys, Jesus has been made real through the heart and hands of someone in His family. Wise counsel, an encouraging word, a shoul-

*Let me come closer to Thee, Jesus,
Oh, closer day by day;
Let me lean harder on Thee, Jesus,
Yes, harder all the way.*

*Let me show forth Thy beauty, Jesus,
Like sunshine on the hills!
Oh, let my lips pour forth Thy sweetness
In joyous, sparkling rills!*

*Yes, like a fountain, precious Jesus,
Make me and let me be;
Keep me and use me daily, Jesus,
For Thee, for only Thee.*

*In all my heart and will, O Jesus,
Be altogether King!
Make me a loyal subject, Jesus,
To Thee in everything.*

J.L. Lyne

Every day God sets in my path individuals in need of the face and hands of a loving Jesus. He says to me, “I care about this person. She is Mine, and I love her. She needs Me right now. Take the time, and make the effort, to be Me in this person’s life.”

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

If He is real in my life, then I must let Jesus work through me, *in* me, to actualize Him in the life of another.



Every believer is the actuality of Jesus. Every believer is called to model in flesh the compassion, kindness, longsuffering, and forgiveness of the Savior.

For a world that will not acknowledge the invisible truth about God, I must be, for them, the first Jesus they experience. I must, for the moment, be Him in flesh—His face, His hands, His tactile love.

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

John 17:22-26

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der to cry on, strong arms to help with a job, a moment of shared humor, a ready example of holy living—all these and more have made my Lord Jesus evident in the here and now.

His Tactile Love

This means, then, that in one of God’s good-humored ironies, I, too, have the opportunity to *be* the actuality of Jesus—both to brothers and sisters in Christ, and to everyone else in a fallen world.