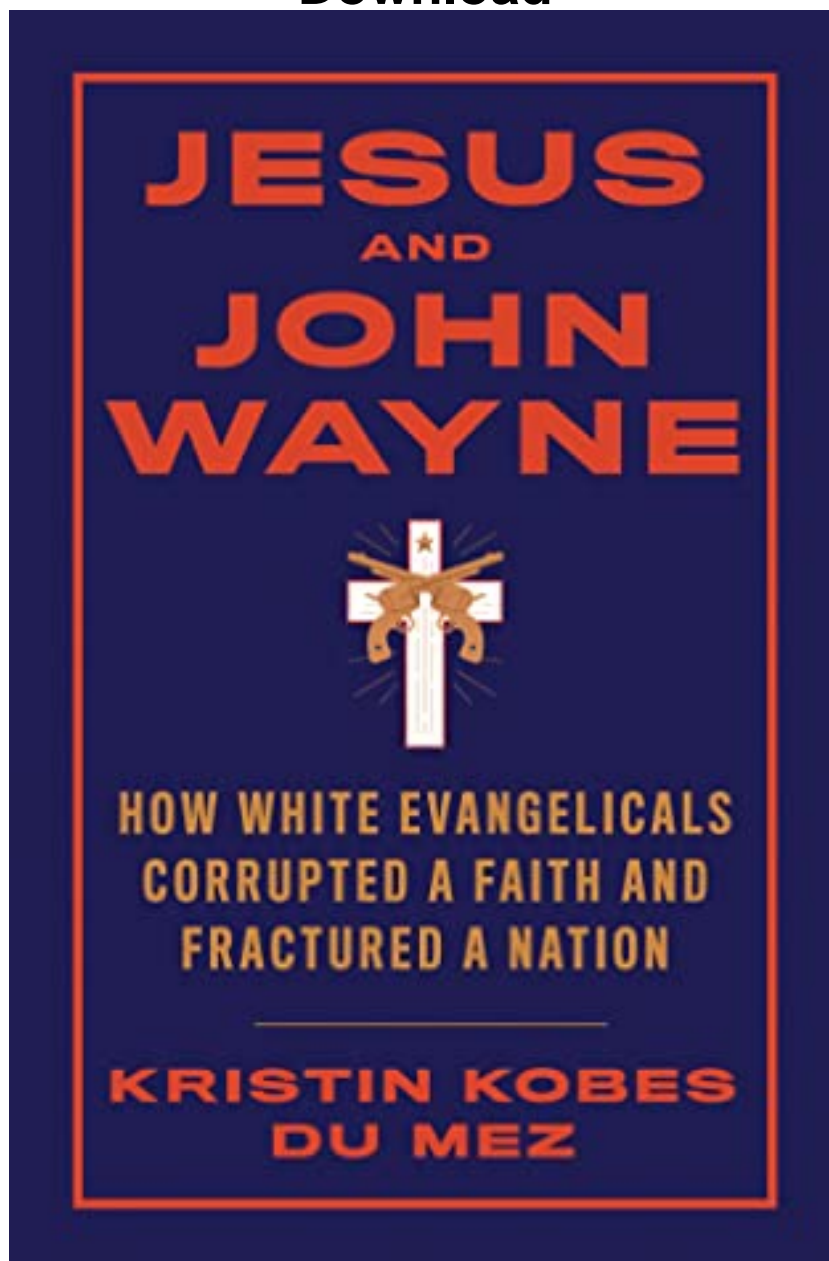


Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation Book PDF Download



By:
Kristin Kobes DuMez

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What people Say:

David Wineberg

Usually I will stay away from books on religion. Everyone's passions overtake their judgment, facts are few, fleeting and ignored, and no minds are changed in the reading. But the pop culture intersection of American politics and American evangelicalism proved tempting, and thankfully, most worthwhile. For a title like Jesus and John Wayne, I broke my rule.

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To be an evangelical, according to the National Association of Evangelicals, is to uphold the Bible as one's ultimate authority, to confess the centrality of Christ's atonement, to believe in a born-again conversion experience, and to actively work to spread this good news and reform society accordingly. There is no mention of watching Fox News or voting Republican straight ticket, carrying guns, supporting the patriarchy or proselytizing the military. But those facets have taken over evangelicalism. The rest of the requirements have pretty much dropped away.

Kristin Kobes Du Mez hails from this environment, so she is intimately familiar with it and how it operates. She has written an exhaustive study of the evolution of American evangelicalism, with emphasis on its political effects. She has assembled all the top personalities and all the turning points in a fast-moving, if stomach-churning history that ultimately explains how America adopted Donald Trump. It is less than pretty.

Putting John Wayne and Jesus Christ in the same box takes a little work (for the uninitiated, like me). Wayne was a philanderer, married three times in an era when divorce was shameful. He was hard-smoking and swearing. He was a racist who claimed the Indians got what they deserved because whites needed more land and Indians were selfishly occupying it. For all his patriotic ballyhoo, he avoided the draft and never served. You might not see how this would be the ideal role model for evangelical Christians. But then, millions would say the same of Donald Trump. And that is the point.

Wayne was a swashbuckler onscreen. He took no guff from anyone. He was his own man; everyone else be damned. That is what evangelicals aspire to. They demand it of their president. And they also attribute all these qualities to Jesus Christ.

Throughout the last hundred years, evangelicals have glommed on to very flawed, most un-Christian characters as their heroes. Du Mez examines the histories of numerous televangelists who bilked millions from their viewers, only to be humiliated out of business by sex scandals. Two-faced politician-hypocrites are nothing new, and whoring Hollywood stars are the kinds of people evangelicals want everyone to look up to. Trump is not a difficult case to rationalize; he fits the cast perfectly.

Evangelicals believe in the patriarchy. Men rule, women are submissive. Men need to be serviced, women are only there to serve and support. Men are wild conquerors, saving and protecting the family. Women prefer it this way, needing to be swept off their feet by a bold knight in shining armor, rather than a pretty Prince Charming. There is stability and order in the patriarchy; equality means chaos.

Evangelicals are against anything that dilutes the power of men. They are against abortion (women having control over anything), women dressing like men, working outside the home or in politics. They are against (most) immigration and any form of foreign government they object to. This means constant war, the main thing they seem devoted to.

Avid

This was an unsettling read. It stirred me up to read the particulars behind the philosophy of millions of evangelicals. Nothing was particularly new or eye-opening for me, but to read the numerous examples and details tended to rile me up. There is a great deal of information here that evangelicals should know about their own history and philosophies and practices, especially as it relates to contributing to today's political divide. The frustration is that those who need to read this probably

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Gregory Jones

This is a fantastic book about masculinity and Christianity. As someone who grew up idolizing John Wayne in reruns of his films in the 1980s, this book resonated with me from the title to the last word. For many men who struggle to reconcile America's "rugged individualism" with the gentle servant heart of Jesus, this book connects a lot of dots.

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There are so many good sections of the book that I could highlight, but for me understanding the common thread of masculinity in evangelical churches is absolutely key. This was an intentional desire of folks like Mark Driscoll (who features in the book) to "save the family by saving the man." Yet also this culture of gruff, chest-pounding masculinity held flaws that helped to shape the nation.

I enjoyed this as an academic historian learning a bit more about religion and masculinity. But, perhaps more meaningfully, I was blown away by the truth-telling in DuMez's writing. There are moments that the book helped me better understand my own upbringing and why I struggled to understand or fit in to so many "tropes" of evangelical maleness. I was a part of the *Wild at Heart* generation. I had never thought about how much the book recommendations from pastors and comments from youth leaders were all connected to a larger narrative intending to shape me as a man in a very intentional way.

I would recommend this book for church men's groups. I would recommend this book for men and women who want to understand evangelical masculinity. I would recommend this book for an undergraduate sociology course on gender. There are so many ways this book would be an excellent resource. This will become standard reading for anyone writing about masculinity and broader "evangelical" culture for the foreseeable future.

Chris S.

I received this ARC together with a copy of

, which was apt, as both deal, to an extent, with the harmful aspects of gender politics in modern societies and were both well-researched. Many thanks to Liveright for this opportunity.

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There are certain books that you just keep quoting to those around you day after day, which make a few days of reading them feel like a long but fulfilling trek through decades of experiences and ways of conceiving things. That's what happened with this book. While I am going to differ with other readers who said it was a quick read (there are dozens of individuals in here and they're hard to keep track of- the need for a list of prominent players at the beginning is my only complaint) it didn't need to be, and it gave me more time to digest the wealth of information and context crammed into 300 pages.

Kobes Du Mez is not an entirely unbiased observer, as some researchers strive for, but she didn't seem to be going for that anyway. History, to me, is the art of creating and critiquing narratives we tell ourselves about nations, states, and cultures, and in this book Kobes Du Mez critiques the heck out of the cult and culture of mainstream evangelical masculinity, tracking it from Billy Sunday to Donald Trump and beyond. Yet, in her criticism, she still strives to show understanding towards evangelicalism- not cutting any corners or leaving out its absurdity (there's plenty of quotes that will have you laughing, outraged, or both) but at the same time making the case that people could and did believe these arguments abundantly clear. Even in a faith associated at times with televangelist charlatans, her mapping of development of evangelical tropes from one influential man (and they're almost always men, save a few prominent exceptions) to the next makes it understandable how rank-and-file believers and even a few sincere pastors could hold to these ideas.

As a Catholic myself, this definitely made me draw parallels both between evangelical culture and their opponents in my faith (I was basically a Catholic purity TA for about a year and purity culture- with a few notable tweaks, like John Paul II's statement on renewed virginity, was a staple at my school, as it is no doubt in evangelical schools). I won't be leaving my faith over the contents of this book, but suffice to say it will make me look at certain strands of it with a more critical eye.

Fair warning- this book does include talk of victim-blaming, rape, and crude language involving sex. Granted, it is a book primarily about the role of conceptions on gender and sexual politics, so that may be obvious, but if you are someone who is very uncomfortable reading about those topics, you might want to steer clear here. With that being said, it is my belief that these conversations are necessary to have if you have the mental or spiritual ability to read and reflect on them.

Ultimately, this is a great book written with a keen, critical, yet understanding eye. I strongly encourage you to read it when it comes out on June 23. I know that I will be recommending it to people, both academics and casual readers, at the very least.

Caleb

This important book fills a niche in the historical, theological, and political literature, detailing how (largely white) evangelicals have woven together secular visions of (alleged) masculinity with strongly patriarchal theology and politics...with disastrous results that include sexism, assault, broken marriages, addiction, disastrous politics, poor theology, dangerous compromises, and more. This was a difficult read, but only because of the content, not the prose. DuMez writes for a broad audience, not assuming the theological or historical background of her reader, so those immersed in either of those discussions may find familiar stories and information analyzed in newly perceptive ways, while those new to this discussion will be nimbly guided along by DuMez' context and explanations. While fair and familiar with the material, DuMez is unflinching in her critiques of the missteps of evangelical masculinity and ends the book with a much-appreciated call to do better.

Here are a few key quotes from the conclusion that help to summarize the book--with the large caveat that the best parts of the book are the choice quotes and stories in the middle chapters:

"Inspired by images of heroic white manhood, evangelicals had fashioned a savior who would lead them into the battles of their own choosing. The new, rugged Christ transformed Christian manhood, and Christianity itself."

"This movement involved "a larger world of evangelical 'family values'--to traditional visions of

masculinity and femininity, and to a social order structured along clear lines of patriarchal authority."

"Evangelicals may self-identify as 'Bible-believing Christians,' but evangelicalism itself entails a broader set of deeply held values communicated through symbol, ritual, and political allegiance...Despite evangelicals' frequent claims that the Bible is the source of their social and political commitments, evangelicalism must be seen as a cultural and political movement rather than as a community defined chiefly by its theology. Evangelical views on any given issues are facets of their larger cultural identity, and no number of Bible verses will dislodge the greater truths at the heart of it. Rather than seeing culture as pitted against theology, however, we should treat the interplay between the two as what ultimately defines evangelicalism."