

# WHOLLY JESUS

HIS SURPRISING APPROACH TO  
**WHOLENESS**  
AND WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

**MARK FOREMAN**



---

ampelōn  
PUBLISHING

[ampeltonpublishing.com](http://ampeltonpublishing.com)

Wholly Jesus  
Copyright ©2008 by Mark Foreman

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

ISBN: 978-09817705-5-0  
Printed in the United States of America  
Requests for information should be addressed to:  
Ampelon Publishing  
PO Box 140675  
Boise, ID 83714

Published in association with Invisible Ink, Inc., Literary Agents, Athens, Georgia.

To order other Ampelon Publishing products, visit us on the web at:  
[www.ampelonpublishing.com](http://www.ampelonpublishing.com)

Cover & inside design: Jared Swafford — [SwingFromTheRafters.com](http://SwingFromTheRafters.com)

Printed on paper and with ink made from sustainable resources

## **To**

I dedicate this book to my spiritual mentor, C. S. Lewis, who snuck past my watchful dragons to invade my castle with Aslan's redeeming nature. He taught and modeled for me what it means to be wholly consumed by the Mighty Lion in order to become an agent of wholeness.



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	6
Foreword by Jon & Tim Foreman .....	7
0. Inspiring Unintended Moments by Gabe Lyons .....	13
<b>Part I: Why Wholeness Matters</b>	
1. The Whole World Has Gone Whole .....	19
2. Old Chewing Gum: Wholeness and Salvation .....	27
3. Pirates, Mutiny and Mutation: How Broken Are We? .....	41
4. Broken Masterpieces: What Does a Whole Person Look Like? .....	55
<b>Part II: How Jesus Defined Wholeness</b>	
Chapter 5: The Invasion Has Begun .....	73
Chapter 6: Wholly Jesus in a Material World .....	91
Chapter 7: Mangers, Mustard Seeds, Children and Crosses .....	105
Chapter 8: The Wholly Trojan Horse .....	117
<b>Part III: How Half People Become Whole</b>	
Chapter 9: Raising the Bar to Normal .....	131
Chapter 10: Becoming Spirit People .....	149
Chapter 11: Risk, Sacrifice and Wholly Transformation .....	165
Chapter 12: Building a Church Without Walls .....	187
Chapter 13: Wholeness Will Prevail .....	205
Notes .....	221

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

For my wonderful wife and friend, Jan, who has shared countless hours and vacation days to allow me to finish this manuscript, I am most grateful. I want to thank my sons, Jon and Tim, for their encouragement and for modeling in the music industry much of what I believe about influencing culture. I am indebted to believers, such as Cassie and Jenny Carstens, Joseph DeSousa, Sameh, Eddie, and others around the world who have modeled transformational Christianity for me. Much thanks to Brent Cole for believing in this project, masterfully editing it and coaching me along the way, and to Jason Chatraw for believing in and publishing this work. And I am grateful for countless friends and loved ones who have believed in this project and, with me, believe that transformed people can transform this world.

## FOREWORDS

**I**mmature poets imitate; mature poets steal.” Maybe Picasso stole that concept from T. S. Elliot—or maybe neither of ‘em said it. Either way my confession is this: I am both a thief and an imitator of my father.

The best parts of me are simply echoes of my dad. He’s still showing me patience after all these years—still showing me how to love the folks that insult me. And so the song remains the same: though I’m a few inches taller than my dad, he remains a much bigger man than I.

So you see my predicament in writing this forward: I am the shadow asked to introduce the object who has cast it. I am the cartoon asked to introduce the real thing. To usher in his words with my own could be a bit redundant.

So I shall begin by talking about everything that is not written in this book, the things between the lines, the shadows that only a son can know. The early morning surf sessions at Pipes. The late morning philosophy chats at Swami’s. Staring at the stars and talking about how quickly time passes. He was there even during the broken times when nothing was right. My dad, to my amazement, has always been the man who won’t try to fix me, just love me.

I am so proud of him. Stories I hear of my dad remind me of other heroes of mine. Stories like the time when he gave his minivan to a band who was broken down on the side of the road; he’d never met them before but they needed a car. Times when he stood strong and tall in the face of opposition. There’s a friend of mine who said her main reason for belief in God was knowing my folks. No joke. I know what she means though; we see what God is like in the faces of those around us. And though my dad has his flaws like everyone else, I often see God through him, through the things he says and does. And now, through what he has written.

With the word “wholeness” trapped in the ether of the tabloids, it can be a dangerous thing to write about—particularly risky stuff for a pastor. Yet it was The Teacher himself who was deeply concerned about our entire being. He lived and died that the broken would know wholeness. “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” Blessed are the broken, for they will be made whole.

I have learned so much about this strange, inverse relationship from my dad. I feel like he embodies it better than anyone I know. In some ways this book doesn’t do his life justice—it’s like a band’s studio record that can’t quite capture the live experience. Though these pages are quite an album in and of themselves, I’ve seen the live show all my life.

My father’s “music” often came to me in the form of an ongoing dialogue. A few hours ago, I had a conversation with one of the most inspiring musicians I’ve ever met. He was telling me about a church that had kicked him out, an experience that deeply wounded him. I know what that feels like, to be misunderstood and abused by the folks who are supposed to be loving you—fighting for you. I’ve had many great conversations with my dad about this. He says the church is like your extended family, crazy second uncles and cousins that might drive you mad. But they are still your family; and they are the only family you’ll ever get. You have the privilege of loving them.

Yes, the church is beat-up, ugly, and splintered. Even wrong at times. Tele-evangelists, bigots, hypocrites ... yup. It’s easy to take shots at the church. So in the age of American individualism and personal salvation, there is the temptation to disown the whole lot and reinvent the wheel. “We’ll start fresh!” And yet to think that we’re going to be the first church that gets it right is ludicrous. We’re never going to find “Christian wholeness” on our own, not without loving the folks around us.

Yes, the church is broken. It’s always been broken. We are a body of misfits, losers, misdirected souls who are desperate for healing. But let the hospital never abandon the sick patients; let the church never abandon the broken. The broken are the bride of Christ—the broken are our family. We, the damaged souls, are the church.

So in this cacophony of brokenness I often look to my dad's words to figure out how to heal. How to grow. How to become more whole. And his words always point me back to The Teacher of wholeness, the only one who can bring peace. The one who came so that we could have whole life, abundant life, and I am thirsty for this life he gives.

In this broken world we face sorrow. We face death and pain. We face the horrors of our own shattered humanity. But our yearning for wholeness is beneath it all; we will be satisfied in God alone. In this longing, I am an immature poet aping God when I try to find wholeness in and of myself. I must continually be reminded to find peace in the Father of the heavens alone.

For this, I'll keep stealing from my dad.

**Jon Foreman**, *frontman for Switchfoot*

*We are a beautiful letdown,  
Painfully uncool,  
The church of the dropouts  
The losers, the sinners, the failures and the fools  
Oh what a beautiful let down  
Are we salt in the wound  
Let us sing one true tune*

Words to a song that my brother wrote, a song that we've played hundreds of times, all over the world. And yet, they still resonate deeply within my soul. What a broken people we are. Spending most of my formative years growing up in the laid-back surf culture of north county, San Diego, I am very familiar with the growing search for a remedy. Answers are seemingly found within the bulletin boards, flyers, books, and pamphlets in nearly every storefront shop or cafe. And yet, as the number of remedies increases, ironically so does the demand. There is obviously a large disconnect here.

This observation is not limited to my hometown, however. As a touring musician, I've enjoyed the opportunity to travel throughout the world. I love seeing things from a new vantage point—experiencing other cultures, food, music, waves and everything else along the way. In all these travels it becomes clear that while the desire for wholeness is certainly nothing new, there is a growing global awareness of our brokenness and a newfound urgency towards restoration. Of course, if I'm truly seeking evidence of our innate human need for wholeness, I need look no further than the confines of my own heart.

This is why we sing. Singing allows us safe passage through the treacherous waters of the soul. Our hopes and fears, our doubts and our beliefs—these are frightening caves to explore, and even worse to talk about. But in a song, all matter is fair game. “We are a beautiful letdown ... the church of the dropouts, the losers, the sinners, the failures and the fools.” It's an all-too accurate description of humanity when we try to fix ourselves. “Oh what a beautiful letdown... Let us sing one true tune!” For me, the letdown is the painful reality that no

matter how hard I try, I am quite unable to fix myself. I am in desperate need of a savior. But what a beautiful truth. There is such freedom in our surrender to Wholly Jesus, who's offer to us is nothing less than complete wholeness. This is the Beautiful Letdown.

\*\*\*

When my Dad asked Jon and I to write a response to his book, it made me smile. I play rock and roll for a living. What could I possibly say to add to the well-chosen words of my Dad, one of my greatest heroes. Definitely a tall order. My Dad has, without a doubt, played a huge role in shaping who I am and the worldview that I carry. This is the guy who pulled the car over when we heard U2's "Still haven't found what I'm looking for" on the radio for the first time. This is the Dad who introduced me to the magical worlds of Tolkien, Lewis, and MacDonald. The guy who pushed me into my first wave on a surfboard, and the guy who taught me how to play Zeppelin and the Beatles. But perhaps larger than all of these influences, I'm thankful that he allowed me the freedom to explore, make mistakes, dream big dreams, and ask even bigger questions.

No question was ever too big or too small—no dialogue was off-limits. I knew that my Dad's God was a big God, one who wasn't intimidated by my doubts, my questions, my music or my hairstyle. None of these were frightening to the God he knew (although I'm sure some of my hairstyles should have been). But it gets better. Not only was God Almighty not scared by my music, doubts or questions—He was interested in them. He actually wanted to hear that warbly, pre-pubescent imitation of Robert Plant singing Stairway to Heaven. This is the Jesus I was introduced to as a kid: a Wholly Jesus, fully integrated with all aspects of life, culture and even the darkest aspects of my soul.

\*\*\*

I remember one Sunday message in particular that my Dad taught, titled, "No Thin Jesus." The title really sums it up. There is nowhere I can go that is beyond the reaches of redemption. There is no music venue, no song, no lyric that is outside the sphere of this Wholly Jesus. When we started this band called Switchfoot, this is why we saw no disconnect between playing our songs in a bar or in a church.

These were honest songs about hope, doubt, failure and redemption: the broken human condition and the universal longing to be whole. These were songs that needed to be sung in bars, coffee shops, colleges, churches and everywhere else.

They needed to be sung because Jesus' invasion of wholeness is passionate and robust, desiring to integrate all aspects of humanity with himself. So the question that now remains is this: "Where are you gonna go? Salvation is here!"

**Tim Foreman**, *bassist for Switchfoot*

## chapter zero

# Inspiring Unintended Moments

I can't imagine a more credible person than Mark Foreman to write the definitive book on holistic Christianity. You'll better understand why when you know how I was introduced to him.

It is a more profound moment than I would ever expect, sitting on our living room couch on a Sunday evening, watching the fall premier of the most popular television show of the season, *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*. As the episode began, host Ty Pennington introduced the Wofford family to the world—a recently widowed father and his eight children in desperate need of hope and better living space.

Anyone who has watched this Emmy award-winning show knows what happens next. The show begins its transition from tragedy to triumph as Ty and his design team set out to rally a mass of volunteers in the community to help in the weeklong demolition and remodeling of a house—in this case, the Wofford's house.

It is hard to picture now but early in the life of *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*, recruiting volunteers wasn't so easy. For this particular episode, it was further complicated by the location—north county San Diego—a vacation haven and a hub of beach lifestyles. Can you imagine the challenge of convincing hundreds to leave the balmy comforts of the ocean breeze and warm sand to help build a home for complete strangers? Enter into the equation North Coast Calvary Chapel, Carlsbad, CA.

Back from commercial break, the shot cuts to Ty Pennington occupying the North Coast pulpit on a Sunday morning. He passionately makes his appeal for electricians, framers, landscapers, painters and anyone able enough to participate. Hundreds of churchgoers jump to

their feet and raise their hands. Ty tosses blue volunteer t-shirts from stage as member after member stands to commit a week of their life, and in many cases, personal vacation time to the cause.

I was blown away. Completely encouraged and thrilled to know that a church would rise to the occasion when confronted with the need of a family in its community. And rise up they did, helping create an incredible home and new way of life for this beautiful family.

The pastor of that church is Mark Foreman.

People like Mark do not look for the spotlight—you'd have a hard time finding them taking up the "talking head" spot on national TV—but their stories always seem to make it out, usually unintentionally. They don't care about promoting themselves or their organizations; instead they focus on living an exemplary life and humbly encourage those closest to follow. Their lives reflect the nature of Jesus more than any mission statement ever could and the fruit of their lives is a more compelling lesson than any sermon. And that is why this book has impacted me most. It embodies a life well-lived.

Mark has had numerous opportunities to write a book—but chose not to until now. His foremost commitment was always to have something valuable to add to the conversation. *Wholly Jesus* has surpassed that mark.

In a time when the vast majority of Americans are warm to spirituality, seeking transcendence and longing for answers to life's age-old questions, most of us have come up short. The common expression of Christianity most encounter leaves them wanting or, worse yet, driven to find alternative answers in half-truth pursuits of spiritual fulfillment.

Somewhere along the way, the movement of Jesus got off course. Historically recognized for motivating the fight for justice, community involvement, civil society, volunteerism, justice, freedom for all humankind and a life connected with the rhythms of God's creation—Christianity has now become a label to be scorned. Context is everything and in this challenging cultural environment, Mark Foreman gives a clarion call to Christ's followers to become reacquainted with the core message of the Gospel—that Christ's redemptive work not only offers salvation to the lost but equally compels us to transform

all things within our grasp. We really do have good news to share and it centers on this message of wholeness for all of creation.

Mark's approach runs refreshingly counter to attempts by others to hijack Jesus and use Christianity as a religious facade to hide their harsh and mean-spirited prejudices. In stark contrast, he motivates thoughtful engagement in our world by painting a picture that leaves you wondering how it's conceivable you had never thought of the Christian faith in this way.

For those who care about embodying a sincere faith that is loving, authentic, humble and full of grace, *Wholly Jesus* will spur you on. You will be challenged to go deeper into the heart of Jesus and discover for yourself why his message has resonated throughout every generation for centuries. But it won't be enough to recognize it—you will be challenged to embody it. To pursue the kind of life that remains true to the call of Jesus, stimulates questions, invites thoughtful discussion and refreshes a world of unimpressed onlookers.

\*\*\*

In case you are wondering, at the conclusion of the episode of *Extreme Makeover Home Edition*, it was obvious. Mark and North Coast Calvary Chapel had not only restored a home and the lives of its nine occupants, they had redeemed the reputation of the church. If only for a few minutes, millions saw the Bride of Christ love their neighbor, not just with words but in deeds. It was a beautiful, unintentional, transcendent moment.

My hope is that the valuable time you invest in reading *Wholly Jesus* inspires many more of these unintended moments; that followers of Christ would recover the way of Jesus in their everyday circumstances, relationships, neighborhoods and communities; and that the watching world would be compelled to understand why.

In *Wholly Jesus* we are privileged to discover the impetus behind the well-lived life of my friend and mentor, Mark Foreman. In this discovery, let's remember that to whom much is given, much is required.

## **Gabe Lyons**

Co-Author, *UnChristian*

Founder, Fermi Project and Q



**PART I:**  
**WHY WHOLENESS MATTERS**



## chapter one

# The Whole World Has Gone Whole

*Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.*

— Henry David Thoreau

**B**etween the surf communities of Carlsbad and Solana Beach, a lush garden spreads out atop oceanfront cliffs. Its northern gate opens to a meandering brick and flagstone path flanked by tropical trees and koi-filled ponds. I arrived at 7:00 AM for my daybreak tradition.

Faded blue-jean light illuminated the Pacific before the sun crowned the eastern horizon behind me. The garden looked empty as far as I could see. Whispering green space, swaying palm umbrellas, trickling brooks and pools—I had my pick of havens. I followed the flagstone path to a favorite spot on the west end; a bench nestled on the edge of a grass island facing a spectacular view of the reefbreak below. Local surfers call the break “Swami’s”, after the garden’s founder and longtime resident, the Swami Paramahansa Yogananda. He penned his renowned 1946 book *The Autobiography of a Yogi* while watching the same ebbs and flows.<sup>1</sup>

Rounding the path’s final bend, I approached my familiar perch. It was only then I noticed a grayed, middle-aged man reclining on the bench swallowed by blooming snapdragons. Disappointed, I slid qui-

etly to another bench and watched for him to leave.

Legs outstretched and crossed at the ankles, a plump gold pillow beneath him, the man alternated between closed-eyed meditation and open-eyed trance. Thirty minutes passed like seconds while my eyes ping-ponged between the man and the surfers 100 feet below. Eventually, I realized the only meditating I'd done was on my desire to ride a wave and my need to drink coffee. I pushed myself up, left the garden and walked to the café across the street.

As I waited in line, I read the corkboard's local ads:

### **Ion Therapy—Living energy medicine**

Somatic Life Coaching—You hold the tools necessary  
to find the solutions to all your challenges

NATUROPATHIC FAMILY CARE

Living Prana—Enhancing your well-being holistically

### **Bon—The indigenous practice of Tibet**

My turn came and the young lady behind the counter handed me a white cup. I pumped it full of caffeine and headed back to the garden. As I arrived, the middle-aged man was climbing the steps to leave when our eyes met at the garden gate...

\*\*\*

I'd thought a lot about spirituality in that garden, especially lately—about themes for Sundays sermons or topics from recent conversations. Specifically, I'd been thinking about the term wholeness. It weaves its way into a lot of conversations these days. From yoga to Thai chi to meditation and naturopathic medicine, millions of

Westerners are adopting and practicing Eastern philosophies centered on improving the whole person—body, mind and spirit. The café corkboard is Exhibit A. These pursuits represent a deviation from our historical pursuit of wholeness, which focused only on physical and mental treatments, without consideration for the soul.

Eastern-minded wholeness is no short-term fad either. Americans spend an estimated \$3 billion a year on yoga alone,<sup>2</sup> and approximately \$40 billion a year on naturopathic treatments in general.<sup>3</sup> Wholeness has clearly become a booming industry with no signs of slowing down. Crowds flock to places like the cliff-top meditation garden and its property-mate, the world-renowned Self Realization Fellowship. Every summer, I watch buses spill out wide-eyed visitors wearing hope on their faces. They all hope for the same thing, and it's a hope common to us all.

I decided some time ago that if opportunity presented itself, I would talk to those I met in the garden. Most are wonderful, warm people and their stories are fascinating. Unless they ask, I rarely tell them I'm a pastor. It tends to muddle their perceptions and our subsequent conversation. Instead, I enjoy simply listening and learning from them. I love to hear their hearts speak and understand their deeper desires. The middle-aged man on my favorite bench was no exception. Before he passed, I struck up a conversation.

\*\*\*

Richard is his name, he said, and he'd been visiting the garden nearly every day for 20 years. I told him it then made sense why he looked so familiar—we must have crossed paths before, I said. He agreed.

We exchanged pleasantries and then I said, "Can I ask you a personal question, Richard?"

"Sure."

"How does coming here help you?"

"Well," he contemplated, "I believe we're all on a path. Our paths are all different and this kind of place isn't for everyone—but this is part of my path."

“What do you mean by path?”

“Well, regardless of how we come to it, I think we’re all searching for wholeness, trying to become better people inside and out. I’m not saying it’s the right path for everyone but my path to wholeness goes through this garden.”

\*\*\*

## A WORLD GONE WHOLE

Humans are proud, ambitious and brilliant. But whether or not we admit it, we are also porous beings, fundamentally shaped by outside forces: people, philosophies, trends, chemicals and the Divine. It seems we are predisposed to find our identity in something or someone beyond ourselves. “Self-made” is ultimately an illusion. Still, our culture believes, like Richard, we can fix ourselves.

Visit Barnes & Noble and you’ll find an entire aisle dedicated to the enterprise of “self-help”—a book category that did not exist fifteen years ago. Its enormous appeal epitomizes the colossal trend toward holistic self-healing. It seems the personal pursuit-of-wholeness has become the current American remedy for the spiritual itch inside us all.

While many begin their pursuit through the physical door—yoga, Thai chi, acupuncture, etc.—most seek more than better health. Most also hope to find therapy for their minds and enrichment for their souls, remedies for greater meaning to their existence: a fuller humanity. If only the Christian church were better at illuminating Jesus’ offer.

The Savior offers nothing short of the wholeness and complete humanity so many seek. But something surprising sets His approach to wholeness apart. Contrary to every other approach, His does not hinge on self-help. He went so far as to say we are not capable of making or keeping ourselves whole (if you look around this is fairly apparent). Instead, He tells us it is only through His-Spirit-in-us that wholeness can be attained—full humanity from indwelling Divinity.

It is a critical consideration that the Christian church has largely missed the present significance of Jesus’ offer. Why amidst a culture that seeks wholeness so intently—to the tune of \$40 billion a year—

do we still offer a shrunken, otherworldly view of salvation rather than speaking of the robust redemption that Jesus spoke of, the salvation that injects restoration into all of life in us and around us now? Isn't this the very thing pop-culture seeks? These are key questions we will address in the coming pages. Their answers are far more significant than establishing personal preference or denominational doctrine. Your understanding of Jesus' offer of wholeness and its relationship to salvation is critical—especially as a Christian.

In fact, with a deeper understanding of Jesus' offer of and approach to wholeness, you might begin to wonder if the infusion of Eastern philosophy into Western pursuits might be something good—even something of a lesson from God. In the very least, the wholeness pursuits of Western pop-culture can remind us of a critical component of Christ's message we've forgotten.

For certain, there are lines that must be drawn as followers of Christ, but there are also lines we've drawn that limit Christ's message. When it comes to the topic of wholeness, it seems we may need an eraser.

On the other hand, there are certainly churches and individuals that recognize the spiritual significance of our culture's fascination with health and wholeness. Still, they are the minority.

Prevailing Christian posture is anti-Eastern philosophy and therefore distrusting (or at least ignorant) of the immense popularity of yoga, Thai chi, acupuncture and naturopathic treatment in general. I know of a few in my church who still sneak to yoga class each week for fear of being cast as heretics. It's a posture we need to clarify and modify according to Scripture. We haven't done this for some time—but if there was ever a time, it is now.

Ultimately, when we clarify Jesus' offer of wholeness and then place it in the context of mainstream spiritual conversation, we find many common threads. Knowing which threads form a tapestry of truth is a major key to presenting people with the redemptive wholeness they crave and need—people like Richard from the garden. It is also a key to knowing what about the prevailing holistic philosophy we should embrace and what we should not.

## A WHOLLY POSTURE

While the Apostle Paul waited in Athens for Silas and Timothy to join him, he took stock of the city's culture. He noticed idols everywhere—Athens was the philosophy and spirituality capital of the world at that time and this was evident by the many forms and objects of worship. People everywhere were searching for wholeness and establishing many paths to this end. Paul was immediately burdened for the Athenians and he began approaching Christians and non-Christians alike with Jesus' full offer: He died that we would be restored to wholeness. A group of popular philosophers got wind of Paul's conversations and invited him to Mars Hill where locals hung out and discussed the latest ideas. There, Paul contextualized Jesus' message within the mainstream conversation. He understood what the people ultimately sought—wholeness—and he presented them with a new way to find it. He presented to them not only a Holy Jesus, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind, but also a Wholly Jesus, the remedy for the brokenness of the world.

In many ways, today's modern world is quite similar to the ancient Athens where Paul once stood. And as fellow Christians, we too should recognize that the distinctiveness of Jesus' offer sets Him apart from today's other wholeness remedies. If we overlook this, we quietly remove Jesus from today's mainstream spiritual conversation. We also push people like Richard from the reach of church influence.

\*\*\*

As we continued our conversation that morning, he talked openly about finding his path to wholeness.

"I grew up in a Presbyterian church," he admitted with some discomfort.

"It wasn't for you?"

"Don't get me wrong. I know that kind of place is where some people need to be. I don't want to leave the impression I'm against Christianity because I'm not. But as I got older I started to realize what I was looking for was life and I wasn't finding it at church. For

me, the church was all about dogma. All it wanted to do was argue and be right.”

\*\*\*

I intersect with life-seekers like Richard nearly every week in the garden and nearly everywhere I travel. They are not shy to talk about what they seek. They want better health, a sounder mind and a peaceful soul. They want a wholly life—a more meaningful and complete life—and they look for it where it seems most likely to be found: in Eastern philosophy, in Buddhist temples, in yoga and Thai chi classes and in lush meditation gardens along the southern California coast.

Like Richard, many wholeness-seekers see in the Christian church something churchgoers don't: What we offer is not wholly what Jesus' offered. We have somehow (and quite inadvertently in many cases) reduced His promise of perfect wholeness to “forgiveness for now and hope for later” or to an edgy ad campaign about giving church and God a chance.

The sum of what is seen is that Christians seem to live half-lives (with the Spirit of whole-life in our hearts), and we seem to offer half-life (with the promise of wholeness in our hands). It's a pattern we have to change. That begins when we seek to comprehend Jesus' whole message and then learn to place it in today's dialogue. The combination has eternal implications.