

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a small, white, wooden boat floating on a body of water. The water is a deep, textured blue with gentle ripples. The boat is positioned in the lower right quadrant, showing its bow and part of its side. The interior of the boat is a warm, brownish-orange color, and a rope is visible tied to the bow. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

MAX LUCADO

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

# JESUS

*The God Who Knows  
Your Name*

JESUS

## ALSO BY MAX LUCADO

### INSPIRATIONAL

*3:16*  
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*A Love Worth Giving*  
*And the Angels Were Silent*  
*Anxious for Nothing*  
*Because of Bethlehem*  
*Before Amen*  
*Come Thirsty*  
*Cure for the Common Life*  
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*No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*  
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*His Name Is Jesus*  
*Let the Journey Begin*  
*Live Loved*  
*Mocha with Max*  
*Safe in the Shepherd's Arms*  
*This Is Love*  
*You Changed My Life*

# JESUS

*The God Who Knows  
Your Name*

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

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# Introduction

Carinette has a spark in her. A look. A bounce in her step. A light in her eyes. She is one of fifty-seven children in the Haitian orphanage: all dark skinned, bright eyed, curly haired, Creole speaking, and fun loving. Each one is precious. But this seven-year-old stands out from the others. Not as a result of special treatment. She eats the same rice and beans as the others eat and plays on the same grassless playground. She sleeps beneath the same tin roof as the other girls, hearing the nearly nightly pound of rain. Her routine is identical to the other children's. Yet she is different.

The reason? Ask her. Ask Carinette about the visitors who traveled from a faraway world just to see her. They were looking for a girl, a little girl, a girl just like her. They knew her name. They knew her favorite song. They knew that she loves to look at books



## INTRODUCTION

and jump rope. And, in a moment that changed her forever, they invited her to live with them.

“They are coming for me,” she will tell you.

Ask to see the pictures of her soon-to-be home; she’ll show them to you. Fail to ask; she’ll offer to show you. Her adoptive parents brought her pictures, a teddy bear, granola bars, and cookies. She shared the goodies with her friends and asked the director to guard her bear, but she keeps the pictures.

They remind her of the father who knows her. They remind her of the home that awaits her. The photographs convince her to believe the incredible: somebody knows her name and has promised to take her home.

As a result Carinette is different. She still lives in the same orphanage, plays on the same playground, eats in the same cafeteria. But her world changed the day she learned that someone faraway knows her name and is coming for her.

Might you be willing to believe the same?

Are you open to the idea of a Father, a heavenly Father, who knows you? A soon-to-be home that awaits you? Would you consider this life-changing idea: the almighty and all-knowing God has set his affection on you. Every detail about you he knows. Your interests, your hang-ups. Your fears and failures. He knows you.

About his children God says, “The LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought” (1 Chron. 28:9).

He regards you as “the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8).

He can “sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15 NKJV).

“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me . . .,” King David wrote, “You knew my path” (Ps. 142:3 NKJV).

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“He knows the way that I take,” declared Job (Job 23:10 NKJV).

Do you know this God who knows you?

He knows your name. And he can’t wait to get you home.

I came to know the story of the Cap-Haïtien orphan, not by traveling to Haiti, but by standing in the church foyer. I’m a pastor. Like other pastors I like to greet people after church services. And like other pastors I am a captive audience for parents and grandparents who want to show off new additions to the family. I’ve held more babies than I can count and looked at more pictures than a photographer. But I can’t recall ever being more surprised than the day Dan wanted to show me a photo of his new daughter.

The girl in the photo smiled a big smile, wore a pink ribbon, and had skin the color of chocolate.

The guy who handed me the photo smiled a big smile, wore cowboy boots and a hat, and had skin the color of Casper the Friendly Ghost.

“Daughter?”

That’s when I heard about the orphanage, the trip, and the decision to expand their family by adding one more face around the table. He scarcely took a breath for the next five minutes, telling me all about her hair, eyes, and favorite color, song, and book. He couldn’t stop talking about her. He was crazy about her.

Might you believe the same about your Father?

This is the ever-recurring, soul-lifting message of heaven.

“The LORD delights in you” (Isa. 62:4 NKJV).

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine” (Isa. 43:1 NKJV).

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“I have written your name on the palms of my hands” (Isa. 49:16 NLT).

“The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy” (Ps. 147:11 NKJV).

“The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand” (Ps. 37:23–24 NLT).

Do such words surprise you? Where did we get this idea of a God who does not care, who is not near? We certainly didn’t get it from Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the perfect picture of God. Just as Carinette had her photos, we have Jesus. Want to know how God feels about the sick? Look at Jesus. What angers God? Look at Jesus. Does God ever give up on people? Does he stand up for people? Find the answer in Jesus. “The Son is the radiance and only expression of the glory of [our awesome] God . . . and the exact representation and perfect imprint of His [Father’s] essence” (Heb. 1:3 AMP).

The pictures inform Carinette’s thoughts about her home-to-be. She’s not home yet. Within a month she will be, maybe. Two at the most. She knows the day is coming. She knows the hour is imminent. Every opening of the gate makes her heart jump. Any day now her father will appear. He’s coming. He promised he’d be back. He came once to claim her. He’ll come again to carry her.

Till then she lives with a heart headed home.

Shouldn’t we all? Carinette’s situation mirrors ours. Have we not been claimed? Are we not adopted children? “So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you

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received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:15 NLT).

God sought you. He searched you out. Before you knew you needed adopting, he'd already filed the papers.

"For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Rom. 8:29 NLT).

Abandon you to a fatherless world of tin plates and hard bunks? No way. Those privy to God's family Bible can read your name. He put your name in his book. What's more, he covered the adoption fees. "God sent him [Christ] to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children" (Gal. 4:5 NLT).

We don't finance our adoption, but we do accept it. Carinette could tell the Johnsons to get lost. But she didn't. You can tell God to get lost. But you wouldn't dare, would you? "You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26 NLT). The moment we accept his offer we go from orphans to heirs: "You are his heirs . . ." (Gal. 3:29 NLT).

Heirs! Heirs with a new name. New home. New life. "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17 NKJV). Heaven knows no stepchildren or grandchildren. You and Christ share the same will. What he inherits, you inherit. You are headed home.

Oh, but we tend to forget, don't we? We grow accustomed to hard bunks and crowded classrooms. Too seldom do we peer over the fence into the world to come. And how long since you pictured your future home? Is Peter speaking to us when he urges, "Friends, this world is not your home, so don't make yourselves cozy in it" (1 Peter 2:11 THE MESSAGE)?

## INTRODUCTION

Like Carinette we are adopted but not transported. We have a new family but haven't met all of them yet. We know our Father's name, and he has claimed us, but he has yet to come for us.

So here we are. Caught between what is and what will be. No longer orphans but not yet home. What do we do in the meantime? Indeed, it can be just that—a mean time. Time made mean with disease, deceit, death, and debt. How do we live in the meantime? How do we keep our hearts headed home?

“Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect” (Heb. 12:2 NCV).

Look to Jesus. Ponder his life. Consider his ways. Meditate on his words. Jesus. Just Jesus.

That is the aim of this book that you hold. It contains both published and heretofore unpublished thoughts about the life of Christ. With these words may I offer this prayer:

May the Hero of all history talk personally to you. May you find in Jesus the answer to the deepest needs of your life. May you remember your highest privilege: you are known by God and cherished by heaven.

Keep an eye on the front gate. Your Father will show up to take you home before you know it.

PART 1

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# IMMANUEL

When our daughter Sara was four years old, she burst into the house carrying a water-filled baggie in which swam a wide-eyed burst of sunshine. “Look what they gave us at the birthday party!” (Gee thanks.) We dumped the pet into a fishbowl and gathered around to select a name. *Sebastian* won. He quickly became the star of the family. We actually set the bowl on the dinner table so we could watch him swim while we ate. The ultimate fish dinner.

But then we got bored. Can’t fault Sebastian. He did everything expected of a family fish. He swam in circles and surfaced on cue to gobble fish food. He never jumped out of the bowl into the sink or demanded a seat on the couch. He spent his nights nestled amid a green plant. Quiet. Novel. Contained. Like Jesus?

The Jesus of many people is small enough to be contained in an aquarium that fits on the cabinet. Package him up, and send him home with the kids. Dump him in a bowl, and watch him swim. He never causes trouble or demands attention. Everyone wants a goldfish bowl of Jesus, right? If you do, steer clear of the real Jesus Christ. He brings a wild ride. He comes at you like a fire hose—blasting, purging, cleansing. He will not swim quietly. He is more

a force than a fixture, flushing away every last clod of doubt and death and infusing us with wonder and hope.

He changes everything. Jesus does not promise to stop your snoring, turn your kids into valedictorians, or guarantee you will have the correct lottery number. Jesus doesn't make you sexy, skinny, or clever. Jesus doesn't change what you see in the mirror. He changes how you see what you see.

He will not be silenced, packaged, or predicted. He is the pastor who chased people out of church. He is the prophet who had a soft spot for crooks and whores. He is the king who washed the grime off the feet of his betrayer. He turned a bread basket into a buffet and a dead friend into a living one. And most of all, he transformed the tomb into a womb out of which life was born. Your life.

*Jesus:* Five letters. Six hours. One cross. Three nails. We live because he does, hope because he works, and matter because he matters. To be saved by grace is to be saved by him—not by an idea, doctrine, creed, or church membership, but by Jesus himself, who will sweep into heaven anyone who so much as gives him the nod.

Goldfish Jesus? Not on your life.

Goldfish Jesus happens only on Christmas and Easter. The real Jesus claims every tick of the clock.

Goldfish Jesus winks at sin. The real Jesus nukes it.

Goldfish Jesus is a lucky charm crucifix on a necklace. Jesus is a tiger in your heart.

Do you know this Jesus? If your answer is no, let's talk about him. If your answer is yes, let's talk about him. Let's talk about Jesus.

Let's begin where the earthly ministry of Jesus began—in the



womb of Mary. The God of the universe, for a time, kicked against the wall of that womb. He was born in the poverty of a peasant and spent his first night in the feed trough of a cow. “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14 THE MESSAGE).

Didn’t have to, did he?

Jesus could have become a voice—a voice in the air.

Jesus could have become a message—a message in the sky.

Jesus could have become a light—a light in the night.

But he became more, so much more. He became flesh. Why? Why did he take the journey? Why did he go so far?

Might the answer include this word: *you*?

Jesus came to be near you. Any concerns you might have about his power and love were removed from the discussion the moment he became flesh and entered the world.

What a beginning. What an entrance. What a moment. Goldfish Jesus? No way.

## *Chapter 1*

# Born to You This Day

*Born to a mother.*

*Acquainted with physical pain.*

*Enjoys a good party.*

*Rejected by friends.*

*Unfairly accused.*

*Loves stories.*

*Reluctantly pays taxes.*

*Sings.*

*Turned off by greedy religion.*

*Feels sorry for the lonely.*

*Unappreciated by siblings.*

*Stands up for the underdog.*  
*Kept awake at night by concerns.*  
*Known to doze off in the midst of trips.*  
*Accused of being too rowdy.*  
*Afraid of death.*

Whom am I describing? Jesus . . . or you? Perhaps both.  
Based on this list, it seems you and I have a lot in common with Jesus.

Big deal? I think so.

Jesus understands you. He understands small-town anonymity and big-city pressure. He's walked through pastures of sheep and palaces of kings. He's faced hunger, sorrow, and death and wants to face them with you. Jesus "understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin" (Heb. 4:15 NLT).

If Jesus understands our weaknesses, then so does God. Jesus was God in human form. He was God with us. That is why Jesus is called Immanuel.

*Immanuel* appears in the same Hebrew form as it did two thousand years ago. *Immanu* means "with us." *El* refers to *Elohim*, or God. So Immanuel is not an "above-us God" or a "somewhere-in-the-neighborhood God." He came as the "with-us God." God with us. Not "God with the rich" or "God with the religious." But God with *us*. All of us. Russians, Germans, Buddhists, Mormons, truck drivers and taxi drivers, librarians. God with *us*.

Don't we love the word *with*? "Will you go *with* me?" we ask. "To the store, to the hospital, through my life?" God says he will.

“I am *with* you always,” Jesus said before he ascended to heaven, “to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Search for restrictions on the promise; you’ll find none. You won’t find “I’ll be with you if you behave . . . when you believe. I’ll be with you on Sundays in worship . . . at mass.” No, none of that. There’s no withholding tax on God’s “with” promise. He is *with* us.

God is with us.

Prophets weren’t enough. Apostles wouldn’t do. Angels won’t suffice. God sent more than miracles and messages. He sent himself; he sent his Son. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14 NKJV).

For thousands of years God gave us his voice. Prior to Bethlehem he gave us his messengers, his teachers, his words. But in the manger God gave us himself. Extraordinary, don’t you think?

I imagine even Gabriel scratched his head at the idea of “God with us.” Gabriel wasn’t one to question his God-given missions. Sending fire and dividing seas were all in an eternity’s work for this angel. When God sent, Gabriel went.

And when word got out that God was to become a human, Gabriel was no doubt enthused. He could envision the moment:

The Messiah in a blazing chariot.

The King descending on a fiery cloud.

An explosion of light from which the Messiah would emerge.

That’s surely what he expected. What he never expected, however, was what he got: a slip of paper with a Nazarene address. “God will become a baby,” it read. “Tell the mother to name the child *Jesus*. And tell her not to be afraid.”

Gabriel was never one to question, but this time he had to

wonder. *God will become a baby?* Gabriel had seen babies before. He had been platoon leader on the bulrush operation. He remembered what little Moses looked like.

*That's okay for humans*, he thought to himself. *But for God? The heavens can't contain him. How could a body? Besides, have you seen what comes out of those babies? Hardly befitting the Creator of the universe. Babies must be carried and fed, bounced and bathed. Some mother burping God on her shoulder? Why, that was beyond what even an angel could imagine.*

*And what of this name? What was it—Jesus? Such a common name. There's a Jesus in every cul-de-sac. Come on, even the name Gabriel has more punch to it than Jesus. Call the baby Eminence or Majesty or Heaven-sent. Anything but Jesus.*

So Gabriel scratched his head. *What happened to the good ol' days?* Global floods. Flaming swords. That's the action he liked.

But Gabriel had his orders. Take the message to Mary. *Must be a special girl*, he assumed as he traveled. But Gabriel was in for another shock. One peek told him Mary was no queen. The mother-to-be of God was not regal. She was a Jewish peasant who'd barely outgrown her acne and had a crush on a guy named Joe.

*And speaking of Joe, what does this fellow know? Might as well be a weaver in Spain or a cobbler in Greece. He's a carpenter. Look at him over there—sawdust in his beard and a nail apron around his waist. You're telling me that God is going to have dinner every night with him? You're telling me that the source of wisdom is going to call this guy "Dad"? You're telling me that a common laborer is going to be charged with providing food to God?*

*What if he gets laid off?*

BORN TO YOU THIS DAY

*What if he gets cranky?*

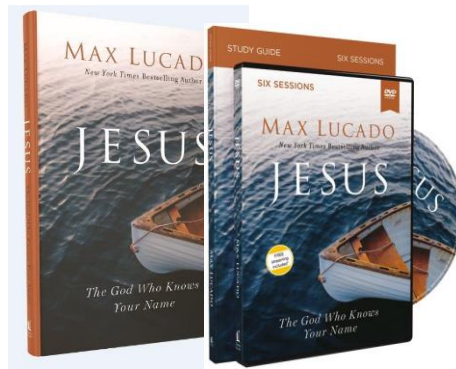
*What if he decides to run off with a pretty young girl from down the street? Then where will we be?*

It was all Gabriel could do to keep from turning back. “This is a peculiar idea you have, God,” he must have muttered to himself, but he followed through. He wasn’t about to rebel against his boss, who also happened to control the universe.

He visited Mary and told her:

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. (Luke 1:30–31 NKJV)

The story of Jesus begins with the story of a great descent. The Son of God became the child of Mary. He became one of us so we might become one with Him. He entered our world in the high hope that we will enter his.



# JESUS

by Max Lucado

**You believe Jesus is God. But do you also think of him as a real person?**

For thirty-three years Jesus felt everything that we have ever felt: weakness, weariness, rejections. His feelings got hurt. His feet grew tired. His head ached. To think of Jesus in such terms almost seems irreverent. But we must remember that the people who saw Jesus first, saw him first as a person.

As Max Lucado reveals in this video Bible study, because Jesus became human, it is now possible for us to see God and hear his voice. If we want to know what matters to God, all we need to do is look in the Bible to see what matters to Jesus. If we want to know what God is doing in our world, we need only ponder the words of Jesus. By learning more about the person Jesus was and is, we come to understand more clearly the people we were created to be.

*Jesus* inspires us to spend time at the foot of the cross and search the heart of the one who would rather die for us than live without us.

**LEARN MORE**