

November 9, 2005



Actor Ashton Kutcher and his
JESUS shirt and hat

“JESUS is my Homeboy.” Los Angeles-based clothing company Teenage Millionaire introduced the design four years ago (see photo). “We were looking at pop icons of the 21st century, and Jesus topped the list,” said Chris Hoy, a partner in Teenage Millionaire. Some believers like the t-shirts. “The shirts are cool,” said John Peterson, a youth pastor from New Jersey. “It might have been started as a joke, but it could still have spiritual significance for people.” There seems to be a growing trend toward wearing your religion (literally) on your sleeve. “Strongly-worded religious apparel is a growing trend,” said Catherine Stellin, vice president of The Intelligence Group in Los Angeles, which forecasts trends. “Teens and those in their early 20s see consumerism as a way to express convictions,” she said. “So if they believe in something, they are going to shout it out. Subtlety is not their strong point.”

The appearance of Jesus in pop culture can be seen as positive or negative. Not everyone who wears the “JESUS is my Homeboy” t-shirt is necessarily broadcasting their religious convictions. Some people see something like a Jesus action figure (it exists!) as ridiculing people’s beliefs. Others see the figure—along with such other items as Jesus night-lights, Virgin Mary tank tops, and crocheted polyester Last Supper tablecloths—as harmless, even respectfully ironic, images of cultural icons. Jesus is trendy—what a concept...what an opportunity! Christian themes, so often marginalized in the past, are now increasingly present in pop culture. Most noticeable has been the overwhelming success of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, which ranks No. 7 in terms of all-time U.S. box office hits. *Joan of Arcadia*, a CBS show about a high school girl who talks to God, won a People’s Choice Award for best dramatic series.

Please pray—

*For the remainder of our
support to be provided*

*For the completion and
distribution of the Jesus
segments*

Praise:

*Mikayla turns one on
Nov 22!*

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“Religion in its own way has become a brand—and right now it’s hot,” said Jane Buckingham, president of Youth Intelligence, a New York trend-forecasting company. Jesus is not very religious...in fact, he was pretty much opposed to the very religious and pious views circulating in Jewish culture when he was here. He was called “friend of sinners.” (Luke 15:2) So, although some might take offense at the popularity of Jesus-themed clothing or Christ as an “action figure,” we think that even in some crude way, the popularity of Jesus can build a bridge for the true gospel. The bottom line is connecting college students with Jesus. And right now, Jesus is popular. Perhaps still misunderstood, but nonetheless, popular.

Last weekend, several members of our team spent time shooting video for “Jesus—On Campus Now” commercials. These short narratives will capitalize on the Jesus trend to help overcome stereotypes that many students have built up about Christ (that he’s unapproachable or just a cold churchy icon that they can’t relate to). Jesus will be portrayed positively; interacting with college students as he helps in their classrooms, hanging out with them in their dorms and participating with them at college events. He’ll be presented as a relational living being. This is a spiritual need—students don’t know that Christ can be like that to them. Through entertaining the audience, we hope to inform them of this truth and draw them to meetings on their campuses where they can learn more about the real Jesus...deep, kind, loving, forgiving and the best friend (or homeboy) they could ever have.

Heather + David Nagy