

# Heartspeak



BY MICHAEL MANCHA

**Y**ou've seen them before, haven't you? The t-shirts with the Coca-Cola logo that says "Jesus Christ" instead. Or the ones that have the MySpace logo that read "HisFace." This new one I saw had a little Jesus avatar — you know, the kind you create on the Nintendo Wii — and it said "Hii Saved Me."

And it doesn't end with t-shirts. There is a "Christianized" version of everything you can think of. They even have a version of the popular Bratz dolls called God's Girlz. My personal favorite is one I saw recently. It was a bright green shirt with a spot-on match of the Mountain Dew slogan "Do the Dew," but instead it read "Do the Jew." Did they really say that?

I've heard so many different names for this stuff: Witness Wear, Good News Clothing, Christian Swag. My generation has a term for it: Jesus Junk.

Sometimes I wonder what the point of all this is. Does it amp up the message of the gospel? Is it truly effective? Or does it just simply cut us off from the rest of the world and cheapen Jesus' whole purpose?

Just before He ascends to heaven, Jesus says this (Mark's Gospel): "Go now into all the world. Take everything the current culture has to offer and tweak it a bit so it's less secular and more godly. Use these things to blend with the culture — only subtle differences. Sooner or later someone will notice."

Oh, wait. What Jesus actually said was this: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (16:15, NIV). Did you catch that? He said, "Go into all the world."



shine a light



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Imagine our culture as a raging river. It moves fast, it's always changing, and it's rough. Anyone can call themselves Christians when they are out of the cultural water walking safely along the shore.

They're dry, they can breathe, and mostly they're safe. But fact is that the gospel is not safe. It's dangerous work. Jesus didn't come here to play it safe. He came to go where people were, to pour out His heart and love them beyond measure. And that changed the world forever.

The ideal of American youth is to be in the mix of popular culture. But the truth is you are popular culture. You are right in the heart of it, and Jesus wants us not to stand to one side and hope someone will come along, but to stand in the middle and shine a light. Cause we are in Him and He in us and we must be that light.

This magazine has one purpose: you. It stands to motivate, inform, provoke thought, and raise questions. Its goal is to encourage you to be who you are in Christ, to embrace your goals, your ideas, and your voice.

HeartSpeak is about communication among hearts – God's, yours, ours, and others'. We are all different, but HeartSpeak can help bring us together, united in our love for God, for His people, and for the world He so loved. As we open our hearts to the heart of God, we will find a way to make His voice heard in the world, revealing His HeartSpeak.

*Michael Mancha is the designer-coordinator of HeartSpeak. He and his wife, Batina, are the music directors for the Living Rock CoG7 in San Antonio, TX.*

### Just in case you're wondering...

The average person will spend two weeks over his lifetime waiting for the traffic light to change.

No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver and purple.

The Bible, the world's best-selling book, is also the world's most shoplifted book.

Coca-Cola translated to Chinese means, "To make mouth happy".

Apples, not caffeine, are more efficient at waking you up in the morning.

Mosquito repellents don't repel. They hide you. The spray blocks mosquitoes' sensors so they don't know you're there.

[www.randomfunfacts.com](http://www.randomfunfacts.com)

# NFYC Registration for 2009 is here!

All local youth groups are encouraged to register with the NFYC at the beginning of each year.

Benefits include youth camp discounts, SVA discounts, weekly youth e-devotions, and more! Youth workers can register your group by going to <http://nfy.cog7.org/register> and completing the simple process for each of their students.

**Register today!**



## National Youth Week/ Hunger Lock-In April 17-19, 2009

Get your local church involved! Information packets are available. Contact Kurt Lang, NFYC director, at [nfy@cog7.org](mailto:nfy@cog7.org) for more information.

# MORE THAN A VOTE

BY MICHAEL FLORES



I recently asked my sixteen-year-old brother if he cared about the presidential election. He enthusiastically answered, "Yeah!"

Surprised, I asked why. "I don't know," he said "I mean the next president is going to be important for the nation."

Hearing him try to communicate his thoughts, I remembered this about youth: Despite what popular culture wants us to believe, they *do* care about others. Put teenagers in a situation where they can help someone, and they probably will.

This month our new president, Barack Obama, will be sworn into office. This is a sensitive nerve in our culture, especially for some in Christian culture, but we can learn valuable lessons here.

The recent campaign felt as though it was all about one person, one party, trying to gain power, and about lines being drawn that made one side all right and the other all wrong. So many of the political ads we saw in 2008, and even the statements we heard, revealed this one-sided, greedy approach to power-hungry politics.

On the surface, at least, the past election seemed to fall short of showing much genuine care for our neighbors, at least those who disagreed with us. As Christians, we are called to surrender power. The American model of government is one of service, and that model is something Christians should identify with above any political or individual interests. American government is "of the people, by the people, for the people." If government is about the people, then getting involved and developing your views should be for *all* the people, right?

My awareness about politics should be centered not only on how politics affects me but also on how it affects my neighbor. My vote, or any political involvement, is not just an expression of my voice but also a reflection of how I love my neighbor.

I know what you're thinking. "Why should I care about politics? I can't even vote!" Well, consider this. Would you help someone if you could? Anyone: a friend, a stranger, a parent, or a grand-

“You can try to understand why other people think differently.”

parent? What would you do if a friend came to you asking for advice on having an abortion? Or if you knew your grandparents couldn't afford the medicines they needed? Or if you knew that most of your friends couldn't pay for college because of education prices? Or if your parents couldn't afford healthcare because of rising living costs? If you wouldn't ignore these people, then maybe you're the kind of person who does care about politics.

Politics is about the girl in your high school who is pregnant and thinking about her options. Politics is about the grandparents who are struggling to pay for prescription drugs. It's about ways for everyone to pay for college or healthcare. Politics affects not just you but everyone. Valuing human life is not just babies but also the poverty stricken, abused, neglected, and addicted. Economic recovery is not just for those who have lost their homes but also for those who never had one. The war is not just on the streets of Iraq but also on the streets of LA, Houston, and every town in America.

So maybe it will be four years before you can vote for president. It doesn't mean you can't be socially conscious. You can know what it means to be Republican or Democrat, or what it means to support one issue while denying another. You can try to understand why other people think differently and engage those who do vote in political discussions. You can volunteer with organizations that are helpful to your community. Your age doesn't deter you from loving someone, so it shouldn't be a reason to be socially and politically uninformed.

As we begin this four-year journey with President Obama, remember to pray for our leaders, to petition God for wisdom for them and for ourselves. He also calls us to love our brother and sister. He calls us to put those who are last, first. And He calls us to do justly and to love mercy.

*Michael Flores is a former youth leader living in San Antonio, TX, with his wife, Victoria, and their daughter, Kennedy.*

# GO DEEPER

Maybe you're not 18 yet. Maybe you just missed your chance to vote, or maybe you did vote for the first time. Wherever you fall in that mix, it's important to know that anyone can make a difference. Here are some ways you can bring about a change.

- **Pay attention in government class.** Having a well-rounded understanding of how the government process works is your first step.
- **Write to your state legislators.** There are no restrictions as to who can petition local and state leaders. Letter writing campaigns often work!
- **Write letters to the editor of your local paper.** It's your first amendment right!
- **Find an area of service that is not funded by the government and volunteer.** There are countless numbers of non-profit organizations that seek volunteers. Research them and find one that you can be passionate about.
- **Get the church involved in funding local organizations that need assistance.** Local non-profits will appreciate any help they can get. Petition your church board and pastor about organizing a project.