

Jesus and John Wayne: An Unlikely Encounter that Reshaped History

When we think of Jesus and John Wayne, two completely different images come to mind - one representing divine love and compassion, the other representing rugged masculinity and the Wild West. But what if I told you that these two remarkable figures intersected in a way that would forever change the course of history? Brace yourself for an extraordinary tale of unexpected connections, unlikely friendships, and an enduring legacy that continues to captivate billions.

The Man Who Embodied the Wild West

John Wayne, born Marion Robert Morrison in 1907, became the epitome of the American cowboy archetype. With his towering presence, deep voice, and unwavering patriotism, Wayne portrayed a string of iconic characters that embodied the essence of the Wild West both on and off the silver screen.

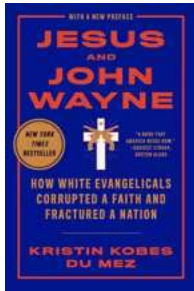
But beneath the gruff exterior and the cowboy hat, Wayne harbored a profound curiosity about spirituality. His journey led him to explore various belief systems, including Christianity. Raised Presbyterian, Wayne embraced the teachings of Jesus and sought to understand how they could coexist with his rugged persona.

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

by Kristin Kobes Du Mez(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English



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Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
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Print length	: 365 pages



The Unexpected Encounter

It was during the filming of "The Greatest Story Ever Told" in 1965 that Wayne's fate intertwined with that of Jesus. Cast as Centurion at Crucifixion, Wayne found himself face to face with the actor portraying Jesus in one of the most pivotal scenes of the film. In this moment, an unexpected connection was forged between the legendary cowboy and the divine figure he was meant to crucify.

As the cameras rolled and the scene unfolded, something profound happened. Wayne later described it as an overwhelming surge of emotion that washed over him. He felt a sense of awe and reverence as he looked into the eyes of the actor portraying Jesus, a moment that would forever reshape his understanding of faith and masculinity.

A Shift in Perspective

The encounter with Jesus on the crucifixion set ignited a profound shift in Wayne's perspective. It challenged his preconceived notions of masculinity and power, urging him to embrace a gentler, more compassionate version of manhood. Reflecting on the experience, Wayne stated, "It was as if

Jesus himself had touched my soul, commanding me to walk a path of love, understanding, and forgiveness."

This newfound revelation led Wayne to dive deeper into the teachings of Jesus. He devoured biblical texts and sought guidance from theologians, eager to align his personal beliefs with the iconic characters he portrayed on screen. Wayne's faith became a defining aspect of his identity, influencing his subsequent roles and the way he interacted with others, both in Hollywood and beyond.

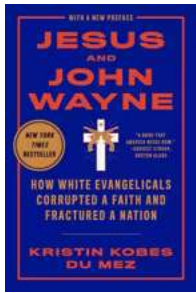
A Lasting Legacy

Though Wayne passed away in 1979, his encounter with Jesus left an indelible mark on his life and brought about a lasting legacy. His subsequent roles became more nuanced and reflective of his evolving understanding of faith and masculinity. Wayne aimed to humanize his characters, offering viewers glimpses of vulnerability and empathy that were previously unseen in his earlier Western films.

Today, Wayne's films continue to inspire and entertain audiences worldwide. His embodiment of the American cowboy, coupled with his genuine spiritual journey, resonates with people from all walks of life. By challenging societal norms and seeking to unite the ruggedness of the Wild West with the teachings of Jesus, Wayne carved out a unique place in cinematic history and redefined masculinity on his own terms.

Jesus and John Wayne - two names that seem worlds apart, yet their encounter forever linked them in a remarkable tale of transformation. Wayne's journey from the Wild West to the crucifixion set represents a truly unique intersection of faith, cinema, and the power of personal growth.

So the next time you watch a John Wayne film or contemplate the teachings of Jesus, remember the unlikely connection that exists between these two icons. May their tale inspire us to challenge our own preconceived notions, embrace compassion, and leave a legacy that transcends societal expectations.



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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

The “paradigm-influencing” book (Christianity Today) that is fundamentally transforming our understanding of white evangelicalism in America.

Jesus and John Wayne is a sweeping, revisionist history of the last seventy-five years of white evangelicalism, revealing how evangelicals have worked to replace the Jesus of the Gospels with an idol of rugged masculinity and Christian nationalism—or in the words of one modern chaplain, with “a spiritual badass.”

As acclaimed scholar Kristin Du Mez explains, the key to understanding this transformation is to recognize the centrality of popular culture in contemporary American evangelicalism. Many of today's evangelicals might not be theologically astute, but they know their VeggieTales, they've read John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*, and they learned about purity before they learned about sex—and they have a silver ring to prove it. Evangelical books, films, music, clothing, and merchandise shape the beliefs of millions. And evangelical culture is teeming with muscular heroes—mythical warriors and rugged soldiers, men like Oliver North, Ronald Reagan, Mel Gibson, and the Duck Dynasty clan, who assert white masculine power in defense of “Christian America.” Chief among these evangelical legends is John Wayne, an icon of a lost time when men were uncowed by political correctness, unafraid to tell it like it was, and did what needed to be done.

Challenging the commonly held assumption that the “moral majority” backed Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020 for purely pragmatic reasons, Du Mez reveals that Trump in fact represented the fulfillment, rather than the betrayal, of white evangelicals' most deeply held values: patriarchy, authoritarian rule, aggressive foreign policy, fear of Islam, ambivalence toward #MeToo, and opposition to Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ community. A much-needed reexamination of perhaps the most influential subculture in this country, *Jesus and John Wayne* shows that, far from adhering to biblical principles, modern white evangelicals have remade their faith, with enduring consequences for all Americans.



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