

Up, Up, and Away

Superman is the world's most vibrant extrabiblical type of Christ. This means that the fictional character Superman vividly points toward the actual Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah/Christ. Superman reminds us of Jesus and elicits desires for goodness that only the God-man can satisfy.

While the film *Superman* tries not lean into the obvious Christological imagery of the Reeve, Routh, and Cavill Superman movies, David Corenswet's outing as the Big Blue Boy Scout, captures the virtues of Jesus while demonstrating less of Superman-as-Christ motif and more of a Superman-as-Christ-follower.

Jesus and Superman both seek and save the lost, even they're not very good dogs. In the movie, Krypto the super dog is captured. Superman demonstrates a willingness to put himself at great peril to save a dog that he considers "not even a very good one." Jesus demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice Himself to save us, even though none of us is worthy or good.

Luke 15:3-7—"Jesus told them this parable: Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

John 10:11-14—"The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd."

1 Timothy 1:13-15—"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the love that is in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."

-How does it make you feel that grace is not for the worthy, but for the willing? How can we share this vital truth with a world in a way that might resonate? From what depths did Jesus save you?

Jesus and Superman are both punk rock. To be punk rock is to be countercultural. The culture around us embraces vitriol, hatred, pride, and distrust of anyone not in our political tribe.

Galatians 5:22-26—The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

-How does Jesus embody any of these virtues/fruit? How can we embody them? How can we better live by the Spirit?

-Is envy or conceit a bigger problem in your life? In what areas are you conceited or whom do you envy? How can we better seek to embrace the truth that we who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh and its passions/desires?

Superman and each of us can overcome our ancestor's faults and adopt virtue. Superman experienced a crisis of identity when he realized that his biological parents wanted him to rule earth rather than to serve it. Superman needed to realize that adoptive parents instilled within him a strong sense of virtue and that he could choose and act in virtuous ways.

Romans 8:14-17—"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

-Do you have inherited generational sins? Have you ever felt like the biological cards you've been dealt are a losing hand? How does the Spirit help us choose and act like Christ rather than like our ancestors?

-The Holy Spirit brings about our adoption into God's family. How can we better listen to His leading? Do you see yourself as a co-heir with Christ or do you not feel worthy of such a title?

Jesus and Superman point to the great strength of the Judeo-Christian worldview. Raised by farmers in Kansas, Superman embraced the morality and virtue of a thoroughly Judeo-Christian view of the world. The Bible—the 10 Commandments, the Gospel, the fruit of the Spirit shaped the American way. Clark Kent developed a sense of morality and virtue from that way.

One of the great thought experiments in both comic books and in philosophy classes is to consider the merit of a particular worldview by asking 'what would it be like if Superman adhered to _____ worldview?' Superman adheres to what the world might consider old fashioned. He says "golly," "guff," "chum," etc., and he espouses trust, kindness, gentleness, self-sacrifice, and goodness.

-What would it be like if Superman were a Nazi? What would it be like if Superman were a communist? What would it be like if Superman were an Islamic Jihadist? What would it be like if Superman were a secular humanist?

-What would it be like if Superman were a Judeo-Christian theist? Watch the movie *Superman* to see. Does Superman inspire you to embrace punk rock goodness? If a fictional character can bring about real world change in people, imagine the change Jesus and the Holy Spirit can bring? With whom can you share the goodness of Jesus?