

# Introduction

*By John Thomas*

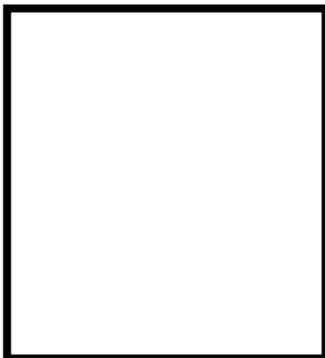
**Jesus** was a master of the “thirty second spot.” Long before any disciple wielded a remote control, Jesus enlivened the imagination of his audience with short stories, symbolic actions, brief but intense encounters. A loving father watching the far horizon for the return of a beloved but lost son. A woman scouring her home for a lost coin. A shepherd risking the flock for the one lost sheep. Gathering unruly children and suggesting we become like them before entering God’s realm. Inviting himself to dinner with an unethical tax collector. Stopping to ask for water from a Samaritan woman. The Gospels are lavishly sprinkled with these “thirty second spots.”

Like any good advertiser, Jesus used these arresting spots to startle his audience into a new way of thinking, a new kind of desiring. The message was clear. God’s love is more amazing than you ever imagined, more extravagant than some religious leaders want you to believe. Jesus captured the disciples’ attention with his thirty second spots about God’s love. He made them think, and invited them to desire a new life in a new community. Unlike modern advertising, Jesus’ spots have had a remarkable shelf life. They continue to make us think and to make us desire a place in that wide and extravagant embrace. They continue to trouble some who worry that God’s love is being wasted on the undeserving.

The United Church of Christ ads - “Bouncer” and now, “Ejector” - attempt a similar message. These ads, like Jesus’ spots, make us uncomfortable, exposing the narrow exclusions of our churches and our own discomfort with the wideness of God’s love. They prompt us to yearn for a community that not only tolerates extravagant grace, but lives it, even celebrates it. “Ejector” offers a hilarious, audacious glimpse at the way the church withholds the welcome Jesus asks us to extend.

It makes us wonder, “Could we be better stewards of grace?” It makes others ask, “Is this a church that would welcome me home?” All in thirty seconds!

No one is suggesting that we make additions to the gospel narratives. “Bouncer” and “Ejector” will come and go. But if they help us hear the comfort and challenge of God’s extravagant welcome, if they give us a new lens through which to see Jesus’ original thirty second spots, then they will have served a purpose. Who knows? They may even help us learn to cherish a child that was lost, a woman who was despised, a sinner who had no one with whom to share the banquet of life.



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