



Published on *Inclusive Church* (<https://www.inclusive-church.org>)

[Home](#) > Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics

Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics

Mon, 2015-03-30 15:01 -- Ben Treadaway

Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.

This major study of New Testament ethics will be of considerable interest to those whose vision of the Church is an inclusive one. Richard Burridge is explicitly concerned with the way in which the New Testament's ethical vision can be appropriated today, and uses the experiences of the churches in South Africa as a 'test case' from which to learn.

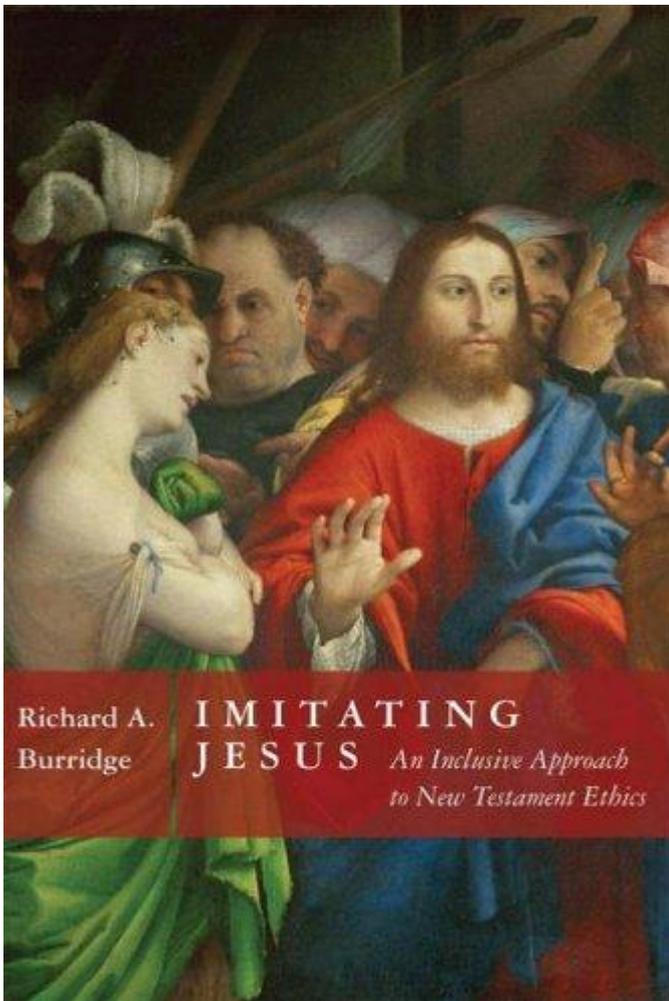
Central to the book is the perspective on the Gospels influentially argued in Burridge's earlier book, *What Are the Gospels?* (CUP, 1992). Here Burridge argued, against much scholarly opinion, that the Gospels should be seen as a kind of ancient biography. In the present book, he explores the implications of this for our understanding of the ethics of the Gospels. In essence, the key argument is that we should not simply extract from the Gospels certain passages that contain 'ethical' teaching; these are, of course, important, but central to the purpose of an ancient biography was the presentation of the key character as an example to be imitated. Consequently, it is the Gospels' overall depiction of Jesus' life, teaching, practice, and death that should fundamentally inform our understanding of their 'ethics'. When we take this broader perspective we see that Jesus' rigorous ethical teaching is set in the context of a practice which is open and inclusive, famously displayed in Jesus' welcome acceptance of 'sinners' and his self-giving for others. Burridge sees this as the fundamental pattern embodied in the life of the historical Jesus, who, Burridge argues, should stand at the centre of any attempt to interpret the New Testament's ethics. It is also a pattern reproduced, in varied and distinctive ways, by Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke and John (the bulk of the book comprises chapters on each of these writers). And the fundamental mistake of the South African churches which supported apartheid was their failure to practise biblical interpretation within a truly inclusive community.

Burridge does not directly address contemporary ethical questions, about human sexuality, or the role of women, etc., in this book. But what he writes is clearly intended to be relevant to the ways in which the Church conducts its debates on these topics. The closing words of the book express its central message well: 'Whenever we are presented with a choice between being biblical and being inclusive, it is a false dichotomy - for to be truly biblical is to be inclusive in any community which wants to follow and imitate Jesus' (p. 409).

Category:

[Book](#) [1]

Image:



[Tweet](#)

[2]

Source URL: <https://www.inclusive-church.org/imitating-jesus-inclusive-approach-new-testament-ethics>

Links

[1] <https://www.inclusive-church.org/resource-type/book>

[2] <http://twitter.com/share>