



## PRESS-REGISTER

### Where faith meets fashion

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At first glance, many of today's Christian T-shirts look a lot like their pop-culture counterparts.

A few of them certainly caused me to do a double-take.

Remember that popular image from the presidential election campaign that featured an artist's rendition of Barack Obama with the word HOPE underneath?

Now, Jesus has a HOPE tee, too. An image of Christ wearing a crown of thorns is centered atop the word HOPE on the election-inspired T-shirt.

The shirt, just one of many pop-culture copies, is making faith-based apparel hot, hip and a force to be reckoned with in the fashion industry.

Christian apparel is reported to be a \$4 billion-a-year industry with steady growth. And with starlets like Madonna and Pamela Anderson sporting tops that read "Mary is my home girl," mainstream America is certainly paying attention.

That's the goal of faith-based apparel, according to Vic Kennett, chief executive officer and President of Kerusso, a popular Christian apparel company whose T-shirts are sold across the country.

He told Fox News recently that Christian teens and young adults want to be culturally relevant, and Kerusso T-shirts offer them the chance to fit in.

If a teen loves to wear T-shirts from the popular mall retailer Aeropostale, then the folks at Kerusso hope Christian teens will go for their similar shirt that reads Ourapostle.

From Superman to princesses, feature films to music and couture fashion labels, no brand is exempt. Kennett says that by taking trendy T-shirts and reproducing them with a faith-based message, he is helping people "do the great commission in their communities."

According to Kerusso's 2009 Christian Apparel Faith & Motivational Research Report, 98 percent of respondents said they desired the message on their Christian T-shirts to be noticed by non-believers, and 56.8 percent of Christians wearing faith-themed apparel said they had a non-believer ask about the message on their clothes.

"As a result of this study, Kerusso is launching the pre-Easter 'Change Your Shirt! Change the World' campaign to encourage Christians to put on a Christian-message T-shirt and share their faith," Kennett stated in a release.

Kerusso apparel, jewelry and gifts are available in thousands of retail stores nationwide and at [www.kerusso.com](http://www.kerusso.com)

A trip to local Christian bookstores revealed that the Kerusso brand is certainly popular among locals, but



DEBRA BRAGGS

it's not the only game in town.

At LifeWay Christian store, which sits directly in front of Mobile's Bel Air Mall, a full wall at the rear of the store is dedicated to Christian apparel. Kerusso wear is certainly among the offerings, with lots of caps dominating the display. Many other brands were also available with a variety of sweatshirts, T-shirts and hats of every size.

And at CrossRoads Books and Gifts, a little farther west in Mobile, the Kerusso label has earned a standalone display, with endless options of pop-culture-styled T-shirts to choose from.

Chandra Helton, book-buyer and floor manager at the store, says the brand is definitely their best seller and is popular among teens and young college students.

"Not only are they stylish, but the price points are great. Kids think they are a steal at \$14.99," Helton said.

Young adults aren't the only ones shopping the apparel line, either, adds Helton.

"From parents to grandparents, they seem to think the shirts make great gifts for their kids."

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