

A Warning, part 9 or Serving Jesus Together
December 3, 2017

Most days... when you go to work... you know what to expect. Most days are much the same. You meet the same people and engage in the same activities. There may be small differences day to day. But for the most part one day is like another. You know what to expect because you have been there before. You have learned what to expect. The same is true of school, or home or the library or the store. You know what to expect.

Let me make an application to your spiritual life. When you come to the Bible, do you know what to expect? Do you know what you are likely to encounter? Or does it seem to be much a mystery to you each time you open the book?

It can be confusing. A friend of mine, before she was a Christian, started reading the Bible. She started at the beginning, but got bogged down when she got to Exodus. It wasn't making much sense to her. So she decided to skip to the end and turned to the book of Revelation. That was worse. That is when she asked for help.

This morning I want to give you a way of thinking about the Bible so that when you open it you will know what to expect. There are different kinds of information in the Bible.

1. Some Bible passages teach us something about God.

For example in Deuteronomy 32:4 we learn several things about God.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NIV) He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

We learn here that God is just, always doing right by people. We also learn that God is faithful. He always keeps His promises.

Both of these are things to believe about God and for which to praise Him. If you have ever been let down by someone who made a promise and did not keep it, you will be glad that our God is faithful. He always keeps His promises. And realizing that calls for a response from us. This brings us to the difference between the Bible and any other book.

The difference between reading the Bible and any other book is believing that the Bible is God's personal word to us and then responding to Him with prayer.

Maybe today you are facing something for which you need God to come through on one His promises. Praise Him for being a faithful God, thank Him for times He has been faithful in the past, and call on Him to keep His word for your present need.

So when you go to the Bible, expect to learn things about God. Expect to learn what God is like, what He has promised, and what He is doing in the world. Then respond with prayer. **Praise and thank God for who He is and how He deals with us.**

A second category of what to expect when you read the Bible is us.

2. Some Bible passages teach us something about ourselves.

He made us unique from all the rest of creation. He made us for His purposes. The meaning of our lives is not something we make up for ourselves, rather God made us for His purposes. Our lives will only have meaning as we give ourselves to His purposes for us.

We see many examples in the Bible of people who rejected God's purposes. We see other examples of people who gave themselves to God's purposes. We can learn the lessons of both in our response to God.

One of the things we learn about ourselves in the Bible is that we are sinners. The Bible spells out what sins we are guilty of.

3. Some Bible passages teach us about specific sins.

As we learn of specific sins and feel guilt for these sins, we must admit to ourselves that we are guilty, confess our sin to God, and then change our behavior. We change our behavior by repenting or turning away from repeating this sin.

4. Some Bible passages teach us commands from God.

Some of these are commands to do something that fulfills God's purposes. Others are commands not to do something sinful. **These commands call for prayers of commitment and submission to God.**

5. Some Bible passages teach us what to pray for.

Likely you already know of some of your needs. You know of physical needs. You may have a need for healing, for example. In the Bible we learn of needs we have but may not yet be aware of.

You might have some decisions to make this week. Maybe you have decisions to make about spending on Christmas gifts, about party invitations, about how to budget your time, etc. Whatever decisions you have to make this week, you will need wisdom to make them. In James 1 we learn that God wants to give us wisdom for everyday living.

James 1:5 (NIV) If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Another example comes from Paul's prayers. Paul the missionary knew that the people in the churches needed to know God better. So he prayed that for them, and encouraged them to pray it too. We all need to be closer to God. We all need to learn to live in fellowship with Him. This should be a regular subject of our prayers.

6. Some Bible passages are warnings to us.

The Bible is full of warnings. That is because we were created for God's purposes and there are warnings about not living out those purposes. There are warnings about not dealing with our sins. There are warnings about living foolishly.

Today's passage in our series of 1 Timothy is one of those warning passages.

1 Timothy 4:1-6 (NIV) The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

The warning is that some people will abandon the faith. He is warning us to be one of these. They will walk away from the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. They will leave. They will turn their back on Christianity. They will say, "I'm done. I'm outta here. I'm through with this, through with Jesus, through with His people, through with the church." Paul is writing of people who are in a local church. But then they leave. They claim to be Christians, but then they leave Christ. Who are these people?

Who are these people who made a public profession of faith in Jesus, were baptized, became active in a local church, and then walked away from Jesus?

They are people who have not given all to Jesus. They put conditions on following Jesus. We have all have hopes, dreams, and desires for our lives. One of the songs we often sing is "All That I Am." The second line reads, "All of my dreams and all my desires, I give them to You." Not everyone gives their dreams and desires to Jesus. Not everyone gives up their expectations of life. Let me give you some examples. The following are some dreams or expectations people have of God.

- God will protect me from any serious harm, disability, or chronic illness.
- God will give me a comfortable lifestyle without struggle.
- God will keep my parents alive into their old age.
- God will let me see my children grow up.
- God will keep my family together.

God promises us none of such things. Yet many people hold such beliefs in their hearts. They may never have said them out loud, but they believe them and live as if they are true. And when something like these happen, they abandon God. Several times I have known someone to lose a parent to death, one a pre-teen and the other an adult. Both walked away from God.

Listen, the promises God makes to us are about eternity, in heaven. There we will have perfect health and live forever. He makes no such promises about life on earth. When you follow Jesus your commitment to Him must be complete. But there are people in many churches who have not given Him all. They will stick with Him only as long as their expectations are met.

So what are we being warned against in 1 Timothy 4?

We are being warned against false teaching. He gives two examples.

1 Timothy 4:3 (NIV) They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods...

This is not an exhaustive list, as if these were the only two false teachings. These are examples. And these two have something in common. They both fit the first kind of false teaching.

- Some false teaching states that non-sins are sins.

He says they forbid their followers to get married. Listen, there is nothing wrong with marriage. God invented marriage. He created marriage for the proper propagation of human beings and the raising of children in a loving home where they will learn the wisdom needed to live successfully with God. Marriage is a good thing.

Nor is there anything sinful about eating foods God has given to us. All foods God has provided are sanctified as we give thanks for them. But some people would turn you against what God has created to be good.

- Some false teaching states that sins are non-sins.

We see this today in that some teach that homosexual behavior is okay with God. Others teach that sex outside of marriage is okay with God. Neither is true.

- Some false teaching corrupts the gospel in some way.

Some teach that Jesus was just a model for us instead of a savior.

Some teach that Jesus' death only paid for the sins you committed before your baptism.

Some teach that Jesus is one of many ways to God.

Some teach that God would never send anyone to hell.

Some teach that Jesus was never raised from the dead.

Until Jesus returns we can expect to hear people teach such things. We can expect that people will teach something that sounds LIKE good news but is not the good news of Jesus that God has given us in the Bible.

What I teach, what we teach, what we believe is that every person, no matter how good, is a sinner before God.

We believe that the wages of sin is death, and condemnation to hell.

We believe God to be a righteous and just judge.

We believe that the only possibility for salvation is that another person, a person without sin, dies in our place.

We believe that God provided such a person in Jesus. His resurrection proves His death was an acceptable substitute for us.

We believe that by believing and trusting in Jesus as our savior that we are forgiven, regenerated, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, justified, sanctified, glorified, and adopted into God's family forever.

We believe Jesus is not sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, praying for us.

We believe that Jesus will one day return and take His rightful throne over all the earth.

We believe that such a salvation calls for total commitment of us to Jesus. And only those who do will never abandon the faith.

So why would anyone leave such a faith for some other teaching?

Because they want to believe something different.

It is hard to believe that your friend or family member is going to hell. After all, this person is a good person, a moral person, a good parent, good spouse, good neighbor, obeying the laws of the land. How could such a person be sent to hell? That is what many are thinking. It seems ridiculous to them that really, really good people are going to hell.

But that is what God reveals to us in the Bible. There is no one righteous, no one good enough for heaven. The only way any of us get in is by faith in Jesus.

That is harsh. But while the Gospel IS good news, it also contains the harsh reality of hell.

Here is the warning of this passage to us all:

Make sure, today, that you are fully committed to Jesus. It is okay to dream, to desire, to wish. But place all such things into the hands of Jesus.