

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST – WEEK 1

1 Peter 4:1-6

By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is “What to expect when you give your life to Christ.”

Unmet expectations lead to disappointment, and then to conflict.

When Lydia and I were courting, and we only courted for 5 weeks before we got engaged for 6 months, I had no idea what to expect. I had never had a girlfriend before, so all I knew is what I’d seen on TV. So when my birthday came around, I expected great things. But Lydia didn’t get me anything. To say the least, I was disappointed. I was hurt. And then we had what may have been our first fight.

Looking back it is funny, because Lydia and I don’t care about gifts, and we don’t give gifts to each other at Christmas, or birthdays, or Valentine’s Day, or for our anniversary.

But at the time, unmet expectations led to disappointment, which then led to conflict.

Now whose fault was it that I was disappointed? It was my fault.

Whose fault was it that we got in a fight? It was my fault.

Lydia didn’t do anything wrong. She didn’t sin or break any sacred rules. She didn’t promise great things for my birthday and then fail to follow through.

My expectations were unrealistic; they were not based in reality; I expected things that she did not promise, and that got me into trouble.

The same thing can happen in your relationship with God.

If you go into your Christian life with unrealistic expectations, expecting what God has not promised, then not only are you going to be deeply disappointed, but you are going to feel betrayed by God, and then you will be tempted to rebel against God.

That's why it is so important to know what to expect from the Christian life.

Many Christians begin their Christian life with unrealistic expectations. Why? A big part of the blame is on false teachers. There are many false teachers that are claiming that if you have enough faith, if you have enough devotion, then God will give you health, wealth, and prosperity.

Let me give you an example. As of mid-February, at least 53 children and many adults have been killed by the flu this season – one of the worst flu-seasons on record. TV preacher Gloria Copeland has some advice for her listeners. She says she doesn't believe there such a thing as flu season. She claims that she and her husband, Kenneth, do not use prescription drugs because the Lord heals all illnesses. She even says that if the doctor diagnoses you with cancer that you shouldn't "receive it" (agree with it). She said, "Jesus Himself gave us the flu shot and redeemed us from the curse of the flu." Her advice is to inoculate yourself with the word of God. She says, "Just keep saying, 'I'll never have the flu. I'll never have the flu.'"

The Copelands are leaders in the Word of Faith movement,

which believes that Christians have the ability to manipulate reality and create health and wealth by faith, and by calling these things into existence.

If you just keep confessing what you want, and have enough faith, you'll get it.

So if you just keep saying, "I'm not going to get the flu. I'm not going to get the flu." And if you have enough faith, you will not get the flu.

This “name it and claim it”, prosperity gospel theology is very popular. It is preached by a lot of the big name TV and radio preachers. But it’s not true. It is not Biblical.

The Bible does not promise that you can name and claim anything that you want.

It does not promise that you will be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous.

In the next life, yes, but not in this life.

And so many Christians are listening to these false teachers and expecting things from God that He hasn’t promised.

They are expecting God to always answer their prayers; to always be successful; to have well-behaved kids; safety; comfort; long life.

And this leads to disappointment as well as rebellion against God. After all, why follow a God who doesn’t do what you say He’s supposed to do?

So it is important to go into the Christian life knowing what to expect.

What can you expect from the Christian life? From the devoted-Christian life?

In **1 Peter 4:1-6** we’re going to see 5 things you can expect when you give your life to Christ. Let’s read.

1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin— 2 in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will. 3 For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you don’t join them in the same

flood of wild living—and they slander you. 5 They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God’s standards.

5 THINGS TO EXPECT WHEN YOU GIVE YOUR LIFE TO CHRIST

1. You will suffer.

Let’s look at **verse 1**. “Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding.”

What does it mean to arm yourselves with the same attitude?

It’s referring to the previous chapter, 1 Peter 3:18, where it said that Christ suffered for our sins.

The point is that Christ was willing to suffer for a good cause, and you, too, must be willing to suffer for what is good.

To put it another way, to arm yourself with the same understanding is to do what is right, even if it means suffering.

Do what is good, no matter the cost.

And notice the benefit in the second part of the verse. “because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin.”

When you get to the point where you are willing to do what is right, no matter the cost; when you get to the point where you are committed to doing God’s will, even if it means suffering, then you are on the path to spiritual maturity. You are fully-devoted, and you are headed for maturity in Christ.

The **ESV Study Bible** put it this way. “When believers are willing to suffer, the nerve center of sin is severed in their lives. Although believers will never be totally free from sin in this life, when believers endure suffering for the sake of Christ they show that their purpose in life is not to live for their own pleasures but according to the will of God.”

But there’s a bigger point here. **As a Christian, you will suffer.**

This passage is saying that you will suffer because of Christ, and you will suffer in spite of Christ.

You will suffer because you are a Christian, and you will suffer even though you are a Christian.

In other words, Jesus is not a shield to protect you from all harm; nor is He a genie waiting to grant your every wish.

You will suffer.

Jesus promised this in **John 16:33**. “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

The greatest heroes in Scripture suffered.

- Abraham and Sarah were infertile and couldn’t have children until Abraham was 100, and Sarah was 90.
- Jacob was deceived into marrying the wrong woman.
- Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers, and then he was false accused of sexual assault and sent to prison.
- The entire nation of Israel was enslaved by the Egyptians for hundreds of years.
- Job was a righteous man, but in one day his ten children were killed, all of his livestock was either stolen or destroyed, and all of his servants were killed except for four. Then he got sick. He had painful boils from head to toe; severe itching/irritation; great grief; loss of appetite; agonizing

discomfort; insomnia; worm and dust infested flesh; continual oozing of boils; hallucinations; decaying skin; shriveled up; severe halitosis (bad breath); relentless pain; skin turned black; raging fever; dramatic weight loss. It got so back that he wished he had never been born.

- David had to run and hide for 4 years because King Saul was hunting him down to kill him.
- David's son Amnon raped David's daughter, Tamar. And if that's not enough, David's other son, Absalom, then killed Amnon. And then to top it all off, David's son, Absalom tried to steal his throne.
- John the Baptist was beheaded for serving the Lord.
- 11 of the 12 apostles were murdered for preaching about Christ. Before that many of them were arrested and beaten.
- Stephen was stoned to death for preaching about Christ.
- Paul was the greatest missionary of all time, but he was whipped with forty lashes on five occasions, three times he was beaten with rods, he was stoned once, three times he was shipwrecked, and ultimately he was beheaded like John the Baptist.
- And then Jesus. Jesus was "despised and rejected" (Is 53:3). One of his closest friends betrayed Him. In His darkest hour His best abandoned Him. He was falsely accused. And although He was without sin, He was sentenced to die by crucifixion.

If the greatest heroes of the faith suffered, then you can expect to suffer.

There are actually 14 types of suffering in the Bible.¹ And it's important to know these because your response to suffering depends on the kind of suffering.

- 1) Adamic suffering. Adam sinned; sin and death entered the world. Things decay; things die; things don't work; that's not God picking on you; that's you living in a fallen world.
- 2) Demonic suffering. Spiritual warfare. Satan and demons attack, lie, harm, and oppress you.

¹ Mark Driscoll: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markdriscoll/2016/06/14-kinds-of-suffering-in-the-bible/>

- 3) Victim suffering. You didn't do anything, but somebody did something wrong to you. Drunk driver hits you.
- 4) Collective suffering. A group of people suffering together. After 9/11 the entire nation went into mourning.
- 5) Disciplinary suffering. God disciplines you to correct you and get you out of harms way.
- 6) Persecution suffering. You are suffering b/c you love the Lord. Opposition against Christ is poured out on you.
- 7) Empathetic suffering. You love someone so much that you share their suffering. Some have high empathy.
- 8) Testimonial suffering. Someone is causing you harm and God wants you to use your testimony to glorify Him.
- 9) Providential suffering. God is doing something much bigger than us; we're just a small part of it; in the middle of it; we don't see it or understand it. Joseph is an example.
- 10) Preventative suffering. Sometimes suffering warns us of greater suffering that will happen if we don't heed God's warnings. For example, you might get a pain in your side to show you that you've got a burst appendix.
- 11) Mysterious suffering. Sometimes we just don't know. We see in part; we know in part. It's okay. You're not always going to know why. We don't know, but we know the One who knows.
- 12) Punishment suffering. Commit a crime a pay a fine or go to jail.
- 13) Consequential suffering. Reaping and sowing. The decisions we make have consequences. If you smoke, you may get lung cancer. Satan is not attacking you. You attacked yourself with cigarettes.
- 14) Apocalyptic suffering. As we are approaching the second coming, suffering in the world will get worse.

So the point is that you will suffer.

Don't go into the Christian life expecting that now that you're with Jesus, He's going to protect you from suffering and setback. That's not going to happen.

Now that's the bad news.

Here's the good news.

First of all, nothing can happen to you unless God allows it, and He will use it for your good and His glory.

We know this because God is sovereign – He is in complete control of everything.

And we also know this because **Romans 8:28** says, “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Second, the good news is that God uses our suffering to grow us.

Hebrews 12:7-11 says that God allows us to suffer in order to grow us.

If you are a Christian, then your primary goal is to overcome sin and become like Christ, and that's the purpose of suffering.

And third, the good news is that no suffering is permanent.

Even if you have to suffer for the rest of your life, your suffering is only temporary.

Because when Christians die, they immediately wake up in the presence of Jesus and spend eternity in paradise where there is no more sin, no more suffering, no more sickness, and no more sadness.

2. You will sacrifice.

The second thing you can expect when you give your life to Christ is sacrifice.

Look at **1 Peter 4:2**. “In order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God's will.”

To be a Christian is to live for God's will and not for your will. It is to live for what God wants and not what you want. And that means that you are going to have to sacrifice.

Jesus put it like this in **Luke 9:23**. "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

To deny yourself means to deny what you want and do what God wants.

To take up your cross means to do God's will no matter the cost, even if it means torture and death.

And to follow Him means to devote your life to His mission – making disciples of all nations.

When you follow Jesus, you will be called to make sacrifices.

You might have to sacrifice your health and safety and comforts and luxuries.

God has called many Christians to serve as missionaries in places where they had to sacrifice all those things.

You might have to sacrifice relationships.

If a Muslim converts to Christianity they will be disowned by their family.

If a Roman Catholic becomes a Baptist, your parents will be upset.

Jesus said in **Luke 14:26**, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever

does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

You might have to sacrifice pleasure;

you can't always do what feels good, because you are called first and foremost to please God rather than yourself.

You might have to sacrifice you're your job or a promotion or a raise.

I have a friend who used to be a manager at Walmart, and he said that it's impossible to move up the ladder at Walmart unless you are willing to be unethical.

Well, then that means Christians won't be able to rise up the ladder at Walmart.

You might have to sacrifice your money and possessions.

One time Jesus called a rich young man to give away everything he had to the poor.

In **Luke 14:33** Jesus said, “In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Jesus isn't necessarily calling you to give away all your money, but He is asking you to renounce ownership of your money, and to give Him control; live life with an open hand so that you are ready to give it all to God when He calls for it.

I have been very blessed, but I have had to make sacrifices for the Lord.

The Lord called Lydia and I to homeschool our kids, so that means that we are living on one income.

That means we don't have as much money as we could.

God has called me to pastor Church Acadiana, and that means I have to be bi-vocational to support my family.

God has called me to lead our church to be family-integrated, and that meant losing some members, and some people won't like our church.

God calls me to preach the hard truths, even if that means making some people angry and driving them away from the church.

If you follow Jesus, then you can expect to make sacrifices.

But here's the good news. Look at Jesus' words in **Mark 10:29-30**.

29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said, "there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundred times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come."

Jesus promises that if you give up anything for Him, He will pay you back 100 times more.

That's a 10,000 percent return on your investment.

You can't out-give God.

Any sacrifice that you make for God will only be a temporary sacrifice. In the end it will turn in to a great reward.

CONCLUSION

When I got married I had all these expectations of Lydia, and many of them were unrealistic and unreasonable.

And so when she didn't fulfill all my expectations, I was disappointed.

And guess what? It was the same for her. I definitely didn't live up to all her expectations.

But we never considered divorce because we made a covenant – a commitment to one another and to God, that we would stay married for life.

But here's the surprising thing. While Lydia didn't fulfill all my silly expectations, after sixteen years of marriage I can honestly say that she is far better than I ever imagined, and marriage is far better than I ever imagined.

In the same way, Christianity doesn't mean that you won't suffer; it doesn't mean that you won't have to sacrifice. You will suffer. You will have to sacrifice.

But I can guarantee you this. Christianity, true Christianity, a real relationship with Jesus Christ, is far better than you can imagine.

The suffering is worth it. The sacrifice is worth it.

The benefits and rewards of knowing Christ far outweigh the hardships.

Everyone faces hard times.

But as Christians our hardships are filled with purpose, and peace, and promise.

Purpose, because we know that God uses our suffering for our good and His glory.

Peace, because Jesus walks with us in our trials.

And promise, because we know that one day our sufferings will be over, and we will spend eternity in paradise with Jesus.

Are you confident that you will spend eternity with Jesus?