

Uncomfortable Life

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[0 : 00] Unmet expectation breeds conflict. This is one of the things I always talk to. I talk to couples that are about to get married.

I always try to get them to talk about many things. You know, have you spoken about how many kids that you want to have? Whether you're going to have kids at all? Because if you both have expectations and they're not met, it will breed conflict.

John Piper, in his book, *The Roots of Endurance*, says that here in the Western civilization, there is a mindset that we deserve trouble-free, pain-free existence.

So we expect to be able to go to the school that we want to. We expect to have all the creature comforts of life. We expect that life will be comfortable.

Maybe if you've moved to Australia, you came here for those reasons. A better life, a better job, a place to raise your kids, to avoid pain and conflict.

[1 : 06] What is the expectation of our lives? Is it the avoidance of pain and suffering and the pursuit of comfort and pleasures? Is it possible that we bring in this Western mindset of having a safe, risk-averse, pain-free life into the life of Christianity?

What are the expectations of the Christian life? If you're a Christian, what are the expectations that you have of Christianity? Is it a settled, comfortable life?

What does it cost to be a Christian? How much does being a Christian impact your job, where you live, the people that you welcome into your own home?

Does being a committed Christian just look like coming to church on a Sunday? What is the expectation of how much our entire life will be shaped and impacted by Jesus?

Is Christianity just like supporting a sporting team, where we just have our life and the sporting team sits on top, and sometimes we're really serious about the sport, and sometimes it's the off-season, and we don't even think about it at all?

[2 : 24] Jesus is going to set some clear expectations about what the Christian life looks like. We're in John chapter 15, and Jesus is just about to die, and to be raised to the throne above all thrones.

Raised in glory, as we see God's kingdom breaking in. Dead people are raised to life. The Holy Spirit starts dwelling within people. It's a new world.

But what is it going to look like for the Christians in this stage between Jesus' death and resurrection, and Jesus' return?

Where Jesus is the King of the cosmos, but the whole world isn't yet following Him. What's going to happen when there's conflict on the earth between those who follow Jesus and those who don't?

What can we expect this life to look like while we wait? Let me pray as we jump into chapter 15 and 16. Heavenly Father, be with us tonight. Help us to hear what you have to say to us individually, so that we would depend upon you and to be shaped to be more like your Son.

[3 : 35] Amen. And so Jesus has spent time over the last couple of chapters, the last couple of weeks that we've been looking at this book, explaining the positives of what it means to be a Christian.

Those who follow Jesus have life. Jesus is going to prepare a house. Christians will have the Holy Spirit. Christians are invited into the awesome love of the Trinity.

He calls on us to abide in His love, shaped by the Father, and to love other people. And now He has some very sobering words.

Chapter 15, verse 18. What... Have a look with me. Chapter 15, verse 18. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

[4 : 43] Hatred. It's a pretty sharp turn for Jesus. If the disciples were hoping that everything was going to be smooth sailing, following Jesus, Jesus makes their expectations really clear.

Christians have been taken out of the world. We are owned by Jesus. And so if Jesus was hated by the world, well, so will those who are owned by Him.

Jesus is saying, don't be surprised if the world's hatred goes from being on me to now being on you. Jesus had been the focus of the hate. And now it's going to turn to His followers.

There's going to be conflict between Christians and the world, because Christians don't belong to the world anymore. We are taken as His. We are owned by Him.

And Jesus' followers slowly start to look like Jesus, in their love and obedience and fruitfulness being connected to the vine. Jesus stood out.

[5 : 47] And people didn't like that. And Jesus' followers are going to stand out as well. Increasingly so, in our culture, those who joyfully follow Jesus and obey Him, just don't make sense to the rest of the world.

People love to rebel, particularly against God. And so when Christians joyfully obey God, at the least people are surprised, and at the worst, people hate.

I remember many, many years ago, people saying to me, what do you mean you've chosen not to have sex before marriage? How can you be happy in that situation?

You're limiting your rights. How are you going to know that she's the right person to marry? It's like when someone changes a team that they support. Can somebody offer me a team sport?

Curling? I don't know. Something far more mainstream than that. AFL. Thank you, Liv. And give me an AFL team, Liv.

[6 : 53] GWS. GWS. Yes. The greater Western Sydney Giants. When GWS started, I was living in Parramatta, so I have an affinity for GWS.

Their arch rival is, of course, the Swans. That's right. Now imagine that, you know, every weekend, there's Liv and Darcy. They're out there supporting GWS, loving it, having a great time.

But then, for some reason, Darcy changed teams. He's gone to the Swans. Can you imagine their relationship? All of a sudden, we used to go to this game together, and now you're on the other side.

You're not only going for another team, you're going for our arch rival. You're going for our nemesis. How are you going to go for them? Christians are people who have been literally plucked from being on the wrong team against God, and now we are placed on God's team.

Jesus has come as the captain of the new team and plucked us out. And so Christians are going to be treated the same way that Jesus was treated.

[8 : 12] I'm trying to click. There we go. Oh, too far. There we go. Go back one. And so there's a positive and negative to the way that Jesus was treated and the way we're going to be treated too. Have a look with me at verse 20.

Jesus said, if they persecute me, and some of them did persecute Jesus, they will persecute you also. Some of them certainly did get jealous and angry and kill Jesus.

So expect the same thing. But some people didn't. Some people, like the disciples and those people that he healed in particular, some of them didn't persecute Jesus.

Some of them followed him. And so Jesus was persecuted by some and others followed. And so for those who follow Jesus, the same thing is going to happen.

Some will persecute and some will not persecute and listen. Jesus said, if they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. So how is Jesus treated?

[9 : 16] Well, some of them obeyed Jesus' teaching, like the disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, again, those who were healed. Some will obey Jesus, but not all will listen.

People were divided around Jesus. Much like the Pharisees, they seemed to be like a whole group who didn't like Jesus, and yet even they are divided. And you get someone like Nicodemus who stands out from the crowd.

But Jesus is like a knife that cuts through a crowd. Some fall this way, some fall that way. People are divided around Jesus, and it's going to be the same with the disciples.

We're going to divide people. So expect some people to listen to you when you talk about what you were doing on Sunday afternoon at church. expect some people to ridicule you and persecute you just for coming to church.

It leads to the question, why all the hate? Why are people so divided around Jesus? Why are people then and even now divided around Jesus' followers?

[10:29] Verse 22, If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. But now, they have no excuse for their sin.

By coming, Jesus has brought before people's eyes the most central and controlling of sins. The rejection and rebellion of God.

Jesus has come, God in the flesh, and people refuse to listen to God, and it's damning. The Pharisees didn't like it when they were told that they were worshipping God in the wrong way. They were offering praise and service which was actually just all about themselves. And even now, when we hold out the good news about Jesus being the only way to God, it causes a rejection of not just us but a rejection of Jesus and a hatred towards those who follow him.

Why all the hate? Because just like Jesus, Christians are called to stand up and reveal sin. Our lives will reveal sin in other people's lives.

[11:40] This paints a dark and difficult picture of the future for the disciples. And anyone else, including ourselves, that follows Jesus, what is the point of Jesus telling the disciples all of this?

Have a look at verse 1 of chapter 16 with me. All this I have told you so you will not fall away. Jesus is telling the disciples this so that they have clear expectations.

They know what to expect. It's a big purpose statement for this segment. Jesus has so much concern for this little flock. He has so much love for them.

He doesn't want them to fall away. He's already lost Judas who he sent out to go and betray him.

He is preparing them so that they won't fall away.

So they're not surprised and they won't stumble. The Greek word for fall away is skandalizo. It's one of my favorite Greek words. That's why I still remember it.

[12:42] And it's the word that we get scandalized from. Jesus doesn't want these disciples to be scandalized by falling away and ruining their lives.

And so Jesus gets them ready to know what to expect in a Christian walk. He doesn't want to lose his disciples and so he's preparing them. And Jesus in his final moments gives them such an awesome view of God he's making sure that they get to God and don't fall away like Judas. He's not pretending that everything's fine don't worry follow me after I die it's all going to be hunky-dory you know there's not going to be any problems at all. It's not that. Far better for Jesus to prepare his disciples.

I'm going to go and the same way that they treat me they're going to treat you. Make sure that they didn't go into Christianity with rose tinted glasses.

I remember reading a book a couple of years ago about how to preach an evangelistic sermon how to preach in a way so that at the end you can call people to follow Jesus you know come down the front put your hand up whatever way you like doing but the author made a note that when people do come down the front let's say I'll take Lachlan as an example let's say you know Lachlan wanted to commit his life to Jesus the author encouraged people to push and say you know Lachlan why do you want to be a Christian?

[14:13] It's not going to be easy are you sure you want to be a Christian? and at first I thought this was a little crazy it's a bit counterintuitive you know if Lachlan wants to be a Christian quick sign on the dotted line we'll get the tank in we'll get him dunked we'll get him baptized we're not going to tell him about persecution we're not going to warn him that it's going to be hard that there will be consequences with family and friends just push him over the line but if we forget in our zeal and desire a good desire to see people follow Jesus if we forget that Christianity is not easy it's possible to go into Christianity with unfair expectations that God will do everything I want a Christianity where yes Jesus died for me but a Christianity that says Jesus I want you to do what I want when I want you keep providing for me and I'll keep following you and then what happens when life is tough when their expectations of

Christianity are dashed by persecution or hate because they're trying hard to obey Jesus will they crumble when the first roadblock hits will they crumble when God doesn't actually take the roadblock away but it's there so that they're encouraged to trust in God more Jesus sets clear expectations of what's going to happen he is real with the disciples he doesn't sugarcoat it he tells them the painful truth chapter 16 verse 2 then they will put you out of the synagogue in fact the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God they will do such

things because they have not known the father or me Jesus is predicting what is going to happen to him that he would be killed and people would think that they were doing the right thing they were serving God it reminds us of the apostle Paul who was totally convinced he was doing the right thing persecuting

Christians putting Christians to death heading to Damascus to put more Christians in jail full of misguided zeal until he was confronted by Jesus himself Jesus said I have told you this so that when your time comes you will remember that I warned you about them Jesus is warning them so it drives people back to him in trust and dependence because even though Christianity will not be easy it will not be a comfortable life Jesus has done enough for us to trust and depend upon him Jesus has told us what's going to happen to Christians in the world waiting on his return and now he tells us about what the Holy Spirit will be doing in the world he tells us what the Spirit will be doing have a look at verse 8 when he comes he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment the believers might be left in a world of hate directed to them causing them to depend upon Jesus but the Spirit is going to be working in that same world convicting people about sin and righteousness and judgment verse 9 about sin because people do not believe in me about righteousness because I'm going to the

Father where you can see me no longer and judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned just as Jesus caused a division between people the Holy Spirit is going to come and confront people in the same way it does it in our lives in the lives of believers causing us to confront our own sin and he'll keep doing it in the world the Spirit convicts the world of its sin because the world hasn't believed that Jesus is from God it's convicted in righteousness because Jesus is the only one who is right before God the only one who is good and judgment because the devil has been condemned and this is a promise about God's continued graciousness to us Christians are to continue Jesus's ministry and people are going to respond and be divided some will hate and some the Spirit will work in their hearts to follow the

Lord making them realize their need for Jesus and to turn to him to be on his team and to stop being on the world's team the Holy Spirit does it out in the world and he does it often through the witness of his disciples verse 26 and 27 of chapter 15 explain that the Holy Spirit will testify to the truth and so are Christians who follow the Lord Christians aren't just to hide away and stay safe and think okay I'm now following Jesus and there's lots of temptations out there so I'm going to hide from them I'm going to go into this little bubble I'm only going to hang out with Christians I'm going to hide in my little cave and I'll be safe Christians don't just hide away and stay safe try and have a risk averse life to try and protect themselves part of the Christian walk in the world is to testify about Jesus we can do this in two ways we can do it passively which is just following

[19:57] Jesus and people will see him in our lives or we can do it actively where we verbally testify and we go on the front foot sharing Jesus message and mission the testimony of a life the passive way goes something like this where I'm just going to work really hard through the power of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus in my life I'm going to be praying reading God's word shaped more like him and asking the Holy Spirit to be convicting me about my sin and as Steve was talking about last week cutting things out of my life idols out of my life and a consequence of that is people notice I know of people who've said this Christian they don't they don't swear they don't gamble they don't drink too much they are generous and loving why are they so different they're joyful and they seem to cope when life gets tough how can this be we had someone contact the church just recently and say there's these people that I work with who are

Christians and they're different and I want to know what's so unique about them I have problems I can't cope I want what they have and so confronting sin in the world with our friends and family starts by confronting it in our own lives seeing God cut us draw from the vine and shapes more like Jesus but this is not where it stops we're also called to confront sin and unbelief in the world now there are good ways to do this and there are bad ways I'm going to share two ways that you shouldn't do it two bad ways to confront sin in the world before two good ways the first bad way to confront sin is something my four year old daughter recently did daughters are wonderful gifts from God if you hadn't noticed so Tamara was at preschool last week and she's a wonderful evangelist and she was going around asking the kids if they believed Jesus in Jesus and if they didn't she said well you're going to hell and it's fiery and it's hot and it's spiky and that's true not so sure about the spiky part but it made kids cry

I don't know why you're laughing but that was my response too it's probably not the best way to evangelize to encourage people that Jesus is better than the way they are living but she was confronting unbelief and so I encouraged her show the love of Jesus to them instead show them why Jesus is so great but imagine if half of us had her courage maybe we all need to be led by the sprouts team on a Sunday morning the second bad way to confront sin in the world is anything on social media particularly Facebook I see many posts lots of inflammatory posts about Christianity and religion in general and I'm always tempted to engage and try and point out in a helpful way why they're wrong about Jesus but it never works it never goes well it just devolves into argument upon argument and so these are these are two ways not to confront sin I don't think there's anything helpful on

Facebook when it comes to arguing about Christianity but let me encourage you to testify to Jesus' identity and to confront the sin in the world in two ways quietly and loudly quietly first of all by personally mentioning it to someone maybe a friend maybe you see a friend making some poor decisions about their life some decisions that you know will have consequences you know that Jesus said if you go down this path it will not go well for you and so speak quietly to them whether it's a Christian or a non-Christian friend maybe you don't want to do this this is going to go poorly for you people might be able to hear this if it's done well people might get defensive but this is a way to speak to people in a loving way to confront their sin it probably won't destroy friendships the second way is loudly sometimes we need to speak loudly for those who don't have a voice for the life of the unborn for the rights of refugees even if it makes our life uncomfortable in China there is a pastor of a

Chinese church called early rain in Chengdu province his name is pastor Wang Yi and he has been doing exactly this he has been preaching the gospel faithfully in spite of pressure to be silent he was arrested on December 9th with over 100 members of the church in Chengdu including his wife and as of two days ago they're still in prison and no one knows where they are knowing that it was likely to happen that he'd likely be arrested at some point he wrote a declaration to be published if he was detained by the government for more than 48 hours and so he wrote this declaration I'm going to read part of it which came out in December last year on the basis of the teachings of the Bible and the mission of the gospel I respect the authorities God has established in China for God deposes kings and raises up kings this is why I submit to the historical and institutional arrangements of

[26 : 10] God in China as a pastor of a Christian church I have my own understanding and views based on the Bible about what righteous order and good government is at the same time I am filled with anger and disgust at the persecution of the church by this communist regime at the wickedness of their depriving people of the freedoms of religion and of conscience but changing social and political institutions is not the mission I have been called to and it is not the goal for which God has given his people the gospel for all hideous realities unrighteous politics and arbitrary laws manifest the cross of Jesus Christ the only means by which every Chinese person must be saved they also manifest the fact that true hope and a perfect society will never be found in the transformation of any earthly institution or culture but only in our sins being freely forgiven by Christ and in the hope of eternal life

Pastor Wang Yi is standing firm against the Chinese government looking to clamp down on him it is totally risky he hasn't been satisfied with having an easy comfortable version of Christianity and he's been detained for three months with no end in sight as a consequence following Jesus Jesus has meant he has taken risks but he was prepared for an uncomfortable life he knew that he would be arrested one day which is why he had that declaration published beforehand Jesus prepares his disciples to have an uncomfortable life in the light of our hope of eternal glory with Jesus calling out people's sin either of a friend or the government's will make life uncomfortable but it will see lives changed it will call Sydney and the world to be convicted of their sin and the righteousness of Jesus and to follow him so let me encourage you be praying for Gladys Berger clean and the liberal party at a state level who have come into another term who were elected yesterday today whenever the election is finalized be praying for the federal government with elections coming up it's it's easy to come up with excuses to be comfortable with Christianity and to not speak out it might cost me a friend it might make them uncomfortable I don't want to be the fun police it might get me locked up but what do we expect our lives to look like do we trust God that he will provide what we need even if we are persecuted do we trust God to proclaim the gospel even when it is unattractive and hated

let me pray for us heavenly father we thank you that your son obeyed you fully in life and in death that he endured much persecution and hatred so that we could know you
Lord father prepare us to have an uncomfortable life Lord help when we are persecuted when we are hated to depend upon you knowing that you are enough because you have provided eternal life and relationship with you Lord father help us to draw on you when we are struggling and when we are attacked and persecuted Lord we ask all this in your son's name and your for your glory amen