



Life without Disclaimers

Steve Brown

*Jesus said, "It is finished."
I am here because I believe that.*

Have you noticed the disclaimers they put on advertisements for medications? *"This product may cause headaches, drowsiness or severe pain...and even death. Consult your physician before taking this or any other medication."*

Translation: You're going to die but it's not our fault.

And then there are the stop-smoking pills people keep pushing on me. "Steve," they say, "I know you want to stop smoking your pipe (no I don't), and these pills will help." Have you ever read the disclaimers on this stuff? "Some people have had changes in behavior, hostility, agitation, depressed moods, suicidal thoughts or actions while using [this product] to help them quit smoking. If you, your family, or caregiver notice agitation, hostility, depression or changes in behavior, thinking or mood that are not typical for you, or you develop suicidal thoughts or actions, anxiety, panic, aggression, anger, paranoia, mania or confusion stop taking [this product] and consult your physician immediately."

As I was thinking about *disclaimers*, I realized that properly understood, the Christian life is a **life without disclaimers**. In other words, I don't have to pretend anymore, make excuses anymore, cover my tracks or protect myself anymore. It's why Paul could call himself "the chief of sinners" and even make an embarrassing confession in Romans 7.

Recently I talked to a good friend who went through one of the most horrifying experiences anyone can face. We talked, prayed and wept together. His sin (and it was bad) was publicly revealed. Not only that, his church required that he confess before the entire church (a practice with which I have some serious problems). We all have secrets that shame us, and the thought of our secrets being revealed to everybody is a nightmare! His nightmare became a reality. That's bad, but God

grew a flower in that horrible soil. Let me give you part of what my friend wrote to his church.

Every part of me wants to flee this town and never have to look anyone in the face again. I've begged God to let me go, but I'm still here. I woke up this morning thinking of the parallels between my life and my father's life and what is happening. I am in the middle of a scandal just as he was over thirty years ago. I always swore I'd never be as stupid as he was, yet here I am. I'm faced with choices: I could blame others as my father did and die a slow, miserable death being eaten away in the acid of bitterness. I could commit suicide, leaving my family with nothing. Or I could give it—my shame, my fear and my guilt—to the only one who can carry it. I'm so tired of trying to hold it together. In fact, I can't anymore.

The words "I am sorry" seem too shallow, and I'm very sorry for not loving all of you. There is no excuse, but there is relief. Jesus said, "It is finished." I am here because I believe that. In this knowledge, I am breaking the generational chains that have held me captive my entire life. I'm finally loved.

Frankly, my friend paid a big price for it (one you and I both hope we never have to pay) but he is now free. The Christian life is living **life without disclaimers**, and it's a pretty "heady" place to live. It really isn't about us—our goodness, our efforts or our knowledge. It's only about Jesus. I don't need disclaimers anymore. Love covers it all. When people accuse you of being a hypocrite or being something less than what they think a Christian ought to be, don't get angry or uptight or bring out some disclaimer that absolves you of responsibility. Instead, say "Bingo! Now let me tell you about Jesus, who loves me anyway." □

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