

Always read the fine print! Clauses in small print hold grave consequences. It is rare to find an honest person who tells you the catches right from the start.

Even as Christians talk about Jesus, many are tempted to do this. They will tell about the good things that believing in Jesus brings. They focus on the positives, like going to heaven, of Jesus being always with us, of God's blessings, of the release from guilt, and I even heard one minister claim that Christians make better lovers. But how often have you heard of a negative quality being proclaimed as loudly by someone promoting Christianity?

But Jesus was different. In Luke 12, as he taught a huge crowd of 1000's, telling them what a difference he would make in their lives, he very openly told them something which others may have wanted pushed into the silence. He told them something which would appal the Festival of Light.

He struck at the very heart of what many Christians accept as God's desire for us, and in doing so he blasted our preconceived ideas, and he also gave heart and relief to millions of Christians who have experienced it, and yet have felt great guilt because they thought it is a problem God condemns.

So today, as we come to this passage in Luke 12, I must also proclaim the problem just as loudly. (v51-53) *Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on 5 in 1 household will be divided, 3 against 2 and 2 against 3; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.*

Jesus did not come to bring peace but division. and that division would even divide families. God's sacred plan of family life would be divided because of Jesus! And this he openly declared to 1000's of people.

Does that come as a surprise to you?

For some of us here, we may want to look again and see if Jesus did actually say that. If you want to check it is Luke 12:51-53.

For some of us here, it may come as no surprise, for you may have experienced that division in your own family.

For some of us here, it may come as a piece of a weapon to blast at God or Christians some day, but Jesus was not afraid of people doing that. For he spoke the truth.

He knew it was true, some families would divide because of Him. And it would not just be in marriages where Christians have married Moslems, or Jehovah's Witnesses or Buddhists or New Agers. It would even happen in Christian families.

People often claim that religion is a private issue that should not cause fights. But religion is more than a personal issue. If you believe in Jesus, you will have different attitudes and reasons for behaviour than those who do not. These should flow into your actions.

You will not want to participate in gossip. You will not want to watch that x-rated movie, or miss out on being with other Christians each week; you will not want to cheat on tax forms, or turn a blind eye and ear to that abused child or wife; you will not want to hoard your money, or never share what you have, etc. BUT you will want to live for Jesus; to take on His values; to love your neighbour and seek ways to get on better with them; to pray for others; to read the Bible; and to bring up children as Christians.

As soon as you do this, any non believing family member may have problems. It may be a spouse, or a parent, or a child, or all of them. Division may come as they object.

That division is not pleasant. You will not enjoy it, if it occurs. It is a nightmare to have a divided family. We want the comfort of a loving, caring family. We want the security and stability it can

bring. Yet do we love the family more than Jesus? Do we desire our own comfort more than we desire His Kingdom? Do we desire a false peace which leads away from God forever, or do we desire a true peace which may involve heartache before heaven?

This division which can flow from responding to the truth, is like a fire on earth that burns and tests us, seeing if we really do love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. It's a fire causing much heartache. And it is a fire like that which Jesus faced.

In v49-50, Jesus said *I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!*

Jesus had to go through an awful situation. He called it a baptism, but it was not with water. He was speaking of his death. Through His death and resurrection, we would be put right with God. He was punished in our place. But he did not look forward to it with pleasure.

He died for us. And he rose again. And we who believe that his death was for us, experience some of the difference He makes. They may be wonderful and happy, or they may be hard and distasteful, yet it is part of God's desires for us.

We are not to go out of our way to cause divisions, but if they occur, do not be surprised or guilty.

How can you help anyone who is hurting because of divisions? Here are 5 suggestions that may go towards helping. You may have others.

First of all, pray. Pray specifically for 2 things. 1, that God would comfort the Christians, and give them strength to cope; and 2, pray that any non Christians would come to know Jesus and not reject him. Both prayers are important.

Secondly, we are God's family. As one of His children hurt, we are to care like a loving brother or sister. This may involve lending a shoulder,

or more physical types of supports. By your caring, they can feel the security and comfort from God which their own family may not be giving.

Thirdly, do not aggravate the situation by keeping Christians out too late too often, or by ridiculing the non-believing members.

Fourthly, be understanding if a Christian occasionally declines an invitation to a Christian meeting, because of the situation at home.

& fifthly, do not be ashamed to invite the non-believing people to some of the activities of the church.

Jesus was open about the opposition which may come to Christians, even division of families. I pray that if it happens to your family, or if it has already, that God will strengthen and comfort you, and give you his peace, which passes all understanding, and also that the opposing person or people will come to know Jesus as their Lord and saviour.