

TRITE, *not* TRUE

JARRETT STEPHENS

rightnow MEDIA

SESSION 2: “Safe in the Will of God”

► SERIES RECAP

You and I are swimming in a culture full of opinions masquerading as wisdom. What’s worse, much of what passes as wisdom today has the ring of biblical truth. How do you tell the difference? How do we see through half-truths and self-help trends to access the deep wisdom of God’s Word and the full life found in Him alone?

Those are the questions Jarrett Stephens tackles in his series Trite, Not True – where he explores six of the most common pop philosophies that influence people’s lives today, including Christians.

As you dive in, you’ll discover how to decipher superficial insights from the real truth of God’s Word, as well as how to apply biblical wisdom to your everyday life. Because ultimately, the life of meaning and impact you long for doesn’t come from a philosophy, platitude, maxim, or mantra... but from one person, Jesus Christ.

► OPEN

(Simple intro to frame the objective of the group study, break the ice, and get people thinking)

Ask the group: Think about a fearful time in your life, a time when you felt like you were in danger. What were you doing or experiencing that made you feel unsafe?

In today’s session we’ll be exploring a common saying that’s particularly prevalent in church settings. It’s well intentioned and meant to encourage us to follow God’s will without fear...

“You’re never safer than when you’re in the will of God.”

Have you ever heard this? Have you used this saying to encourage someone else?

Is there a kernel of truth, or is this just Christian pop-psychology? Let’s find out.

► WATCH THE VIDEO

Jarrett Says: I don’t know where this comes from or why it is... some of it is bad teaching within the church... the rest is just the culture in which we live. But we have bought into this idea that as Christians, we’re not supposed to face struggle or hardship.

It’s like we come to Jesus and think all our problems will go away, because if we follow Jesus, we deserve to be free from trials and tribulations—or at least to be delivered from all of them.

► DISCUSS (ASK YOUR GROUP):

Do you think there is any truth to the idea that we’ll find safety in the center of God’s will?

What are some of the potential negative consequences of living as though safety is an indicator of following God’s purpose for your life?

DIG DEEPER: In John 16:33 Jesus says “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Rather than promise a trouble-free life, Christ did the exact opposite. He told us to expect trouble and to take heart (literally to “have courage”) because he has overcome the world.

How can we find courage in the fact that Jesus overcame the world?

► WHAT THE WORLD SAYS

All around you—from TV ads to social media to self-help books—we’re bombarded with the message that our peace comes from safety and security. You’re encouraged to “live your best life” by avoiding uncomfortable situations or people that aren’t going to build you up.

God's will is rarely even acknowledged in these messages, and when he is, keeping you safe and happy often seems to be his main role in your life. Doing his will "earns" you divine favor, prosperity and protection.

How have these messages from society influenced your thinking and actions in daily life?

Ask Yourself: When you find yourself in a difficult situation that threatens your comfort and security, how does it affect your relationship with God? Do you feel abandoned, or do you turn to him for peace and purpose?

► WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Here's a shocking truth: Sometimes the most dangerous place you can be is in the will of God.

Pastor Jarrett talked about one of the biggest examples of living dangerously for God, the Apostle Paul. Paul was right in the middle of God's will. He's one of the most committed servants of God to ever live, yet his life was filled with danger, not safety. Listen to what he lists as things that have happened to him as he pursued God's will.

Ask a participant to read 2 Cor. 11:25-28.

Jesus himself told us it wasn't "safe" to follow him.

Being "safe" because you're in God's will is antithetical to biblical teaching. Jesus warned those who came to hear him speak that to truly follow him could be VERY dangerous.

Have someone in the group read the following:

- Matthew 10:16-19
- Luke 14:26-33

Why do you think Jesus was so up front in his warning about the cost of following him?

How is it, then, that so many Christians have bought into the idea that being in God's will is a safe place to be?

Following God has never been safe.

It wasn't just the New Testament disciples who paid the price of following God and being in his will. The Old Testament is littered with examples of people whose very lives were in danger because they followed God.

Ask several participants to read the following passages:

- Daniel 6:6-17
- Job 1:8-12
- 1 Kings 19:1-4
- Psalm 23

Christian history shows us God's will isn't a safe place

Jarrett says that Christian history confirms what Jesus told his disciples... that following Him would cost us dearly. Just a few examples of those who paid the ultimate price for doing God's will are:

Jim Elliot—missionary killed by indigenous people he was trying to reach with the gospel.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer—Christian theologian who spoke out against the Nazis. He was imprisoned and hanged, just months before the Nazis were defeated.

Martin Luther King Jr.—fought peacefully for civil rights from a biblical perspective and was murdered.

How have you felt your own security or safety jeopardized because of your faith or because you did what you knew was God's will?

IDENTIFY THE TENSION: It's natural to want to feel safe and secure. And God doesn't want us to be careless or neglectful of our physical well-being. But if we truly study and believe the Scriptures, it's clear that living sold-out for Jesus will involve risks, even danger and discomfort. So how can you live wisely as an ambassador for Christ in a world that's increasingly hostile to the gospel, and are you prepared to pay the price for following Jesus?

► APPLY THE BIBLICAL TRUTH IN YOUR LIFE

Paul lived with one clear focus in life – to share the gospel with as many people as possible. Yet he did not spend his final days in the comforts of a den surrounded by family and friends. He was clapped in chains in a Roman prison, and eventually beheaded.

