

Smoky Mountain Reflections, February 2011

A couple of years ago I noted in my reflections that we live in a “sue happy” society, and we continue to live in a culture that always seeks to blame someone else. Usually this falls on the one with the deepest pockets, not focusing on who is at fault or even on reconciliation, but sadly on who can cut a check to see who wins the litigation lottery. I do not mean to disparage our legal system or vocation, but like all things in our sinful broken world, it is plagued by sinners of which we are all one. Because of this, everything we purchase is padded with the cost of insurance and plastered with those all-too-familiar and ridiculous warning signs and caution placards and reams of paper in owners’ manuals (that we never read). All of this is done in order to protect us from ourselves, and to hopefully prevent us from suing the producer of said product.

I am not one to speak against safety precautions—they are a necessary part of a safe working and living environment. In the US Navy, I was taught that all safety rules were written in blood, because some sailor found a way to hurt himself, and therefore a rule was developed to prevent future sailors from doing the same. But in an effort to protect themselves, producers of everything we buy have really gone overboard. Here are a some comical examples of such cautions: On a hair dryer: *Do not use while sleeping*; On an iron: *Do not iron clothes on body*; On a can of peanuts: *Warning: Contains nuts*; On a coffee cup: *Caution: Hot beverages are hot*; In a microwave oven manual: *Do not use for drying pets*; On the bottom of a cola bottle: *Do not open here*; On a bottle of baby lotion: *Keep away from children*; In a Japanese hotel elevator: *Push this button in case anything happens*; On a can of spray paint: *Do not spray in your face*; On a TV remote: *Not dishwasher safe*; On a bottle of hair dye: *Do not use as Ice Cream topping*; On a push lawn mower: *Not to be used as a hedge trimmer*; On the packaging for a wrist watch: *Warning this is not underwear!*; On a toaster: *Do not use under water*; On a mattress: *Do not attempt to swallow*. As ridiculous as these all seem they have at their root a law suit somewhere, in which the manufacturer was held responsible for the accidental use of their product, regardless of the culpability of the individual that filed suit. It is cheaper to print stupid warnings than pay out legal settlements.

This got me to thinking about how often people hold God or His church responsible for their incorrect application of the truths contained in His word. We so often are ready to point the finger at God when we clearly have ourselves to blame. So what sort of warnings or cautions should we place on the inside cover of the Bible to protect us from ourselves. Here are few I dreamt up: *Warning: do not use as a door stop*; *Warning: do not use to level a table*; *Warning: this is not a football!*; *Warning: may cause paper cut*; *Caution: lack of regular use could lead to depression, sadness and lack of purpose*; *Attention: prolonged exposure to God’s word could lead to sporadic acts of Love, Kindness and mercy*; *Caution: use as a dust collector could be hazardous to your lungs and your spiritual health*; *Warning: contains prophetic material which should be handled with care to avoid conflict with any other contained truth*. *Warning: Use regularly to prevent truth decay!*

It seems we are surrounded with those who would cherry-pick the truths they like in God’s word and twist them in ways that suit their desires while disregarding other truths in the very same Bible. We use scripture to interpret scripture, and any scripture can contain many applications, but God does not contradict Himself.

To protect ourselves from choosing false teachers, we need to have our faith planted firmly in Christ and our noses regularly pointed into the Bible. Understanding how to apply faith to God’s mysteries, and reason to His creation, does not come naturally to our sinful minds. We must go to Him in worship, prayer, and in regular personal time with His word in order to seek His help, guidance and revelation of His divine will for our short lives. God does not move through our emotions. He moves in the Word and through His sacraments to deliver to us His love and forgiveness as He instituted it—not in accord with our will or desires, but in His perfect way with His perfect timing. Eternal safety not lawsuit required.

In Christ, Pastor Portier