



February 26, 2025

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in my heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

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READ THE FINE PRINT

All kinds of products we buy have messages on their labels in fine print, and they usually tell a story that would make us less likely to buy them. Contracts we sign have fine print "disclaimers" that the other party hopes we won't notice. The television equivalent of fine print is the fast-talking lower-volume warning message at the end of a commercial that is usually accompanied by images of sunsets, butterflies and beautiful women. These notices may include potentially dangerous side effects of medications, hidden fees for services, limitations on warranties or exclusions on insurance policies. They're often quite important and can lead to "buyer's remorse."

People are so used to ignoring the fine print that the company GameStation pulled off a classic April Fool prank in 2010. In advertising for a new product, they included this fine-print warning:

By placing an order via this Website on the first day of the fourth month of the year 2010 Anno Domini, you agree to grant us a non transferable option to claim, for now and forever more, your immortal soul. Should we wish to exercise this option, you agree to surrender your immortal soul, and any claim you may have on it, within 5 (five) working days of receiving written notification from gamestation.co.uk or one of its duly authorized minions.

They received 7,500 orders in response. 88% of them checked the box that gave their immortal souls to GameStation, and only 12% noticed the hidden joke and commented on it.*

God is straight up with us; he doesn't put anything in fine print. Yet, before we sign the contract with him, we often treat some of the terms of agreement as if they were written in fine print and were not important to the relationship. Let's look at God's Covenant with Abraham, for instance. We read about it in Genesis 15:

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After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. Then he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." (Genesis 15:5-7)

According to Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites, that was the big print contract. The part they relegated to fine print and tried to ignore is found in the following context:

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, "Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years, but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation. (Verses 12-16)

Okay, before the glorious blessings of the Covenant come, Abraham will die and his descendants will endure four hundred years of hard labor as slaves in Egypt! "Yes, but that's just fine print that we can ignore."

Christians make the same mistake in

their interpretation of the New Covenant. We embrace Jesus' promise, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) But we stop reading there; or we reduce the rest of his statement to fine print: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Verses 29-30) Even though it is relatively "easy," there's still a yoke. And though it is comparatively "light," there's still a burden. And Jesus' followers still have to submit to a discipline --- "learn from me." (Verses 29-30)

Pay attention to all the fine print; your immortal soul does depend on it. This is no April Fool joke (That's a month away).

Pastor George Van Alstine

* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gamestation-grabs-souls-o_n_541549