CHAPTER AND VERSE, PLEASE

Popular Sayings People Credit to the Bible, Where They Really Came From, and Whether They Hold Up



Thirty-three sayings and beliefs, tested by chapter and verse

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Before You Begin

> *Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures every day **to see** if these things might be so.*
>
> Acts 17:11 (SLB)

"Like the Bible says..." I have heard that phrase come before a lot of things the Bible never said. You probably have too. "God helps those who help themselves." "Cleanliness is next to godliness." "God won't give you more than you can handle." People say these things at work, at funerals, at the kitchen table, and from the pulpit. Most of the time they mean well. Some of the sayings are wise. Some are half true. And some are the opposite of what God actually says.

Over years of leading Bible studies, I have heard good people quote sayings as Scripture that are nowhere in the Bible. Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) made me check every word against the actual text. I wrote this book for believers who want to know what God really said, not just what sounds religious. Opening the Book for yourself settles the argument every time.

This book takes the most common of those sayings and asks three simple questions about each one. Where did it really come from? What does the Bible actually say? And does the idea hold up?

Why This Matters

You might ask, "Why make a fuss over a few old sayings?" It's simple. What we think the Bible says shapes what we believe about God. If you think the Bible says God helps those who help themselves, you will think you have to earn His help. If you think God won't give you more than you can handle, you may think something is wrong with your faith when life crushes you. If you think you should follow your heart, you will trust the one thing the Bible says you shouldn't.

The Bereans in Acts 17 heard the apostle Paul himself preach, and they still went home and checked what he said against the Scriptures. Luke says that made them "more noble." I want this book to help you do the same thing with the sayings you hear every day.

How Each Chapter Works

Each chapter starts with a saying and how people use it. Then it follows the same steps.

Where It Really Came From traces the saying to its real source, as far as I can verify it. Some sayings come from poets, preachers, philosophers, movies, or comedians. A few come from the Bible itself, just reworded. Where I could check a source myself, I tell you what it says and when it was written. Where I could not confirm a claim that is often made, I say so plainly. I would rather tell you "I don't know" than pass along a story that sounds good but may not be true.

What the Bible Actually Says quotes the verses people have in mind, with enough of the passage around them that you can see the context. A verse pulled out of its setting can be made to say almost anything. Read in its setting, it says what God meant it to say.

The Verdict gives my answer in a box, so you can find it fast. Every verdict is one of these:

- **Holds up.** The saying is not a Bible verse, or not in those words, but the idea matches what the Bible teaches.
- **Quashed.** The saying is not in the Bible, and the idea does not hold up against Scripture. Some of these have a smaller truth inside them, and I point that out.
- **Half true.** Part of the idea is biblical and part is not. When that happens I say which part is which, and whether the saying, as people usually mean it, should be kept or dropped.

Saying It Better gives you a better way to say it, usually in the Bible's own words. Every chapter ends with **Study Questions** for personal reflection or a small group.

How the Book Is Laid Out

Part One: Sayings That Are Not in the Bible covers eighteen popular sayings that are nowhere in Scripture, from "God helps those who help themselves" to "ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Part Two: Close, but Not Quite covers seven sayings that do come from the Bible but have been reworded, shortened, or stretched, like "money is the root of all evil" and "the lion shall lie down with the lamb."

Part Three: Things People Think the Bible Says looks at eight popular beliefs about Bible stories and teachings that are not actually in the text, like the apple in the Garden, the three kings at the manger, and the whale that swallowed Jonah. It ends with one claim turned the other way around: people who say the rapture isn't in the Bible.

Part Four: Sayings That Really Are in the Bible is a short, fun chapter of everyday sayings that do come straight from Scripture, from "the writing on the wall" to "the salt of the earth."

At the back you will find a chart of every saying in the book with its source and verdict, and an index of the Bible passages used.

A Few Notes Before We Start

Scripture quotations in this book come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words set in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. When older English wording matters, I mention the King James Version of 1611 (KJV), because many of these sayings grew up when the KJV was the Bible nearly every English speaker knew.

I capitalize the pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (He, Him, His, You, Your) as a sign of reverence. Inside a Scripture quotation, I leave the capitals exactly as the translation prints them. Inside quotations from other writers, I leave their words and spelling exactly as they wrote them.

I have not tried to cover every saying ever credited to the Bible. I picked the ones I hear most, the ones that matter most, and the ones where I could check where they came from. If you have one I missed, I would like to hear it.

One more thing. Please don't use this book as a club. If your grandmother says "cleanliness is next to godliness," you don't need to correct her at Thanksgiving dinner. Most people who use these sayings love God and mean well. The goal is not to win arguments. The goal is to know what God has really said, so we can trust it, live it, and share it.

Part One: Sayings That Are Not in the Bible

Chapter 1: “God Helps Those Who Help Themselves”

> *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for **the** ungodly.*
>
> Romans 5:6 (SLB)

If there is one saying that most people would swear is in the Bible, it is this one. “God helps those who help themselves.” You hear it from coaches, politicians, parents, and preachers. It sounds like Proverbs. It sounds like good, hardworking common sense. And polls bear out how widely it is believed. George Barna’s research group asked Americans about it in the late 1990s, and about eight out of ten said the Bible teaches it.

It isn’t in the Bible. And in the way most people mean it, it turns the gospel upside down.

For years I was a fully functioning alcoholic. I was successful at work, I denied I had a problem, and I lived as if I had to fix myself. That is the opposite of the gospel. Real help started on May 29, 2020, when I finally admitted I could not save myself. Scripture teaches that God helps the helpless, not the self-sufficient.

Where It Really Came From

This saying is much older than America. The ancient Greeks said something like it about their gods. In the play *Philoctetes*, from about 409 B.C., Sophocles wrote that heaven never helps the men who will not act. Aesop’s fable “Hercules and the Waggoner” tells of a man whose wagon gets stuck in the mud. He prays to Hercules for help, and Hercules tells him to put his own shoulder to the wheel first. The Roman poet Ovid wrote that God Himself helps those who dare.

In English, the poet George Herbert collected the proverb “Help thyself, and God will help thee” in *Jacula Prudentum* in 1651. The English political writer Algernon Sidney used the modern wording, “God helps those who help themselves,” in his *Discourses Concerning Government*, published in 1698. Then Benjamin Franklin put it in *Poor Richard’s Almanack* in 1736, and Americans have been quoting it ever since. Many of them think they are quoting Scripture. They are actually quoting Aesop, by way of Ben Franklin.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does teach hard work. I want to be fair about that. Proverbs has strong words for the lazy man.

> *Go to the ant, sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise, which has no commander, officer, and ruler; it prepares its bread in the summer; it gathers its food at the harvest. Until when, sluggard, will you lie down? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down, and your poverty will come like a wanderer, and your need like a man with a shield.* (Proverbs 6:6-11)

Paul says the same thing to a church where some people had quit working.

> *For even when we were with you, we were commanding you this, that if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat. For we hear **that** some are walking among you disorderly, not working at all, but being busybodies. Now to such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ, that working with quietness they may eat their own bread.* (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

So if you mean, "Don't sit on the couch and expect God to pay your rent," the Bible agrees. God usually works through our work. Nehemiah prayed, and then he set a guard and built the wall (Nehemiah 4:9).

But that is not the main thing people mean by the saying, and it is not the main thing the Bible says about God's help. The Bible says God helps those who *can't* help themselves.

> *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for **the** ungodly. For scarcely will anyone die for a righteous **man**; for perhaps for the good **man** someone even dares to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:6-8)

Christ did not die for people who were helping themselves. He died for the weak, for the ungodly, for sinners. We were not trying hard and falling a little short. Paul says we were "dead in the trespasses."

> *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even us, being dead in the trespasses, He made alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised **us** up together and seated **us** together in the heavenly **places** in Christ Jesus, in order that He might show in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this **is** not from yourselves; the gift **is** of God, not from works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:4-9)

Salvation is "not from yourselves" and "not from works." That is the heart of the gospel. If God only helped those who help themselves, no one would be saved. The tax collector in Jesus' story could not help himself at all. All he could do was beat his chest and cry out for mercy. And Jesus said he was the one who went home justified.

> *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, having stood, was praying these things to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, swindlers, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice in the week; I tithe all things, as many as I acquire.' And the tax collector, having stood far off, was not willing to lift up even **his** eyes to heaven, but was striking his breast, saying, 'God, be propitious to me, the sinner!' I say to you, this one went down to his house justified rather than that one; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 18:10-14)

The Psalms say the same thing about everyday help. "My help is from the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2). "God is a refuge and strength for us, a help in troubles" (Psalm 46:1). Over and over, the people God helps in the Bible are the people who have run out of ways to help themselves: Hagar in the desert, Hannah in her grief, the widow of Zarephath with her last handful of flour, the leper who fell at Jesus' feet.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed.** The saying is not in the Bible. It comes from ancient Greek proverbs and Aesop, by way of Algernon Sidney and Benjamin Franklin. A smaller truth holds up: God expects us to work, and He often blesses our work. But as a statement about salvation, or about who God helps, it is backward. God helps those who know they can't help themselves.

Saying It Better

Try this: "God helps the helpless." Or quote Paul: "while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). And then, because you are His, go to work. Paul says we are saved by grace "for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). We don't work to be saved. We work because we are.

Study Questions

1. Have you ever heard someone say this saying was in the Bible? Did you believe it?
2. What part of the saying is true, and what part is not?
3. Read Romans 5:6-8. What words does Paul use to describe the people Christ died for?
4. Why is "God helps the helpless" such good news?
5. How do Ephesians 2:8-9 and 2:10 fit together?

Chapter 2: “Cleanliness Is Next to Godliness”

Create for me a pure heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10 (SLB)

Generations of mothers have said this to children with muddy hands. “Go wash up. Cleanliness is next to godliness.” It sounds like a verse from Leviticus, and with all the washing laws in the Old Testament, it is easy to see why people think it is. But it isn’t in the Bible.

Where It Really Came From

The saying is usually credited to John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement. In his sermon “On Dress,” Wesley wrote, “Certainly this is a duty, not a sin. ‘Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness.’” Notice that he puts it in quotation marks. He seems to be quoting a saying people already knew. The sermon’s date is uncertain, but it was in print in his collected works by 1811.

An earlier use has been found in a Bible with notes by Anselm Bayly, printed in London in 1773. His note on Leviticus says, “Cleanliness, it is rightly said, is next to godliness.” The idea is older still. In 1605 Francis Bacon wrote that cleanness of body was always thought to come from a proper reverence for God. So the saying grew up in English Christian writing in the 1600s and 1700s. It was a comment *about* the Bible, and it became something people thought was *in* the Bible.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Old Testament does have many washing laws. The priests had to wash before serving at the altar.

> *“And you shall make a laver of bronze and its base **of** bronze for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And Aaron and his sons shall wash from it their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting they shall wash **with** water, and they shall not die; or when they draw near to the altar to minister, to make a fire offering smoke to the LORD, then they shall wash their hands and their feet, and they shall not die; and it shall be for them a statute forever, for him and for his seed throughout their generations.”* (Exodus 30:18-21)

Israel was even told to keep the camp clean of human waste, and the reason given is striking.

> *And you shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out there, outside. And you shall have a peg among your equipment, and it shall be, when you sit down outside, that you shall dig with it, and turn back and cover your excrement. For the LORD your God walks about in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to give your enemies before you; and your camp shall be holy, and He shall not see among you the nakedness of a thing and turn away from after you.* (Deuteronomy 23:12-14)

These laws were good for health, and many people have pointed out how far ahead of their time they were. But look at the reason God gives: “the LORD your God walks about in the midst of your camp.” The

washing was about being ready to be near a holy God. The outward washing was a picture of an inward need.

Jesus made that very clear. The Pharisees had added many washing rules of their own, and they criticized His disciples for eating without the ritual hand washing. Here is what Jesus said.

> *And having called to **Him** all the crowd, He was saying to them, "Hear Me, all **of you**, and understand: There is nothing outside the man entering into him that is able to defile him; but the **things** going out from him, those are the **things** defiling the man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And when He entered into a house from the crowd, His disciples were asking Him concerning the parable. And He says to them, "Are you yourselves also thus without understanding? Do you not perceive that everything from outside entering into the man is not able to defile him, because it does not enter into his heart but into the belly, and goes out into the latrine, cleansing all the foods?" And He was saying, "That which goes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, go out the evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual immoralities, murders, thefts, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, sensuality, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil **things** go out from within and defile the man."* (Mark 7:14-23)

And in another place, He said this.

> *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of them may also become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you resemble whitewashed tombs, which outside indeed appear beautiful, but inside are full of bones of **the** dead and of all uncleanness. Thus you also outside indeed appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.* (Matthew 23:25-28)

That is the problem with "cleanliness is next to godliness." A man can be spotless on the outside and rotten on the inside. Washing your hands is a good habit. It cannot wash your heart. Only God can do that.

> *You will purify me from sin with hyssop, and I will be clean; You will wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. You will make me hear joy and gladness; let the bones **that** You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and wipe out all my iniquities. Create for me a pure heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* (Psalm 51:7-10)

> *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:7-9)

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed as said.** The saying is not in the Bible. It comes from English Christian writing of the 1700s and was made famous by John Wesley. Being clean is a good habit, and the Old Testament's washing laws pointed to God's holiness. But the Bible never ranks soap just below godliness. Jesus said what defiles a person comes from the heart, and only His blood "cleanses us from all sin."

Saying It Better

Teach your kids to wash their hands. That is just good sense, and doctors will thank you. But when you want to talk about being clean before God, use the Bible's words: "Create for me a pure heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

Study Questions

1. Why do you think so many people assume this saying is in the Bible?
2. Read Deuteronomy 23:12-14. What reason does God give for keeping the camp clean?
3. In Mark 7, what did Jesus say really makes a person unclean?
4. What is the difference between being clean on the outside and clean on the inside?
5. Read 1 John 1:9. What does God promise when we confess our sins?

Chapter 3: “God Won’t Give You More Than You Can Handle”

> *And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*
>
> 2 Corinthians 12:9 (SLB)

A friend gets a cancer diagnosis. A couple loses a baby. A man loses his job the same month his wife walks out. And someone, meaning well, says, “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” It is meant as comfort. But for many people in the worst days of their lives, it lands like a weight. They think, “Then why can’t I handle this?”

I have heard this saying more times than I can count, and I believe it hurts more people than it helps. It is not in the Bible. It comes from a verse that says something different.

Where It Really Came From

I could not find a first source for this saying, and I don’t think there is one. It seems to be a popular retelling of one verse, 1 Corinthians 10:13, worn down over time by people who remembered the comfort but not the words. The verse is about temptation, not hardship, and it promises a way out, not a load that fits our strength.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the verse with the paragraph around it.

> *Now these things became examples for us, so that we would not be desirers of evil things, as they also desired. And do not become idolaters, as some of them **were**; as it has been written, “The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them committed sexual immorality, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell. Nor let us put the Christ to the test, as some of them also tested **Him**, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them also grumbled, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them **as** examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages came. Therefore let the one who thinks he stands watch, lest he fall. No temptation has taken you except what is human; and God **is** faithful, who will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way out, so that you may be able to endure **it**.* (1 Corinthians 10:6-13)

Paul is warning the church in Corinth about idolatry and sexual sin. He reminds them of Israel in the wilderness, who fell into those sins. Then he says no temptation is beyond what is common to people, and God will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able, but will provide “the way out.” It is a promise that you never *have* to sin. It is not a promise that life will never crush you.

In fact, Paul tells us that he was crushed beyond his strength.

> *For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning our affliction which happened to us in Asia, that we were weighed down excessively, beyond **our** power, so that we despaired even of living. But we ourselves have had the sentence of death in ourselves, so that we would not be trusting in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead* (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

Paul and his companions were "weighed down excessively, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living." Paul was given more than he could handle. And he tells us why: "so that we would not be trusting in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."

That is the point. God does let us carry more than we can handle, so that we learn to let Him carry us. Paul begged God three times to take away his "thorn in the flesh." God said no.

> *And so that I might not be exalted above measure by the surpassing greatness of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, so that he might buffet me, so that I might not be exalted above measure. Concerning this I begged the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in distresses, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

God didn't say, "You can handle it." He said, "My grace is sufficient for you." There is a world of difference. One puts the weight on your strength. The other puts it on God's grace.

Jesus invites us to bring the weight to Him.

> *Come to Me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. 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.* (Matthew 11:28-30)

> *Therefore be humbled under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in **due** time, having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you.* (1 Peter 5:6-7)

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. The Bible never says God won't give you more than you can handle. It says God won't let you be *tempted* beyond what you can bear without giving you a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). When it comes to hardship, the Bible says the opposite: Paul was burdened "beyond our power" so that he would trust God. What you can't handle, God can.

Saying It Better

If a friend is hurting, try this instead: "This is more than any of us can carry. But God is near, and He will carry you." That is true. "The LORD is near to the broken of heart, and the crushed of spirit He saves"

(Psalm 34:18). And sometimes the best thing to say is nothing at all. Just sit with them, the way Job's friends did for seven days before they started talking (Job 2:13).

Study Questions

1. Has anyone ever said this saying to you in a hard time? How did it feel?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 in context. What is Paul talking about?
3. What does 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 say about Paul's own limits? Why did God allow it?
4. What is the difference between "you can handle it" and "My grace is sufficient for you"?
5. Who do you know right now who needs to hear Psalm 34:18?

Chapter 4: “Everything Happens for a Reason”

> *And we know that to those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to **His** purpose.*
>
> Romans 8:28 (SLB)

“Everything happens for a reason.” People say it after a breakup, a car wreck, a missed flight, or a death. Some say it with deep faith. Others say it with a shrug. Many believe it is a Bible verse, or at least a summary of one. This saying is a little different from the others in this book. It is not completely wrong. But it is not quite right either, and the difference matters a lot when someone is hurting.

Where It Really Came From

I could not find one person who first said “everything happens for a reason.” The idea that every event has a cause and a purpose goes back at least to the Greek philosophers, and it shows up in many religions. In modern talk it often means something like fate: the universe has a plan, and whatever happens was meant to be. Christians who say it usually have Romans 8:28 in mind.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is Romans 8:28 with the verses that follow it.

> *And we know that to those who love God all things work together for good, to those who are called according to **His** purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined **to be** conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be **the** firstborn among many brothers; and those whom He predestined, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.* (Romans 8:28-30)

Read it carefully. It does not say “everything happens for a reason.” It says “to those who love God all things work together for good.” There are three key parts. First, it is a promise to “those who love God,” those “called according to His purpose.” It is not a promise about everyone. Second, it says all things “work together.” It does not say every single thing is good by itself. Cancer is not good. Murder is not good. But God weaves even those things together, with everything else, into good for His people. Third, the “good” is defined in the next verse: being “conformed to the image of His Son.” The good God is working toward is not always our comfort. It is our becoming like Jesus.

Joseph is the best picture of this in the Old Testament. His brothers sold him as a slave. Years later, he told them this.

> *And Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for **am** I in the place of God? And you, you planned evil against me; God planned it for good, so as to do as **it is** this day, to keep alive a numerous people.”* (Genesis 50:19-20)

Joseph did not say, “It all happened for a reason, so no big deal.” He said, “You planned evil.” What his brothers did was evil, and he called it evil. But God had a bigger plan, and He turned their evil into good.

At the same time, the Bible warns us about reading reasons into every tragedy. When a tower fell and killed eighteen people, people assumed those people must have been worse sinners. Jesus said no.

> *Now some were present at that very time, reporting to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And answering, Jesus said to them, "Do you think that these Galileans were sinners beyond all the Galileans, because they have suffered such things? No, I say to you; but unless you repent, you will all perish likewise. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that these were debtors beyond all the men who dwell in Jerusalem? No, I say to you; but unless you repent, you will all perish likewise."* (Luke 13:1-5)

And when the disciples saw a blind man and asked whose sin caused it, Jesus said it was neither his sin nor his parents' (John 9:1-3). We don't always know the reason, and we are not told to guess. "The hidden things belong to the LORD our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Even Solomon admitted that "time and chance happen to all of them" (Ecclesiastes 9:11), meaning that from where we stand, life often looks random.

The Verdict

Verdict: Half true, so quashed as people usually mean it. The Bible does teach that God is in control and that He works all things together for good for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). But the Bible does not teach that every event is good, or that we can always know the reason, or that blind fate runs the world. Evil is still evil, and God's promise is to His children.

Saying It Better

Instead of "everything happens for a reason," try this: "I don't know why this happened. But I know God can bring good out of it for those who love Him." That keeps you honest about what you don't know, and it points to the One who does.

Study Questions

1. What do people usually mean when they say "everything happens for a reason"?
2. Read Romans 8:28-29. Who is the promise for, and what is the "good" God is working toward?
3. How did Joseph talk about what his brothers did? Why is that important?
4. In Luke 13:1-5, what was Jesus correcting?
5. Is there something in your life you are still asking "why" about? How does this chapter help?

Chapter 5: “God Works in Mysterious Ways”

> *For **as** the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*
>
> Isaiah 55:9 (SLB)

Something happens that no one can explain. An answer to prayer comes from an unexpected direction, or a terrible thing turns out to lead somewhere good. And someone says, “Well, God works in mysterious ways.” It sounds like a quote from Isaiah or Paul. It isn’t. It is a line from a hymn.

At 16, walking away from the Air Force after they took back the computer job they promised looked like a dead end. God used that turn to lead me into about 40 years of utility and infrastructure work. God's ways are not random. They reach further than we can see in the moment.

Where It Really Came From

The English poet William Cowper wrote a hymn in 1773 that begins, “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.” It was published in the *Olney Hymns* in 1779, a hymnbook Cowper made with his friend John Newton, the former slave trader who wrote “Amazing Grace.” Cowper suffered from deep depression for much of his life, and he wrote the hymn out of his own dark seasons. It is called “Light Shining out of Darkness,” and it goes on to say that behind a frowning providence God hides a smiling face. Over the years, “God moves in a mysterious way” became “God works in mysterious ways,” and people forgot it was a hymn.

What the Bible Actually Says

Cowper was not making something up. He was putting into verse what the Bible teaches about God’s ways being beyond ours.

> *For My thoughts **are** not your thoughts, and your ways **are** not My ways, declares the LORD. For **as** the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.* (Isaiah 55:8-9)

> *O depth of riches and of wisdom and of knowledge of God! How unsearchable **are** His judgments and untraceable His ways! For who has known **the** mind of **the** Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him? For from Him and through Him and to Him **are** all things. To Him **be** the glory to the ages. Amen.* (Romans 11:33-36)

Paul wrote that after three chapters on God’s plan for Israel and the nations. He could not get to the bottom of it, so he broke out in praise. And Moses drew a clear line between what God has hidden and what He has shown us.

> *The hidden **things belong** to the LORD our God, and the revealed **things belong** to us and to our sons forever, to do all the words of this law.* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

When Job demanded an explanation for his suffering, God did not give him the reasons. He gave him Himself.

> *And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said, "Who **is** this **who** darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins now like a man, and I will ask you, and you make **it** known to Me. Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell **Me**, if you know understanding."* (Job 38:1-4)

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up. The words come from William Cowper's 1773 hymn, not from the Bible. But the idea is solidly biblical. God's ways are higher than ours, His judgments are unsearchable, and the hidden things belong to Him.

One caution. "God works in mysterious ways" can become a way to stop thinking. Some things are a mystery. Many things are not, because God has told us plainly. "The revealed things belong to us." We can't use mystery as an excuse to ignore what God has made clear, like His call to repent and believe the gospel.

Saying It Better

When you can't explain what God is doing, say what Paul said: "O depth of riches and of wisdom and of knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and untraceable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). Or sing Cowper's hymn, which is a wonderful hymn. Just remember it is a hymn.

Study Questions

1. Were you surprised that this saying came from a hymn?
2. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. How much higher are God's ways than ours?
3. What is the difference between "the hidden things" and "the revealed things" in Deuteronomy 29:29?
4. When can "God works in mysterious ways" become an excuse?
5. Think of a time God worked in a way you didn't expect. What did you learn?

Chapter 6: “This Too Shall Pass”

> *For the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us, excessively to excess, an eternal weight of glory*
>
> 2 Corinthians 4:17 (SLB)

People write it on sticky notes, tattoo it on their arms, and say it to friends in hard times. “This too shall pass.” Many think it is from Ecclesiastes, or from King Solomon. Some versions of the story even say Solomon had it carved on a ring. But the saying is not in the Bible, and the story about Solomon is a legend.

Where It Really Came From

The saying comes from an old Eastern story, often told about a Persian king or about Solomon. In the story, the king asks his wise men for a sentence that will be true in every situation and will make him sad when he is happy and happy when he is sad. They give him the words, “This too shall pass.” Versions of this story were printed in American papers by 1839 and in a British magazine in 1848. The English writer Edward FitzGerald told it in 1852 as “Solomon’s Seal.”

Abraham Lincoln made it famous in America. In a speech to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society on September 30, 1859, he told the story of an “Eastern monarch” whose wise men gave him a sentence to be always true, “And this, too, shall pass away.” Lincoln went on to praise how much those few words say, both in the hour of pride and in the depths of trouble.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does teach that the troubles of this life are temporary for God’s people.

> *Therefore we do not lose heart; but even if our outer man is being brought to decay, yet the inner **man** is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us, excessively to excess, an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things being seen but at the things not being seen; for the things being seen **are** temporary, but the things not being seen **are** eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

> *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if it is necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the testing of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found for praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:6-7)

> *For a moment **is** in His anger, life **is** in His favor; in the evening weeping lodges, and at the morning, a shout of joy.* (Psalm 30:5)

And the Bible does teach that this whole world, with all its glory, is passing.

> *A voice is saying, “Call out.” And he said, “What shall I call out?” All flesh **is** grass, and all its steadfast love **is** like the flower of the field. Grass dries up, a flower withers, when the breath of*

> *the LORD blows on it; surely the people **is** grass. Grass dries up, a flower withers, and the word of our God will stand forever.* (Isaiah 40:6-8)
>
> *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that **is** in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boasting of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and its lust; but the one doing the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:15-17)

But notice what the Bible puts next to the passing things. "The word of our God will stand forever." "The one doing the will of God abides forever." "The things not being seen are eternal." The Bible doesn't just say everything passes. It says some things last forever, and those are the things to hold onto.

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up, but only halfway. The words come from an old Eastern legend, made famous in America by Abraham Lincoln in 1859. The Bible agrees that our troubles are "momentary" and that the world is passing away. But the Bible adds what the saying leaves out: God, His Word, and those who do His will last forever. And for those outside of Christ, not everything passes. Judgment does not pass away.

On its own, "this too shall pass" can be cold comfort. Good times pass, and bad times pass, and then what? The Bible's answer is that for believers, the best is not passing. It is coming. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer" (Revelation 21:4).

Saying It Better

Try saying Paul's words: "the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us, excessively to excess, an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). That says the trouble will pass, and it says what is coming after it.

Study Questions

1. Where did you think "this too shall pass" came from?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. What does Paul compare our troubles to?
3. What does the Bible say lasts forever?
4. Why is "this too shall pass" not enough comfort on its own?
5. What trouble in your life do you need to see in light of eternity?

Chapter 7: “Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin”

> ***Let** love **be** without hypocrisy. Abhorring the evil, clinging to the good*
>
> Romans 12:9 (SLB)

This is one of the most argued-over sayings of our time. Some Christians say it as a summary of how to treat people. Others say it is hypocritical, a nice way of saying, “I don’t approve of you.” Many on both sides assume it comes from the Bible. It doesn’t, in those words. But the idea behind it has deep roots in Scripture, and it came from one of the greatest teachers in church history.

Where It Really Came From

The idea goes back to Augustine of Hippo, a North African pastor and theologian. Around A.D. 424 he wrote a letter of guidance to a community of women living together in a convent, now known as Letter 211. In it he told them to correct each other “with love for mankind and hatred of sins.” In Latin, *cum dilectione hominum et odio vitiorum*.

The popular form, “hate the sin and not the sinner,” became widely known through Mohandas Gandhi, who used it in his autobiography, published in 1929. So the saying we know today comes from a Christian bishop’s letter in the 400s, polished by a Hindu leader in the 1900s.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does tell God’s people to love people and hate evil, in the same breath.

> ***Let** love **be** without hypocrisy. Abhorring the evil, clinging to the good* (Romans 12:9)

> *You who love the LORD, hate evil! He guards the lives of His faithful ones; from the hand of the wicked He delivers them.* (Psalm 97:10)

And Jude gives a picture that fits Augustine’s idea almost exactly.

> *And on some have mercy, making a distinction; but others save with fear, snatching **them** out of the fire, hating even the tunic stained by the flesh.* (Jude 1:22-23)

“Have mercy” on people. Snatch them out of the fire. But hate even the clothing stained by their sin. Love the person enough to pull them out. Hate the sin enough not to get it on you.

Jesus Himself did both perfectly. He ate with tax collectors and sinners, and the religious people complained (Luke 15:1-2). He told the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). He did not condemn her, and He did not pretend her sin was fine.

Now for the honest part. The Bible also says some things that are uncomfortable for this saying. The Psalms say God hates “all who work iniquity” (Psalm 5:5). God’s holiness is not a soft thing. That is why the saying can never mean, “God doesn’t care about sin.” He cares so much that He sent His Son to die for

it. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). At the cross, God’s hatred of sin and His love for sinners meet.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Holds up, if it is lived and not just said.** The words are not in the Bible. They come from Augustine, around A.D. 424, and were made popular by Gandhi in 1929. But the idea matches Romans 12:9, Jude 22-23, and the way Jesus treated sinners. The test is whether people feel the love part as clearly as the hate part.

If the only thing people ever hear from us is what we are against, we are not living this saying. We are just quoting it. I have to check myself on this, and maybe you do too. Most of us are much better at hating other people’s sins than our own.

Saying It Better

Try saying it the way Paul did: “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhorring the evil, clinging to the good.” And start with yourself. The sin I should hate most is my own. The sinner I should be most amazed God loves is me.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think this saying causes so many arguments?
2. Read Jude 22-23. How does it picture loving people and hating sin at the same time?
3. How did Jesus treat the woman in John 8:1-11?
4. Do people around you feel loved by you, or mainly judged?
5. Why is it important to start with our own sin?

Chapter 8: “Follow Your Heart”

> *The heart **is** deceitful more than everything, and it **is** incurable; who can know it?*
>
> Jeremiah 17:9 (SLB)

“Follow your heart.” “Be true to yourself.” “Just listen to your heart, and you’ll know what to do.” These may be the most repeated sayings of our time. They are in nearly every children’s movie. They show up on graduation cards and wedding toasts. Some Christians even say them as if they were Bible verses, often mixing them up with “God will give you the desires of your heart.” The Bible says almost exactly the opposite.

Where It Really Came From

“Follow your heart” has no single source that I could find. It grew out of the romantic poets and writers of the late 1700s and 1800s, who taught that our deepest feelings are the truest guide, and it took off in movies and pop songs in the 1900s.

Its older cousin, “to thine own self be true,” comes from William Shakespeare. In *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3, a long-winded old man named Polonius gives his son advice before he leaves home. He ends with, “This above all: to thine ownself be true.” It sounds like wisdom from the King James Bible, which came out around the same time. But Shakespeare wrote Polonius as a bit of a windbag, and he says plenty of foolish things in the play. He is not a reliable Bible teacher.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is what God says about the human heart.

> *The heart **is** deceitful more than everything, and it **is** incurable; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart; I test the kidneys, even to give to each one according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.* (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

> *He who trusts in his own heart, he **is** a fool, and he who walks in wisdom, he will be delivered.* (Proverbs 28:26)

> *But the things proceeding out of the mouth come out of the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies.* (Matthew 15:18-19)

The heart, in the Bible, is not just your feelings. It is the center of who you are: your thinking, choosing, and loving. And God says that since the fall, it is “deceitful more than everything.” That is why following your heart is dangerous. Your heart will tell you that what you want is right. It will tell you that you deserve it. It will tell you that you are the exception.

So instead of following our hearts, the Bible tells us to guard them, and to trust the Lord rather than our own understanding.

> *More than all guarding, guard your heart, for from it **are** the outflows of life.* (Proverbs 4:23)

> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and on your **own** understanding do not lean. In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your **own** eyes; fear the LORD and turn aside from evil.* (Proverbs 3:5-7)

What about Psalm 37:4? "Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you the requests of your heart." That is not "follow your heart." It is "delight in the LORD." When the Lord is your delight, He changes what your heart wants. And that is the real answer. God doesn't tell us to follow our old hearts. He promises to give us new ones.

> *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And My Spirit I will put within you, and I will bring about that you walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do **them**.* (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Jesus put it plainly. Following Him means saying no to self.

> *And He was saying to all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life on account of Me, this one will save it."* (Luke 9:23-24)

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. "Follow your heart" is not in the Bible, and "to thine ownself be true" is from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, spoken by a foolish old man. The Bible says the heart is deceitful, that trusting it is foolish, and that we should trust the Lord instead. The good news is that God gives His people a new heart and His Spirit, so that our desires begin to line up with His.

Saying It Better

Try this instead: "Follow Jesus, and let Him change your heart." Or, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and on your own understanding do not lean" (Proverbs 3:5). That is advice worth putting on a graduation card.

Study Questions

1. Where have you heard "follow your heart" lately?
2. What does Jeremiah 17:9 say about the heart? Do you see that in yourself?
3. What does Psalm 37:4 really promise, and to whom?
4. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. What does God promise to do about our hearts?
5. Is there a decision you are making right now where you need to trust God more than your feelings?

Chapter 9: “Charity Begins at Home”

> *So then, as we have opportunity, let us work the good toward all, and especially toward those of the household of the faith.*
>
> Galatians 6:10 (SLB)

A church asks for a gift to a mission overseas, and someone says, “Charity begins at home.” A neighbor asks for help, and the answer is the same. Sometimes the saying is used wisely, to remind us to take care of our own families. Often it is used as a polite way of saying, “Not my problem.” And many people think it is in the Bible. It isn’t, though the Bible does say something close to it.

For years I have worked a full-time job while running Trinfinity Enterprises, building guitars and writing books on the side. Good work can crowd out family if you let it. Caring for your own household is a biblical duty, but it was never meant to be an excuse to ignore a neighbor in need. Balance comes when we honor both before God.

Where It Really Came From

“Charity begins at home” has been an English proverb for centuries. It is often traced to the English writer Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*, first published in 1642 and 1643, and some reference books trace a form of the idea back to John Wycliffe in the 1300s. I was not able to check either of those in the original text, so I will only say that the saying is old and English, and it is not in Scripture. The word “charity” in old English meant love, not just giving money. So the saying first meant something like, “Love starts with the people closest to you.”

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does put a special duty on us toward our own families.

> *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for **those of his** household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* (1 Timothy 5:8)

That is strong. A Christian who will not provide for his own family “has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Taking care of your own is not optional.

Paul also says believers have a special duty to one another.

> *And let us not lose heart in doing the good, for in **its** own time we will reap, not fainting. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work the good toward all, and especially toward those of the household of the faith.* (Galatians 6:9-10)

“Especially” toward the household of faith. But notice the first part. “Let us work the good toward all.” The circle starts with family and church, but it does not stop there.

Jesus made that clear when a lawyer asked Him, “Who is my neighbor?” The man was looking for a limit, a line where his duty stopped. Jesus told him a story.

> *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" And having taken **it** up, Jesus said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who, having both stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away, having left **him** half dead as he was. And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and having seen him, he passed by on the opposite side. And likewise a Levite also, having been at the place, having come and seen **him**, passed by on the opposite side. But a certain Samaritan, journeying, came to him, and having seen him, he felt compassion, and having approached, he bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and having put him on his own animal, he brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the next day, having gone out, having taken out two denarii, he gave **them** to the innkeeper and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I, when I return, will repay you.' Which therefore of these three seems to you to have become a neighbor to the one who fell among the robbers?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go, and you do likewise."* (Luke 10:29-37)

The priest and the Levite might have said charity begins at home, and kept walking. The Samaritan, a man from a group the Jews despised, stopped and helped a stranger at his own cost. Jesus said, "Go, and you do likewise."

John adds that love has to be real.

> *But whoever has the goods of the world and sees his brother having need and shuts his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* (1 John 3:17-18)

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up where it starts, but quashed where people stop. The saying is an old English proverb, not a Bible verse. The Bible agrees that we must take care of our own families first (1 Timothy 5:8) and especially care for other believers (Galatians 6:10). But charity may begin at home. It is not supposed to end there. Jesus said our neighbor is anyone in need that God puts in our path.

Saying It Better

Say, "Charity begins at home, but it doesn't stay there." Or quote Paul: "as we have opportunity, let us work the good toward all, and especially toward those of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Study Questions

1. When have you heard "charity begins at home" used? Was it used well?
2. Read 1 Timothy 5:8. Why is providing for your family so important to God?
3. In the story of the Good Samaritan, what might the priest and Levite have told themselves?
4. Who is the "neighbor" God has put in your path right now?

Chapter 10: “Moderation in All Things”

> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such **things** there is no law.*
>
> Galatians 5:22-23 (SLB)

“Everything in moderation.” People say it about dessert, about drinking, about exercise, and sometimes about faith itself: “Don’t get too religious. Moderation in all things.” It sounds balanced and wise. Some people think it is from Proverbs or from Paul. It is actually from the ancient Greeks.

I am a recovering alcoholic, sober since May 29, 2020. I know firsthand that "moderation" does not work for everything. Some things call for stopping completely. Even good things like work and hobbies need self-control. Scripture calls us to self-control under the Spirit, not a slogan that fits everyone.

Where It Really Came From

The Greek poet Hesiod, writing around 700 B.C., told his readers in *Works and Days*, “Observe due measure: and proportion is best in all things” (in Hugh Evelyn-White’s translation). Later, one of the famous sayings carved at the temple of Apollo at Delphi was “Nothing in excess.” The Greek philosopher Aristotle built a whole system of ethics on the idea that virtue is the middle path between two extremes. The Roman writers picked it up too. So “moderation in all things” is pagan Greek wisdom, passed down through Roman and European writers.

There is one more twist. The old King James Version of Philippians 4:5 says, “Let your moderation be known unto all men.” Many people have pointed to that verse as the source of the saying. But the Greek word there means gentleness or reasonableness, not moderation in the sense of “not too much.” The SLB and most modern translations render it “gentleness.”

> *Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord **is** near.* (Philippians 4:5)

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does teach self-control. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit.

> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such **things** there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23)

And Proverbs warns against overdoing good things.

> ***If** you have found honey, eat your sufficiency, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it up.* (Proverbs 25:16)

> *Do not be among drunkards of wine, among gluttons of flesh for themselves; for a drunkard and a glutton will become poor, and drowsiness will clothe **with** rags.* (Proverbs 23:20-21)

Paul compares the Christian life to an athlete in training.

> *And everyone who competes exercises self-control in all things. They then **do it** that they may receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run thus, not as uncertainly; thus I box, not as beating **the** air; but I strike my body and bring **it** into slavery, lest somehow, having preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.* (1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

So far, so good. But the Bible draws a line that the Greek saying doesn't. Some things are not to be done in moderation. They are not to be done at all. There is no moderate amount of adultery, lying, or worshiping idols. And some things are not to be done in moderation either, because God wants all of us. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Not a moderate amount of your heart. All of it.

Jesus had the hardest words of all for moderate, lukewarm faith.

> *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth.* (Revelation 3:15-16)

The Verdict

Verdict: Half true, quashed as a rule for everything. The saying comes from Greek writers like Hesiod and the Delphic sayings, not the Bible. The Bible does teach self-control in good things like food and drink. But it does not teach moderation in all things. Sin should be avoided completely, and love for God should be total, not moderate.

Saying It Better

Instead of "moderation in all things," try, "self-control in good things, no part in evil things, and everything for God." Or just quote Paul in Titus 2:12: God's grace is "training us that, having denied ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age."

Study Questions

1. Where does "moderation in all things" really come from?
2. What does Philippians 4:5 actually say in the SLB?
3. What are some good things that need self-control in your life?
4. What are some things that should not be done even in moderation?
5. Read Revelation 3:15-16. Why does Jesus reject "moderate" faith?

Chapter 11: “Idle Hands Are the Devil’s Workshop”

> *Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with the hands what is good, so that he may have **something** to share with the one who has need.*
>
> Ephesians 4:28 (SLB)

Grandparents loved this one. “Find something to do. Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” Some say “the devil’s playground.” Others say “Satan finds work for idle hands.” Many people think it is a proverb from Solomon. It isn’t, but it is very close to something the Bible teaches.

Where It Really Came From

The form most English speakers learned as children comes from the English pastor and hymn writer Isaac Watts. In 1715 he published a book of poems for children called *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children*. One of them, “Against Idleness and Mischief,” starts with the famous lines about the “busy little bee.” Later in the poem come these lines: “For Satan finds some Mischief still / For idle Hands to do.” Over the years, that line became “idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” The idea is older than Watts. Writers in the Middle Ages already warned that idleness opens the door to sin. But Watts gave English speakers the words.

Isaac Watts, by the way, also wrote “Joy to the World” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” So if you got this saying from him, you got it from good company.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible warns about laziness again and again.

> *Go to the ant, sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise, which has no commander, officer, and ruler; it prepares its bread in the summer; it gathers its food at the harvest. Until when, sluggard, will you lie down? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down, and your poverty will come like a wanderer, and your need like a man with a shield.* (Proverbs 6:6-11)

> *Laziness makes deep sleep fall, and a soul of slackness will be hungry.* (Proverbs 19:15)

> *The desire of a sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to work.* (Proverbs 21:25)

And Paul makes the same connection Watts did, between idleness and trouble.

> *And at the same time they also learn **to be** idle, going around the houses; and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, speaking the things **they** ought not.* (1 Timothy 5:13)

> *For even when we were with you, we were commanding you this, that if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat. For we hear **that** some are walking among you disorderly, not working at all, but being busybodies. Now to such we command and exhort through our Lord*

> *Jesus Christ, that working with quietness they may eat their own bread.* (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

People with too much time and nothing to do can drift into gossip, meddling, and worse. Think of King David. It was "at the time of the going out of the kings," the season for war, and yet "David was staying in Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 11:1). He got up from his bed in the evening, walked on his roof, and saw Bathsheba. The worst sin of his life started on an afternoon when he was not where he was supposed to be.

But Paul also gives the Christian reason to work, and it is not just to stay out of trouble.

> *Let the one who steals no longer steal, but rather let him labor, working with the hands what is good, so that he may have **something** to share with the one who has need.* (Ephesians 4:28)

> *And everything, whatever you do, work from **the** soul, as to the Lord and not to men* (Colossians 3:23)

We work to do good, to provide, to have something to give, and to serve the Lord.

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up. The words come from Isaac Watts' children's poem of 1715, not the Bible. But the idea fits Proverbs and Paul. Idleness leads to trouble, and Paul names gossip and meddling as fruits of being idle. The Bible adds a better reason to work: to do good and to serve the Lord.

One balance. Rest is not idleness. God made the Sabbath, and Jesus took His disciples away to rest (Mark 6:31). The danger is not resting. The danger is drifting.

Saying It Better

Try Colossians 3:23: "everything, whatever you do, work from the soul, as to the Lord and not to men." That says more than "keep busy." It says why.

Study Questions

1. Who first taught you this saying?
2. Read 1 Timothy 5:13. What does Paul say idleness can lead to?
3. What can we learn from David in 2 Samuel 11:1?
4. What is the difference between rest and idleness?
5. How would your work change if you did it "as to the Lord"?

Chapter 12: “The Road to Hell Is Paved With Good Intentions”

> *There is a way right before a man, and its end **is** ways of death.*
>
> Proverbs 14:12 (SLB)

Someone means well and makes a mess of things, and someone else says, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” It is a sharp saying, and it sounds like it could be one of Solomon’s proverbs. Some people credit it to the Bible. It is not in it.

Where It Really Came From

This saying has a long and fuzzy history, and I want to be honest about what I could and could not confirm. The form “Hell is paved with good intentions” is often credited to Samuel Johnson, the English writer, who is said to have used it in 1775 according to his friend James Boswell. Johnson, in turn, is often said to have been repeating a saying of Bernard of Clairvaux, a monk of the 1100s. I was not able to check either of those in the original sources, so treat them as “often said,” not as proven. What I can tell you for sure is that the saying is not in the Bible.

What the Bible Actually Says

The closest verse is in Proverbs, and it says it twice.

> *There is a way right before a man, and its end **is** ways of death.* (Proverbs 14:12)

The same words appear again in Proverbs 16:25. The point is that a road can look right and still lead to death. Feeling sure is not the same as being right. Good intentions do not change where a road goes.

Jesus warned about this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

> *Enter through the narrow gate; for wide **is** the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. Because narrow **is** the gate and constricted the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.* (Matthew 7:13-14)

> *Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one who does the will of My Father who **is** in **the** heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many mighty works?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work lawlessness.’* (Matthew 7:21-23)

Those people meant well. They did religious things in Jesus’ name. But they never knew Him. Their good intentions did not save them.

Paul said something similar about his own people, Israel.

> *Brothers, the desire of my heart and the supplication to God on behalf of Israel is for salvation. For I bear witness about them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being unaware of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ **is the** end of law for righteousness to everyone who believes.* (Romans 10:1-4)

They had "zeal for God," but not according to knowledge. Sincere, but sincerely wrong. That is exactly what the saying is getting at.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Holds up.** The words are not in the Bible, and their first source is uncertain. But the idea matches Proverbs 14:12 and Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:21-23. Good intentions cannot save anyone. Only Christ can.

The flip side is good news. If good intentions can't get us to heaven, then bad records can't keep us out, if we come to Jesus. The thief on the cross had no good record at all, and Jesus said to him, "today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The road to heaven is not paved with our intentions. It is paved with His blood.

Saying It Better

Quote Proverbs as it stands: "There is a way right before a man, and its end is ways of death." And then point to Jesus, who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

Study Questions

1. What does this saying mean when people use it?
2. Read Proverbs 14:12. How can a way look right to a man and still end in death?
3. In Matthew 7:21-23, what did the people say they had done? What was missing?
4. What does Romans 10:2 mean by zeal "not according to knowledge"?
5. Why is it good news that good intentions can't save us?

Chapter 13: “When God Closes a Door, He Opens a Window”

> *I know your works. Look, I have set before you an opened door, and no one is able to shut it; because you have little power, and you kept My word and did not deny My name.*
>
> Revelation 3:8 (SLB)

You didn’t get the job. The house sale fell through. The relationship ended. And a friend says, “When God closes a door, He opens a window.” It is meant to say, “Don’t give up. Something better is coming.” Many people think it is in the Bible. It isn’t.

I ran my own computer repair business from 2003 to 2013, and when it ended, my main career kept going. Looking back, every door that closed in my working life pointed me toward the next place I was needed. God guides our steps directly. He does not leave us climbing through windows.

Where It Really Came From

The idea that when one door shuts another opens is an old proverb found in several languages. A form of it is often traced to Miguel de Cervantes and his novel *Don Quixote*, from the early 1600s. The “window” version is widely credited to the 1965 film *The Sound of Music*, where Maria says something like it after her life is turned upside down. I was not able to check the film’s script myself, so I will only say that the film is where most people believe they first heard it. Either way, it came from proverbs and movies, not from Scripture.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does talk about God opening and closing doors. Jesus describes Himself this way to the church in Philadelphia.

> *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the True One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. Look, I have set before you an opened door, and no one is able to shut it; because you have little power, and you kept My word and did not deny My name.* (Revelation 3:7-8)

Jesus holds “the key of David.” He opens, and no one shuts. He shuts, and no one opens. Paul used the same picture for opportunities to preach the gospel.

> *But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great and effective door has opened to me, and many **are** opposing.* (1 Corinthians 16:8-9)

> *praying at the same time also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, on account of which I also have been bound* (Colossians 4:3)

And in Acts, we see God closing doors on Paul twice before He opened the right one.

> *And having passed through Phrygia and the Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, having come to Mysia, they were attempting to go toward Bithynia, and the Spirit did not allow them. And having passed by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: a certain Macedonian man was standing, pleading with him and saying, "Having crossed over into Macedonia, help us!" And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go out to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.* (Acts 16:6-10)

The Spirit forbade them to preach in Asia. The Spirit did not allow them into Bithynia. Then came the vision of the man from Macedonia, and the gospel went into Europe for the first time. The closed doors were part of the leading.

Notice two things. First, in the Bible, the open doors are mainly doors for the gospel, for serving God, not doors to a better house or a nicer job. Second, notice what Paul says right after "a great and effective door has opened to me": "and many are opposing." An open door from God does not always mean an easy road.

The Verdict

Verdict: Half true, so quashed as a promise. The words are not in the Bible. They come from an old proverb, made popular by the movies. The Bible does say Jesus opens and shuts doors and that God leads His people, sometimes by closing one way so they will take another (Acts 16:6-10). But the Bible never promises that every closed door means something better for us is around the corner. It promises that God is with us and is directing our steps.

Saying It Better

Try Proverbs 16:9: "The heart of a man plans his way, and the LORD directs his step." That doesn't promise a window. It promises a Guide. And a Guide is better than a window.

Study Questions

1. Has God ever closed a door in your life that you later understood?
2. Read Acts 16:6-10. How did God lead Paul?
3. What kind of "doors" does the New Testament usually talk about?
4. Why is "the LORD directs his step" better than "God will open a window"?

Chapter 14: “Let Go and Let God”

> *Let go, and know that I **am** God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted on the earth.*
>
> Psalm 46:10 (SLB)

“Let go and let God.” It is on coffee mugs, bumper stickers, and recovery group posters. When someone is worried, controlling, or worn out, a friend says it with a gentle smile. Many people assume it is a Bible verse. It isn’t, word for word. But you may be surprised how close the SLB comes.

Where It Really Came From

I could not find a reliable first source for this saying. It has been used in Christian writing for over a hundred years. The Moody Church in Chicago still publishes a sermon titled “Let Go and Let God” by the evangelist Paul Rader, originally published in 1916. It became even more widely known as a slogan in recovery groups in the 1900s. Some writers connect it with the “higher life” teaching of the late 1800s, but I was not able to confirm that, so I won’t claim it.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the verse in the SLB.

> *Let go, and know that I **am** God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted on the earth.* (Psalm 46:10)

Many older Bibles say “Be still, and know that I am God.” The Hebrew word means to let go, to relax your grip, to stop striving. In the psalm, God is speaking to the nations who are raging and to His people who are afraid. Stop fighting. Let go. Know that I am God.

Moses said something similar to Israel at the Red Sea.

> *And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; station yourselves, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will do for you today; for Egypt, whom you have seen today, you shall not again see them anymore, forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you, you shall keep silent.”*
> (Exodus 14:13-14)

And David put it this way.

> *Roll your way on the LORD, and trust in Him, and He Himself will act. And He will bring forth your righteousness like the light, and your justice like the noonday. Be still before the LORD and wait longingly for Him; do not fret yourself because of **one** who makes his way prosper, because of a man who carries out plots.* (Psalm 37:5-7)

Paul shows us what letting go looks like in daily life.

> *Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6-7)

So the idea is good. But here is the danger. "Let go and let God" can be heard as, "Do nothing. Just sit back and wait." The Bible doesn't teach that. At the Red Sea, God told Moses to stand still one minute, and in the very next verse He told him, "Speak to the sons of Israel, that they set out" (Exodus 14:15). Paul says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the One who is working in you" (Philippians 2:12-13). We let go of worry and control. We do not let go of obedience.

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up, when it means trust and not passivity. The saying is not a Bible verse, and its first source is uncertain. But it is a fair echo of Psalm 46:10, which in the SLB reads "Let go, and know that I am God." Letting go of worry and control is biblical. Letting go of effort and obedience is not.

Saying It Better

Try the verse itself: "Let go, and know that I am God." Then do the next thing God has put in front of you. Pray about it, and get up and go to work.

Study Questions

1. What do you think people usually mean by "let go and let God"?
2. Read Psalm 46:10 in the SLB. What are we told to let go of?
3. Read Exodus 14:13-15. How does God balance standing still and going forward?
4. What are you holding onto too tightly right now?

Chapter 15: “God Is My Co-Pilot”

> *In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight.*
>
> Proverbs 3:6 (SLB)

You may have seen it on a bumper sticker or a key chain: “God is my co-pilot.” It sounds like a nice way of saying God is with me wherever I go. Some people think it is from the Psalms. It is the title of a World War II memoir.

Where It Really Came From

Robert Lee Scott Jr. was an American fighter pilot who flew in China during World War II. In 1943 he published a memoir called *God Is My Co-Pilot*. Hollywood made it into a film in 1945. The title caught on, and soon it was on dashboards all over America. Scott was a brave man, and the book tells of his faith in the middle of combat. But it was a book title, not a Bible verse.

Years later, someone came up with a famous reply that you may have seen on a church sign: “If God is your co-pilot, switch seats.” That one isn’t in the Bible either, but it is closer to the truth.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does promise that God is with His people wherever they go.

> *do not be afraid, for I **am** with you; do not look about, for I **am** your God. I have strengthened you; indeed, I have helped you; indeed, I have upheld you with the right hand of My righteousness.* (Isaiah 41:10)

> ***Let your** way of life **be** without love of money, being content with the things present; for He Himself has said, “I will certainly not leave you, nor will I ever forsake you,” so that we, being confident, say, “**The** Lord **is** my helper, and I will not be afraid; what will man do to me?”* (Hebrews 13:5-6)

> *teaching them to observe all things, as many as I commanded you; and look, I am with you all the days, until the consummation of the age. Amen.* (Matthew 28:20)

But the Bible never pictures God as our helper in the second seat while we fly the plane. It pictures Him as the One in charge.

> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and on your **own** understanding do not lean. In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your **own** eyes; fear the LORD and turn aside from evil.* (Proverbs 3:5-7)

> *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel **you**; My eye **will be** on you.* (Psalm 32:8)

And Jesus is not just a co-pilot. He is Lord. When Thomas saw the risen Jesus, he did not say, “My co-pilot.” He said, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed.** “God is my co-pilot” is the title of a 1943 war memoir by Robert Lee Scott Jr., not a Bible verse. The Bible does promise that God is with His people. But He is not our assistant. He is the Lord, and we follow Him.

Saying It Better

Try Hebrews 13:6: “The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid.” Notice even there, “helper” means the One we depend on, not the one who sits beside us waiting for orders. Or just switch seats.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think “God is my co-pilot” became so popular?
2. What is the difference between a co-pilot and a pilot?
3. Read Proverbs 3:5-7. Who is in charge of your paths?
4. Where in your life are you still trying to fly the plane yourself?

Chapter 16: “The Devil Made Me Do It”

> *But each one is tempted by his own desire, being drawn away and being enticed.*
>
> James 1:14 (SLB)

It is usually said as a joke. Someone eats the last donut, or buys something they shouldn’t have, and grins, “The devil made me do it.” But under the joke is an idea a lot of people really believe: when I do wrong, it’s not really my fault. Something outside me pushed me into it. Some even think the Bible supports that, since it talks so much about Satan’s temptations. It doesn’t.

Where It Really Came From

The catchphrase was made famous by the comedian Flip Wilson in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His character Geraldine Jones, who first appeared in 1969, would blame her bad behavior on the devil, as in “The devil made me buy this dress!” Audiences loved it, and “The devil made me do it” became one of the best-known catchphrases on American television.

The excuse itself is much older. It goes back to the Garden of Eden.

What the Bible Actually Says

When God confronted Adam and Eve after they sinned, listen to what each of them said.

> *And He said, “Who told you that you **were** naked? Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat from?” And the man said, “The woman whom You put with me, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What **is** this **that** you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”* (Genesis 3:11-13)

Adam blamed Eve, and in a way blamed God: “The woman whom You put with me.” Eve blamed the serpent: “The serpent deceived me.” That is the oldest version of “the devil made me do it.” And God did not accept it. He held each of them responsible.

James tells us where temptation really gets its power.

> *Let no one say when he is being tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God is unable to be tempted by evils, and He Himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted by his own desire, being drawn away and being enticed. Then the desire, having conceived, gives birth to sin; and the sin, having been brought to completion, brings forth death.* (James 1:13-15)

“Each one is tempted by his own desire.” The devil can tempt. He can lie, and he can set traps. Peter calls him a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), and Paul warns about his schemes (Ephesians 6:11). But he cannot make a believer sin. The desire that takes the bait is ours.

And the Bible says the devil can be resisted.

> *Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7)

> *No temptation has taken you except what is human; and God **is** faithful, who will not let you be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way out, so that you may be able to endure **it**.* (1 Corinthians 10:13)

God always gives a way out. That is why "the devil made me do it" doesn't hold. If there is always a way out, then when I sin, I chose not to take it.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed.** The catchphrase comes from comedian Flip Wilson's character Geraldine, around 1969 and 1970, and the excuse goes back to Eve in Genesis 3:13. The Bible says the devil tempts, but each person is tempted by their own desire, and God always provides a way out. We are responsible for our sins.

Here is the good news hiding in that hard truth. If my sin is really mine, then I can really confess it, and Jesus can really forgive it. "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, so that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Blame keeps us stuck. Confession sets us free.

Saying It Better

Instead of "The devil made me do it," try what David said: "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13). It is harder to say, but it is the first step to freedom.

Study Questions

1. Why is blaming someone else so natural for us?
2. Read Genesis 3:11-13. Who did Adam blame? Who did Eve blame?
3. What does James 1:14 say is the real source of temptation's pull?
4. Why is it good news that our sin is our responsibility?

Chapter 17: “Forgive and Forget”

> *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.*
>
> Ephesians 4:32 (SLB)

“You need to forgive and forget.” People say it to a hurting friend, to a fighting couple, and sometimes to a victim of abuse. Many believe the Bible commands it. The Bible does command forgiveness. It does not command forgetting, at least not in the way people usually mean it.

My wife caught me drinking in 2020 after I had denied it for years. Rebuilding trust after that took time and steady honesty. Forgiveness does not mean pretending the past never happened. It means choosing not to hold the debt against someone anymore, even when the memory remains. It also works the other way: doing right today does not mean everyone has forgiven you. Give that to God and do not dwell on what others think.

Where It Really Came From

The pairing of “forgive” and “forget” is old in English. William Shakespeare put it in the mouth of King Lear, who says to his daughter Cordelia, “Pray you now, forget, and forgive. I am old and foolish” (*King Lear*, Act 4, Scene 7). It became a common proverb, and people came to assume it was Scripture.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible says a great deal about forgiveness. God forgives completely.

> *He has not done to us according to our sins, and He has not repaid us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, His steadfast love is strong toward those who fear Him. As the east is far from the west, He has removed our transgressions far from us.* (Psalm 103:10-12)

> *Who **is** a God like You, forgiving iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of His inheritance? He does not hold on to His anger forever, for He delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of **the** sea.* (Micah 7:18-19)

And God says He will not remember our sins.

> *I, I **am** He who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and your sins I will not remember.* (Isaiah 43:25)

> *And they will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for all of them will know Me, from the least of them and to the greatest of them, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will not remember again.* (Jeremiah 31:34)

That is where the "forget" idea comes from. But think about it. God knows everything. He doesn't have amnesia. When God says He will not remember our sins, He means He will not hold them against us. He will not bring them up again to punish us. It is a promise, not a memory lapse.

God then tells us to forgive the way He forgives.

> *Let all bitterness and rage and wrath and clamor and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.* (Ephesians 4:31-32)

> *Then Peter, having come, said to Him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus says to him, "I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* (Matthew 18:21-22)

> *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Matthew 6:14-15)

Look at Joseph. He forgave his brothers fully, wept over them, and took care of them. But he did not forget. He said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt" (Genesis 45:4). He remembered exactly what they did. He just would not hold it against them. And he even tested them first to see whether they had changed (Genesis 42 to 44).

> *And Joseph said to his brothers, "Draw near to me, please." And they drew near. And he said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, do not be grieved, and let it not burn in your eyes that you sold me here; because for preservation of life God sent me before you. For these two years the famine has been in the midst of the land, and there are still five years in which there is neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to set for you a remnant on the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. And now, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has appointed me as a father to Pharaoh, and as lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 45:4-8)

The Verdict

Verdict: Half true, so quashed as said. "Forgive and forget" is not a Bible verse. The pairing is old English, and Shakespeare has King Lear say "forget, and forgive." The Bible commands us to forgive, fully and often. When God promises not to remember our sins, He means He won't hold them against us, not that He loses the memory. We are called to do the same: let go of the debt, not pretend it never happened.

This matters most for people who have been badly hurt. Forgiving someone does not mean you have to trust them again right away, or put yourself back in danger, or keep quiet about a crime. Forgiveness releases the debt to God. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Trust, on the other hand, has to be rebuilt over time.

Saying It Better

Try, “Forgive, and don’t keep bringing it up.” Or quote Paul: “forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Study Questions

1. Have you ever been told to “forgive and forget”? Did it help?
2. What does it mean when God says He will not remember our sins?
3. How did Joseph show both forgiveness and wisdom?
4. What is the difference between forgiving someone and trusting them?
5. Is there someone you need to forgive this week?

Chapter 18: “Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust”

> *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken; for you **are** dust, and to dust you shall return.*
>
> Genesis 3:19 (SLB)

At almost every graveside service you will hear it. The pastor drops a handful of dirt on the casket and says, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” It sounds so much like the Bible that almost everyone assumes it is a verse. It isn’t. It is from a prayer book. But it is built on the Bible, and it ends with one of the greatest hopes in Scripture.

Where It Really Came From

The words come from the burial service in the Church of England’s *Book of Common Prayer*, first published in 1549 and revised several times, most lastingly in 1662. In the 1662 book, as the body is laid in the grave, the minister says that we commit the body “to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice that last part. The prayer book never stopped at “dust to dust.” It went right on to the resurrection.

What the Bible Actually Says

The idea of dust comes from God’s words to Adam after the fall.

> *By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for from it you were taken; for you **are** dust, and to dust you shall return.* (Genesis 3:19)

Abraham called himself “dust and ashes” when he prayed for Sodom (Genesis 18:27). Solomon wrote that “everything was from the dust, and everything returns to the dust” (Ecclesiastes 3:20). And David wrote this.

> *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we **are** dust. Man, his days **are** like grass; like the flower of the field, so he flourishes. For a wind passes over it, and it is no more, and its place will not recognize it again.* (Psalm 103:14-16)

But the Bible does not stop at the grave either. Solomon also said the spirit goes back to God.

> *and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.* (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

And Paul says the body that goes into the dust will be raised.

> *But now Christ has been raised from **the** dead; He became **the** firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since through a man **came** death, through a man also **came the** resurrection of **the** dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

> *So also **is** the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

> *And when this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the word that has been written will come to pass: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, **is** your sting? Where, O Hades, **is** your victory?" Now the sting of death **is** sin, and the power of sin **is** the law. But thanks **be** to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

Jesus put it in the plainest words of all to a grieving sister.

> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The **one** believing in Me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone living and believing in Me will certainly never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26)

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up. The words come from the 1549 and 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* burial service, not from the Bible. But they are built on Genesis 3:19, Genesis 18:27, and Ecclesiastes 3:20, and in the prayer book they lead straight into "sure and certain hope of the Resurrection." Said that way, they are deeply biblical.

The danger is when we say only half of it. "Dust to dust" by itself is just sad. For the believer, it is only the first half of the sentence.

Saying It Better

At the next funeral you attend, if you hear "dust to dust," finish the sentence in your heart: "in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection." Or say what Jesus said to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Study Questions

1. Where had you heard "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" before?
2. Read Genesis 3:19. Why do we return to the dust?
3. What does 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 say about the body that is buried?
4. How does John 11:25-26 change the way a Christian faces death?

Part Two: Close, but Not Quite

Chapter 19: “Money Is the Root of All Evil”

> ***Let your*** *way of life* ***be*** *without love of money, being content with the things present; for He Himself has said, “I will certainly not leave you, nor will I ever forsake you,”*
>
> Hebrews 13:5 (SLB)

This is one of the most quoted lines in the English language, and it comes very close to the Bible. People say it when a rich man gets caught cheating, when a family fights over an inheritance, or when somebody wants to sound wise about the lottery. Most of them think they are quoting Paul. They are, almost. They just left out the most important word.

Where It Really Came From

This one did come from the Bible. Paul wrote it to Timothy, a young pastor in the city of Ephesus. But somewhere along the way, people shortened it. The old King James Version of 1611 reads, “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Drop three words off the front, “the love of,” and you get the saying everybody knows. It is shorter and punchier, and it is wrong.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the whole passage. Paul is warning Timothy about teachers who treat religion as a way to get rich, and then he tells him what real gain looks like.

> *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world,* ***and it is*** *evident that neither are we able to carry anything out. But having sustenance and coverings, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all the evils, which some, stretching after* ***it****, have been led astray from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.* (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

Read that slowly. Paul does not say money is evil. He says the love of money is “a root of all the evils.” The problem is not the dollar in your wallet. The problem is the grip it has on your heart. Notice too that Paul is talking to people “who desire to be rich.” The danger is the wanting, the reaching, the “stretching after” money until a person wanders from the faith.

A few verses later Paul tells Timothy what to say to people who already have money. He does not tell them to throw it away.

> *Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded nor to have set* ***their*** *hope on* ***the*** *uncertainty of riches, but in the living God, who provides us all things richly for enjoyment, to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may lay hold of eternal life.*
> (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

God “provides us all things richly for enjoyment.” Money is one of those things. It can feed a family, keep a church’s lights on, send a missionary, and help a widow pay her rent. Abraham was rich. Job was rich. Joseph of Arimathea was rich, and he used his wealth to give Jesus a grave. Lydia ran a business in purple cloth and opened her home to Paul. None of them were condemned for having money.

Jesus said the same thing in His own words.

> *No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and wealth.* (Matthew 6:24)

You can have money. You can’t serve it. And the writer of Hebrews puts the cure right next to the warning: be content, because God has promised never to leave you.

> ***He who** loves silver will not be satisfied with silver, and whoever loves abundance **will** not **be satisfied with** income. This also **is** futility.* (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Solomon had more money than anyone in his day, and he found out the hard way that loving money never fills you up. There is always one more thing to buy.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed as said.** Money is not the root of all evil. The Bible says the *love* of money is a root of all kinds of evil. The short version blames the thing. The Bible blames the heart.

This is not just a word game. If money itself were evil, the answer would be to get rid of it, and poor people would be holy by default. But a poor man can love money as much as a rich man, maybe more. The Bible puts the problem where it really lives, inside us. That means the fix is not a smaller bank account. It is a changed heart that trusts God more than its savings.

Saying It Better

If you want to quote it, quote it right: “The love of money is a root of all the evils” (1 Timothy 6:10). Then add the next line in your heart: “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).

A simple test I use is this. Do I worry about money more than I pray about it? Would I be willing to give some of it away this week if God asked? If the answer to the first is yes, and the second is no, then money has stopped being a tool and started being a master.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think people dropped “the love of” from this verse? What does the short version get wrong?
2. Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. What does Paul tell rich believers to do with their money?
3. Can a poor person love money? What would that look like?
4. What does contentment look like in your life right now? Where do you struggle with it?

Chapter 20: “Pride Goes Before a Fall”

> *But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes **the** proud, but gives grace to **the** humble.”*
>
> James 4:6 (SLB)

A man brags at the office party that he has never had a speeding ticket in thirty years. On the way home he gets pulled over. Somebody in the car says, “Well, pride goes before a fall.” Everybody nods, and somebody adds, “That’s in the Bible, you know.”

It is. Mostly. This is one of the sayings in this book that is close enough to Scripture that I don’t want to beat it up. But it is worth seeing what the Bible actually says, because the real verse is stronger than the saying.

Before May 29, 2020, I was successful at work and sure I had everything under control. Pride has been my biggest downfall through my adult life, and it kept me denying my drinking until my wife caught me and told me I needed help. Pride blinds us right before we hit the wall.

Where It Really Came From

This saying comes from Proverbs 16:18. The King James Version of 1611 reads, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Over time, English speakers squeezed the two halves of the verse together. “Destruction” dropped out, and “pride” got joined to “a fall.” The short form shows up in English writing by the 1500s and 1600s, and it stuck because it is easy to remember.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the verse with the one after it, in the SLB.

> *Before breaking **is** pride, and before stumbling, haughtiness of spirit. Better **is** to be lowly of spirit with **the** humble than to divide plunder with **the** proud.* (Proverbs 16:18-19)

Hebrew poetry often says the same thing twice in different words. The first line says pride comes before “breaking,” which means being shattered or ruined. The second line says a haughty spirit comes before “stumbling.” So the saying is not wrong. It just made the warning smaller. The verse is not talking about slipping on the ice. It is talking about a life being broken.

Proverbs says this more than once.

> *Pride comes, and shame comes; and with **the** modest **is** wisdom.* (Proverbs 11:2)

> *The pride of a man will bring him low, and **one** lowly of spirit will lay hold of honor.* (Proverbs 29:23)

And the New Testament picks it up and points it at God Himself. James quotes Proverbs 3:34 to show that God is not neutral about pride.

> *But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes **the** proud, but gives grace to **the** humble."* (James 4:6)

That is the scariest part. Pride does not just set you up for bad luck. It puts you on the wrong side of God. Think of King Nebuchadnezzar walking on his palace roof, saying, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built for a house of the kingdom by the strength of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). Before the words were out of his mouth, God humbled him. Think of King Uzziah, who grew strong and then grew proud, and walked into the temple to do what only priests could do (2 Chronicles 26:16). Or think of Peter, who told Jesus, "Even if all will be caused to stumble, yet not I!" (Mark 14:29), and denied Him three times before the rooster crowed.

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up. The wording is not exact, but the idea comes straight from Proverbs 16:18, and the rest of the Bible backs it up. If anything, the real verse is stronger: pride goes before *destruction*, and God Himself opposes the proud.

Saying It Better

If you quote it, say, "Pride goes before destruction." And remember the good news on the other side of the verse. "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." The way up in God's kingdom is down. Jesus said, "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between "a fall" and "destruction"? Why does it matter?
2. Read James 4:6. Why do you think God opposes the proud instead of just letting them fail?
3. Think of a time pride got you in trouble. What did you learn?
4. What is one practical way to choose humility this week?

Chapter 21: “Spare the Rod, Spoil the Child”

> *Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*
>
> Hebrews 12:11 (SLB)

Few sayings start an argument faster than this one. Some people hear it and nod. Others hear it and get angry. Almost everyone who says it believes it is a Bible verse. It isn’t, word for word. But the idea behind it comes from the Bible, so it deserves a careful look and not a quick dismissal.

Where It Really Came From

The exact words “spare the rod and spoil the child” come from an English poem, not from Scripture. Samuel Butler wrote a long comic poem called *Hudibras*, published in three parts in 1663, 1664, and 1678. It pokes fun at the Puritans, and the reference works I checked name it as the first place the saying appears in this exact form. The poem was a hit in its day, and this line outlived the rest of it. Butler was writing a comedy, not a sermon, but he was clearly playing off a proverb that every English reader of his time knew from the Bible.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the verse Butler had in mind.

> *He who withholds his rod hates his son, and he who loves him seeks him early **with** discipline.*
> (Proverbs 13:24)

Proverbs talks about the rod several more times.

> *Folly **is** bound in the heart of a youth; the rod of discipline will put it far from him.*
> (Proverbs 22:15)

> *Do not withhold discipline from a youth; when you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You, with the rod you will strike him, and his soul from Sheol you will deliver.* (Proverbs 23:13-14)

The point of these proverbs is love. “He who loves him seeks him early with discipline.” A parent who never corrects a child is not being kind. He is leaving that child to grow up without boundaries, and Proverbs says that is a kind of hatred. The “rod” in Proverbs is the shepherd’s tool and the father’s correction. The goal is a child’s soul, not a parent’s anger.

The New Testament takes the same idea and shows us God as the perfect Father.

> *and you have forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons: “My son, do not regard lightly **the** discipline of **the** Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for whom **the** Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? But if*

> *you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we indeed had the fathers of our flesh as correctors, and we respected **them**; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed disciplined **us** for a few days according to what seemed good to them, but He for **our** benefit, so that **we may** share His holiness. Now all discipline for the present does not seem to be of joy, but of grief; but afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Then Paul puts a guardrail on the parent's side.

> *And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in **the** discipline and admonition of **the** Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4)

> *Fathers, do not provoke your children, so that they may not become discouraged.* (Colossians 3:21)

So the Bible holds two things together. Children need discipline, and children must not be crushed, provoked, or discouraged by it. Discipline in the Bible is always for the child's good, done in love, under control, and never to vent a parent's temper.

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up, with care. The words come from a 1600s poem, but the idea comes from Proverbs 13:24. Loving parents correct their children, and a child left without correction is harmed. The purpose of correction is never to cause pain. It is to stop an unwanted or unhealthy action and raise a child with respect and a true understanding that every action has a consequence, good or bad. But the Bible never gives anyone permission to abuse a child, and it warns fathers not to provoke or discourage their children.

I know people have been hurt by parents who quoted this saying while they lost their temper. That was never what Proverbs meant. If you were treated that way, God's Word was not on your abuser's side. And today, the laws where you live may set limits on how parents may discipline. Christians should obey those laws, and most of the discipline the Bible talks about is teaching, training, and correction, not just punishment.

What Correction Is For

Let me be clear about what physical discipline is for, because this is where people get it wrong on both sides. In the Bible, the rod is never about inflicting pain. Pain is not the goal. Correction is the goal. A parent who disciplines is stopping an unwanted or unhealthy action before it grows into a habit, and pointing the child back to what is right.

Done right, discipline teaches a child two things he will need for the rest of his life. First, respect: respect for his parents, for other people, and in the end for God. Second, a true understanding that every action has a consequence. Good choices bring good results. Bad choices bring bad results. A child who learns that

at home, from parents who love him, does not have to learn it the hard way from a judge, a boss, or a broken life. “Do not be led astray; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

That is why discipline must never be done in anger, and never to embarrass or crush a child. It should be calm, in private, explained, and followed by love. Explain what was wrong, why it was wrong, and what to do next time. Then hug your child and let him know the matter is settled. That is how God disciplines us. “He for our benefit, so that we may share His holiness” (Hebrews 12:10). If you can’t do it calmly, wait until you can.

Saying It Better

Try this instead: “Whom the Lord loves He disciplines” (Hebrews 12:6). That keeps the focus where the Bible keeps it, on love and on the peaceful fruit of righteousness that good discipline produces.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between discipline and punishment?
2. What is the purpose of correction, according to this chapter? What is it not for?
3. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. What does God’s discipline tell us about how He sees us?
4. How do Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 balance Proverbs 13:24?
5. If you are a parent, what is one way you can correct your child this week that builds them up instead of discouraging them?

Chapter 22: “The Lion Shall Lie Down With the Lamb”

> *They will not do evil and they will not destroy in all the mountain of My holiness; for the earth will be full **of** the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*
>
> Isaiah 11:9 (SLB)

You have seen it on Christmas cards, church banners, and paintings: a lion curled up next to a little lamb, both at peace. Underneath, a line says, “The lion shall lie down with the lamb.” It is a beautiful picture of peace, and almost everyone thinks it is a quote from Isaiah. Here is the surprise. No verse in the Bible says those words.

When I translated Isaiah 11 for the SLB, I saw that the verse says the wolf will dwell with the lamb, not the lion. Most of us repeat familiar phrases for years without checking the verse. Reading slowly and literally cures a lot of misquotes.

Where It Really Came From

The saying blends two verses in Isaiah into one. Isaiah 11:6 pairs the wolf with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat. The lion is in the same verse, but it is paired with the calf. Isaiah 65:25 pairs the wolf and the lamb again, and says the lion will eat straw like an ox. Over the years, artists and speakers simply moved the lion over to the lamb, probably because a lion makes a stronger picture and because Jesus is called both the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God (Revelation 5:5-6). The result is a saying that sounds like Scripture but isn’t.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the full passage in Isaiah 11, so you can see who brings this peace.

> *And a shoot will come forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, **the** spirit of wisdom and understanding, **the** spirit of counsel and might, **the** spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. And His delight **will be** in the fear of the LORD; and He will not judge by the sight of His eyes, and He will not decide by the hearing of His ears; and He will judge the poor with righteousness, and decide with uprightness for the humble of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will put the wicked to death. And righteousness will be the waistband of His hips, and faithfulness the waistband of His loins. And the wolf will sojourn with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling **will be** together; and a small boy will lead them. And the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion, like the ox, will eat straw. And the nursing child will play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned **child** will put out his hand over the nest of the viper. They will not do evil and they will not destroy in all the mountain of My holiness; for the earth will be full **of** the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*
> (Isaiah 11:1-9)

And here is the second passage, from the end of Isaiah.

> *For look, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former **things** will not be remembered, and they will not come up on **the** heart. But rejoice and be glad forever **in** what I am creating; for look, I am creating Jerusalem **as** gladness, and her people **as** joy. And I will be glad in Jerusalem and rejoice in My people; and the sound of weeping and the sound of crying will not be heard in her again. There will no longer be from there an infant **living but a few** days, or an old man who does not fill out his days; for the youth will die a son of a hundred years, and the sinner, a son of a hundred years, will be cursed. And they will build houses and dwell **in them**; and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another dwell; they will not plant and another eat; for like the days of the tree **will be** the days of My people, and My chosen ones will fully use the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, and they will not bear **children** for sudden terror; for they **are** the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. And it will be that before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear. Wolf and lamb will graze as one, and the lion like the ox will eat straw, and **as for the** snake, dust **will be** its food. They will not do evil and they will not destroy in all My holy mountain, says the LORD.* (Isaiah 65:17-25)

Notice what the animals are doing in these verses. The wolf lives with the lamb. The leopard lies down with the young goat. The lion eats straw. The point is that the whole created order will be put right. The animals that used to kill will stop killing, and the children will be safe. And notice who brings it. It is the shoot that comes from the stump of Jesse, the Messiah from David's family line. That is Jesus Christ. This peace does not come from people learning to get along. It comes when the King comes and rules the earth with righteousness.

As I teach in my other books, I believe these promises will be fulfilled on this earth when Jesus returns and reigns, when He comes back in glory at the end of the tribulation (Revelation 19 and 20). Before that terrible time begins, I believe He will catch His Church up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and then we come back with Him. My *Revelation Bible Study* lays out that order of events in detail. The new heavens and new earth Isaiah describes come at the end of that story (Revelation 21).

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up in its idea, but quashed in its wording. The Bible never says the lion will lie down with the lamb. It says the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the lion will eat straw like an ox. The hope behind the saying is true: when the Messiah reigns, even nature will be at peace.

Saying It Better

If you want to quote it, quote Isaiah 11:6 or 65:25 as written. Then remember why it matters. The peace we long for is not a nice picture on a card. It is a promise tied to a Person. "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Study Questions

1. Before reading this chapter, did you think "the lion shall lie down with the lamb" was in the Bible?

2. In Isaiah 11, who brings the peace among the animals?

3. Why do you think artists put the lion with the lamb?

4. What part of Isaiah 65:17-25 gives you the most hope?

Chapter 23: “The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away”

> *And he said, “Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there. The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed.”*
>
> Job 1:21 (SLB)

You hear this one at funerals, after a job loss, and sometimes after a bad poker hand. People say it with a shrug: “Well, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.” Usually they mean, “That’s life,” or, “There’s nothing you can do.”

This one really is in the Bible. The wording has drifted a little, and it is often used without the most important part. That is why it is in this section.

Where It Really Came From

It comes from Job 1:21. The King James Version of 1611 reads, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” The “giveth” and “taketh” forms came later, from people imitating old Bible English. The words are close. The bigger change is that people stop halfway through the verse.

What the Bible Actually Says

Job had just lost his livestock, his servants, and all ten of his children in a single day. Here is what he did next.

> *And Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the earth and bowed down. And he said, “Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there. The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed.” In all this Job did not sin, and he did not ascribe unseemliness to God.* (Job 1:20-22)

Job did not shrug. He tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell to the ground. He grieved hard. And then he worshiped. The verse doesn’t end with “the LORD has taken.” It ends with “let the name of the LORD be blessed.” That is not a sigh. That is faith.

A chapter later, Job said it again to his wife.

> *And his wife said to him, “**Are** you still holding fast to your integrity? Curse God and die.” And he said to her, “As one of the foolish women speaks, you speak. Shall we also accept the good from God, and not accept the evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.* (Job 2:9-10)

Job knew that everything he had came from God, and that God had the right to give and to take. He did not understand why. He didn’t know about the conversation in heaven in Job 1 and 2. But he trusted God’s character when he couldn’t see God’s plan. Later in the book Job struggles, argues, and asks hard

questions, and God answers him with Himself. At the end, God restores Job (Job 42:10-17), and James tells us the point: “the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11).

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Holds up, when it is said in full.** The words are from Job 1:21. God does give, and God has the right to take. But Job’s words are a prayer of worship, not a shrug. Say the whole verse: “let the name of the LORD be blessed.”

Saying It Better

When you are hurting, it is all right to grieve the way Job did. Tear your robe, so to speak. Cry. Ask God why. Then, if you can, finish the verse. You don’t have to feel it to say it. Saying “Blessed be the name of the LORD” in the worst week of your life is one of the bravest things a believer can do.

Study Questions

1. What did Job do before he spoke the words of Job 1:21?
2. How is “That’s life” different from “let the name of the LORD be blessed”?
3. Read Job 2:9-10. What does Job’s answer to his wife teach about trusting God?
4. Is there a loss in your life where you need to finish the verse?

Chapter 24: “In the World but Not of It”

> *I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil.*
>
> John 17:15 (SLB)

Christians say this all the time. “We’re supposed to be in the world but not of it.” Preachers say it. Youth leaders say it. Some people say it to explain why they won’t watch a certain movie, and others say it to explain why they will. Almost everyone assumes it is a Bible verse. It isn’t, in those words. But it is a fair summary of something Jesus said in His longest recorded prayer.

Where It Really Came From

The phrase is a summary of John 17, where Jesus prays for His disciples the night before the cross. Preachers have boiled that prayer down to “in the world but not of it” for a long time. I could not find who first said it in exactly those words, and I won’t guess. What matters is that the summary is built on Jesus’ own words.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the heart of Jesus’ prayer.

> *But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world, so that they may have My joy made full in them. I have given them Your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your truth; Your word is truth. Even as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. And on behalf of them I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.* (John 17:13-19)

Jesus says three things here. First, His followers “are not of the world,” just as He is not. Their life and their loyalty come from above. Second, He does not ask the Father to take them out of the world. He wants them right where they are, in the middle of real life, in towns and workplaces and families. Third, He sends them into the world, the same way the Father sent Him. So the full picture is not just “in the world but not of it.” It is “not of the world, but sent into it.”

Paul and John say the same thing from different angles.

> *Therefore I exhort you, brothers, through the compassions of God, to present your bodies **as** a living, holy sacrifice, well-pleasing to God, your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God **is**, the good and well-pleasing and perfect **will**.* (Romans 12:1-2)

> *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that **is** in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes*

> *and the boasting of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and its lust; but the one doing the will of God abides forever.* (1 John 2:15-17)

"The world" in these verses does not mean the planet, or people. God so loved the world, John 3:16 says. It means the way of life that leaves God out: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of life. We are told not to love that, and not to let it press us into its shape.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Holds up.** The words are not in the Bible, but the idea is a fair summary of John 17:14-18. Jesus' people are not of the world, they stay in the world on purpose, and they are sent into it with His message.

The one thing I would add is the word "sent." Some Christians use this saying to hide from people. Others use it to excuse living just like everyone else. Jesus did neither. He ate with sinners and never sinned. That is the pattern.

Saying It Better

Try "not of the world, but sent into it." Or just quote Jesus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

Study Questions

1. What does "the world" mean in 1 John 2:15-17?
2. Why do you think Jesus did not ask the Father to take His disciples out of the world?
3. Which way do you lean: hiding from the world, or blending into it?
4. Where has God sent you to be His light right now?

Chapter 25: “Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You”

> *Therefore all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.*
>
> Matthew 7:12 (SLB)

This is the Golden Rule. It may be the best-known moral teaching in the world. Kids learn it in kindergarten, and many people of other faiths and no faith at all hold it up as the heart of being a good person. Most people who say it know it is from the Bible. They are right. But the words they use are not quite the Bible’s words, and the way they use it often leaves out what Jesus put around it.

Where It Really Came From

Jesus taught it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:12) and again in the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:31). The familiar wording, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” is a popular blend of old Bible English. The name “Golden Rule” came much later, in English writing of the 1600s.

People sometimes point out that other teachers said something like it before Jesus. That is true. The Jewish teacher Hillel, a generation before Jesus, is remembered for saying that what is hateful to you, you should not do to your neighbor, and similar lines turn up in other old writings. Most of those are the negative form: don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you. Jesus said it in the positive form. Not just “don’t hurt people,” but “go and do good to them.” That is a much harder command.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the verse in Matthew.

> *Therefore all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 7:12)

Jesus says this one sentence sums up “the law and the prophets.” That is the whole Old Testament’s teaching on how to treat people. Now look at the setting in Luke.

> *But I say to you who are hearing: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer also the other; and from the one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold also the tunic. And give to everyone who asks you; and from the one who takes away what **is** yours, do not ask **it** back. And just as you desire that men do to you, you also do to them likewise. And if you love those who love you, what credit is **there** to you? For even the sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is **there** to you? For even the sinners do the same. And if you lend **to those** from whom you expect to receive back, what credit is **there** to you? For even the sinners lend to sinners, so that they may receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return;*

> *and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He Himself is kind to the ungrateful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.* (Luke 6:27-36)

That changes everything. The Golden Rule is not about being nice to nice people. Jesus put it right in the middle of "love your enemies." He also put it on the same foundation as the second great commandment.

> *"Teacher, which commandment **is** great in the law?" And Jesus said to him, "'You shall love **the** Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is **the** first and great commandment. And **the** second **is** like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the Prophets."* (Matthew 22:36-40)

The Verdict

Verdict: Holds up. The wording is a paraphrase, but the teaching is Jesus' own, from Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. If anything, the real thing is harder than the saying: Jesus tied it to loving your enemies and to being merciful the way your Father is merciful.

One more thing. Nobody keeps the Golden Rule perfectly. I don't, and you don't. That is why it can't be the way we get to heaven. It shows us how far short we fall, and it sends us to Jesus, who kept it perfectly and died for those of us who haven't.

Saying It Better

Quote Jesus as He said it: "all things whatever you desire that men do to you, so you also do to them." Then ask yourself who in your life is hardest to treat that way. That is probably the person Jesus had in mind.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between "don't do to others what you don't want done to you" and the way Jesus said it?
2. Read Luke 6:27-36. Why do you think Jesus put the Golden Rule in the middle of teaching about enemies?
3. Why can't the Golden Rule be the way we get to heaven?
4. Who is one person you can treat the way you would want to be treated this week?

Part Three: Things People Think the Bible Says

Chapter 26: “Adam and Eve Ate an Apple”

> *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From every tree of the garden you may surely eat; and from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it; for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die.”*
>
> Genesis 2:16-17 (SLB)

Ask almost anyone what Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden, and they will say an apple. Paintings show it. Cartoons show it. We even call the bump in a man’s throat his “Adam’s apple,” from the old idea that a piece of the fruit got stuck there. But open your Bible to Genesis 3 and look for the apple. You won’t find it.

Translating Genesis for the SLB reminded me to separate the pictures in my head from what God actually wrote. The text says fruit. It never says apple. Details matter when we handle God's Word.

Where It Really Came From

Genesis never names the fruit. So where did the apple come from? No one can say for sure, so I will be careful here. A common explanation is a play on words in Latin, the language of the Western church for over a thousand years. The Latin word *malum* can mean “evil,” and a very similar word, *malum*, means “apple” or almost any tree fruit. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *mali*, was easy to picture as an apple. Over the centuries, European painters, who mostly knew apples, painted apples. Some older traditions guessed the fruit was a fig, since Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves right afterward. Others guessed grapes, a pomegranate, or wheat. All of those are guesses. The Bible simply says “fruit.”

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is God’s command to Adam.

> *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From every tree of the garden you may surely eat; and from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat from it; for in the day you eat from it you shall surely die.”* (Genesis 2:16-17)

And here is what happened.

> *And the serpent was more shrewd than every living thing of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; and from the fruit of the tree which **is** in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.’” And the serpent said to the woman, “You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” And the woman saw that the tree **was** good for food, and that it **was** a delight to the eyes, and the tree **was** desirable to make **one** wise; and she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he*

> *ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they **were** naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made for themselves loin coverings.* (Genesis 3:1-7)

The tree is called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Its fruit is just "its fruit." What mattered was never what kind of fruit it was. What mattered was that God had said no, and the serpent got the woman to doubt what God said. "Has God indeed said...?" That is still the first question every temptation asks.

Notice one more thing people often miss. Eve did not wander off alone. The verse says she "gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Adam was there. That is why Paul says sin entered the world through one man.

> *Because of this, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death passed to all men, because all sinned* (Romans 5:12)

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. The Bible never says the forbidden fruit was an apple. It only says "fruit" from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The apple comes from later art and tradition.

This is a small thing, but it shows how easily pictures can take the place of the text. If we can get the fruit wrong, we can get bigger things wrong too. The fix is the same every time: go back and read what it says.

Saying It Better

Say "the forbidden fruit," which is what Genesis gives us. And remember the bigger story. What one man lost at a tree, Jesus won back on a tree, when He "bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the apple picture caught on so strongly?
2. Read Genesis 3:1-7. What did the serpent question first?
3. Why does it matter that Adam was "with her"?
4. Can you think of another Bible story where a picture has taken the place of what the text says?

Chapter 27: “Three Wise Men Came to the Manger”

> *And having come into the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and having fallen down they worshiped Him; and having opened their treasures, they offered to Him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh.*
>
> Matthew 2:11 (SLB)

Every Christmas, the manger scene comes out. There is Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, a few shepherds, an ox and a donkey, and three wise men in royal robes, often with names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. We sing “We Three Kings.” It is a lovely tradition, and I am not trying to ruin anyone’s Christmas. But almost every part of that wise men picture comes from tradition, not from the Bible.

I have studied and taught Scripture for years, and I know it is possible to know all the right Bible facts and still miss obedience. The scribes in Jerusalem knew the exact prophecy in Micah, yet they never made the short trip to Bethlehem. Head knowledge without action never brings us closer to Christ.

Where It Really Came From

Matthew never says how many wise men came. People counted the gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and assumed three men, one gift each. That is a reasonable guess, but it is a guess. Some old traditions in the East counted twelve.

Matthew also never calls them kings. The word he uses is *magi*, which meant wise men or astrologers from the East, probably from Persia or Babylon. They became “kings” later, as Christians read them alongside psalms about kings bringing gifts (Psalm 72:10-11).

The names Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar are not in Scripture at all. They first show up in a Latin chronicle from the 700s, the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, in spellings that look different from ours.

And the date? The Bible never says Jesus was born on December 25. The earliest record we have of the church celebrating Christ’s birth on December 25 is a Roman calendar from A.D. 354, called the Chronograph of 354. Some Christians before that had already worked out other dates. December 25 is a date the church chose to celebrate, not a date the Bible gives.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is Matthew’s whole account.

> *Now when Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea in **the** days of Herod the king, look, Magi from **the** east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the **One** who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.” And having heard **this**, Herod the king was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And having gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he was inquiring of them where the Christ is born. And they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it has been written through the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you*

> *will go forth **One** leading, who will shepherd My people Israel.'" Then Herod, having secretly called the Magi, ascertained exactly from them the time of the appearing star. And having sent them to Bethlehem, he said, "Having gone, search carefully for the child; and when you have found **Him**, bring word back to me, so that I also, having come, may worship Him." And having heard the king, they went away; and look, the star which they saw in the east was going before them, until, having come, it stood over where the child was. And having seen the star, they rejoiced **with** exceedingly great joy. And having come into the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and having fallen down they worshiped Him; and having opened their treasures, they offered to Him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh. And having been divinely warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they withdrew into their country by another way.* (Matthew 2:1-12)

Look carefully at verse 11. They came "into the house," not to a stable, and they "saw the child." Luke uses the word for a newborn baby when he describes the shepherds that first night. Matthew uses a different word, "child." Then in verse 16, Herod kills the boys of Bethlehem "from two years old and under, according to the time which he had ascertained exactly from the Magi." That tells us the wise men probably came some months after Jesus was born, maybe as much as a year or two. The shepherds came the night He was born. The Magi came later.

> *And **there** were shepherds in the same region living out in the fields and keeping watches of the night over their flock. And look, an angel of **the** Lord stood by them, and **the** glory of **the** Lord shone around them, and they feared a great fear. And the angel said to them, "Do not fear; for look, I announce to you great joy as good news, which will be to all the people. For there has been born to you today a Savior, who is Christ **the** Lord, in **the** city of David. And this **is** the sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in the manger." And suddenly **there** was with the angel a multitude of **the** heavenly army, praising God and saying, "Glory in **the** highest to God, and on earth peace, among men good will!"* (Luke 2:8-14)

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. The Bible does not say there were three wise men, does not call them kings, does not give their names, does not put them at the manger, and does not give December 25 as Jesus' birthday. What it does say is better: wise men from the East traveled a long way to worship a child King, while the religious leaders a few miles away stayed home.

Is it wrong to put the wise men in your manger scene or to celebrate Christmas on December 25? No. Those are traditions, and Christians are free to enjoy them (Romans 14:5-6). The point is just to know which parts are the Bible and which parts are us.

Saying It Better

Say "wise men" or "Magi from the East." And notice what they did when they found Jesus. "Having fallen down they worshiped Him." Before the gifts came the worship. That is a good order for us too.

Study Questions

1. Which part of the wise men story surprised you most?
2. Read Matthew 2:11 and 2:16. What clues tell us the Magi came later than the shepherds?
3. Why do you think the chief priests and scribes knew where the Messiah would be born but did not go?
4. How can you keep worship ahead of gifts this Christmas?

Chapter 28: “Jonah Was Swallowed by a Whale”

And the LORD said to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.

Jonah 2:10 (SLB)

This is one of the first Bible stories children learn. Jonah runs from God, gets thrown overboard, and is swallowed by a whale. Kids’ Bibles draw a big blue whale with a smiling Jonah inside. It is a great story. But the book of Jonah never uses the word “whale.”

Where It Really Came From

Jonah 1:17 says “a great fish.” The Hebrew word is the ordinary word for fish. The whale comes from Matthew 12:40 in older English Bibles. When Jesus talks about Jonah, Matthew uses the Greek word *ketos*, which means a huge sea creature or sea monster. The King James Version of 1611 translated it “whale,” and that word shaped how English speakers pictured the story for four hundred years. Most modern translations say “great fish” or “sea monster,” and so does the SLB.

What the Bible Actually Says

> *And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the inward parts of the fish three days and three nights.* (Jonah 1:17)

> *And Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the inward parts of the fish. And he said, “I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me; from the belly of Sheol I cried for help; You heard my voice.”* (Jonah 2:1-2)

> *And the LORD said to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.* (Jonah 2:10)

Notice who is in charge. “The LORD appointed a great fish.” The fish was not an accident, and it was not a punishment. It was God’s rescue. Jonah was drowning, and God sent a fish to save him. Then “the LORD said to the fish,” and it put Jonah on dry land.

Now here is what Jesus said about it.

> *For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.* (Matthew 12:40)

Jesus treated Jonah as a real man and the fish as a real event. More than that, He said it was a sign pointing to His own death, burial, and resurrection. Jonah came out of the fish after three days. Jesus came out of the tomb on the third day.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed in its wording, but the story holds up.** The Bible says “a great fish,” and Jesus called it a “sea monster.” It never says “whale” in the original languages. Whatever kind of creature it was, God appointed it, and Jesus used it as a sign of His resurrection.

Don’t let the word fight distract you from the real point of the book. Jonah is not mainly about a fish. It is about a God who is “a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love” (Jonah 4:2), even to Israel’s enemies in Nineveh, and about a prophet who had a hard time being glad about that.

Saying It Better

Say “a great fish.” And when you tell the story, tell the ending too. The story is not over when Jonah gets out of the fish. It ends with God asking Jonah whether He should not care about a city full of people who don’t know their right hand from their left (Jonah 4:11).

Study Questions

1. Why did older English Bibles say “whale”?
2. Read Jonah 1:17 and 2:10. Who is in control of the fish?
3. How did Jesus use the story of Jonah in Matthew 12:40?
4. Jonah did not want God to show mercy to his enemies. Is there anyone you struggle to want God to forgive?

Chapter 29: “Heaven Gained Another Angel”

> *But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the** city of **the** living God, **the** heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to **the** festal gathering and church of **the** firstborn who are enrolled in **the** heavens, and to God, **the** judge of all, and to **the** spirits of righteous **men** made perfect*
>
> Hebrews 12:22-23 (SLB)

When a child or a loved one dies, people often say, “Heaven gained another angel,” or, “God needed another angel.” Sympathy cards say it. Songs say it. Movies show people earning their wings. The people who say it are trying to bring comfort, and I don’t want to be hard on anyone who has said it at a graveside. But the Bible teaches something different, and the truth is far more comforting.

Where It Really Came From

I could not find one clear first source for the idea that people turn into angels when they die. It seems to have grown out of popular art, poems, and greeting cards, especially in the 1800s, when sweet pictures of children with wings became common. The idea of an angel “earning wings” was made famous by the 1946 film *It’s a Wonderful Life*, where an angel named Clarence is trying to get his wings. That is a movie, not a Bible verse.

What the Bible Actually Says

In the Bible, angels and people are two different kinds of beings. God created angels as spirits who serve Him.

> *But to which of the angels has He ever said, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet”? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth for service for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?* (Hebrews 1:13-14)

People are made in God’s image, with bodies and souls. When a believer dies, he does not become an angel. He goes to be with the Lord as a human person.

> *For to me, to live **is** Christ, and to die **is** gain. But if to live in **the** flesh, this **is** fruit of work for me; and what I will choose, I do not make known. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, **which is** very much better* (Philippians 1:21-23)

> *we are confident, and we are pleased rather to be absent out of the body and to be at home with the Lord.* (2 Corinthians 5:8)

> *And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* (Luke 23:43)

The book of Hebrews lists angels and the spirits of believers side by side, as two different groups.

> *But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the** city of **the** living God, **the** heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to **the** festal gathering and church of **the** firstborn who are enrolled in **the** heavens, and to God, **the** judge of all, and to **the** spirits of righteous **men** made perfect, and to Jesus, **the** mediator of a new covenant, and to **the** blood of sprinkling that speaks better **things** than **that of** Abel.* (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Jesus did say the resurrected will be "like angels" in one way, but He did not say they will be angels.

> *for neither are they able to die any more, for they are like angels, and they are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.* (Luke 20:36)

In context, Jesus is answering a question about marriage. In the resurrection, people will not die any more, and they will not marry. In that way they are like angels. But they are "sons of the resurrection." They have bodies, raised and changed. Paul even says believers will one day judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). We are not headed for a promotion into angelhood. We are headed for something better: resurrection bodies like Jesus' own glorious body (Philippians 3:21).

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. People do not become angels when they die. Believers who die go to be with Christ as themselves, and when He comes for His Church they will be raised with new, glorified bodies. God does not "need" another angel. He has myriads of them.

Here is why this matters. If your grandmother became an angel, then she is not your grandmother anymore. She is something else. But the Bible says she is still herself, with the Lord, and that you will see her again and know her. "The dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Together. That is the comfort.

Saying It Better

Instead of "Heaven gained an angel," try, "She is with the Lord, and we will see her again." That is true, and it is the comfort Paul told us to give one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the "people become angels" idea is so popular?
2. Read Hebrews 1:14 and Hebrews 12:22-23. How does Scripture show angels and believers as different?
3. In Luke 20:36, how are the resurrected "like angels"? How are they not?
4. How would you comfort a grieving friend with what the Bible says?

Chapter 30: “The Devil Rules in Hell”

> *And the devil who deceives them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet **are**; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.*
>
> Revelation 20:10 (SLB)

In cartoons, the devil is red, with horns, a pitchfork, and a pointed tail. He sits on a throne in hell, bossing demons around and poking sinners. People joke about going to hell and partying with the devil. Many people really believe Satan is the king of hell and runs the place. The Bible says the opposite.

Where It Really Came From

Much of the popular picture of hell comes from great poems and art, not from Scripture. Dante’s *Inferno*, written in the early 1300s, mapped hell into rings with Satan frozen at the bottom. John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, gave Satan one of the most famous lines in English poetry. In Book One, Satan says it is “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.” Milton was showing Satan’s pride, not teaching that Satan really reigns. But the line stuck, and so did the idea. The horns and pitchfork come from centuries of medieval and later art.

What the Bible Actually Says

Right now, Satan is not in hell at all. The Bible describes him as active on the earth, tempting and accusing.

> *Be sober, be watchful, because your adversary, **the** devil, walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Peter 5:8)

> *And you, being dead in the trespasses and the sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit that **is** now working in the sons of disobedience* (Ephesians 2:1-2)

Hell was not built as Satan’s kingdom. Jesus said it was prepared as Satan’s punishment.

> *Then He will also say to those on **the** left, ‘Go from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.* (Matthew 25:41)

And the Bible tells us how it ends for him. When Jesus returns in glory at the end of the tribulation, Satan is bound in the abyss for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3). After that, he is released for a short time, and then he is thrown into the lake of fire forever.

> *And the devil who deceives them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet **are**; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.* (Revelation 20:10)

He will not be ruling there. He will be “tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.” He is not the warden. He is the first prisoner.

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed.** The Bible never pictures Satan as the king of hell. Today he prowls the earth. In the end, he is thrown into the lake of fire, which was prepared as his punishment, and he is tormented there forever. Jesus Christ is the One who holds “the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:18).

This matters because people who think hell will be a party with the devil are badly fooled. Hell is not a place where Satan wins. It is where his defeat is final. And no one has to go there. God sent His Son so that “everyone who believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Saying It Better

Say it the way Revelation says it: the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire. And remember who has the keys. “I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and look, I am living to the ages of the ages. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:17-18).

Study Questions

1. Where did you first get your picture of the devil and hell?
2. Read 1 Peter 5:8 and Matthew 25:41. Where is Satan now, and who was hell prepared for?
3. Why is “partying with the devil in hell” such a dangerous idea?
4. What comfort is there in knowing Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of Death?

Chapter 31: “Mary Magdalene Was a Prostitute”

> *Mary the Magdalene comes, announcing to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and **that** He had said these things to her.*
>
> John 20:18 (SLB)

In movies, novels, and plenty of sermons, Mary Magdalene is the reformed prostitute who wept at Jesus’ feet. Many people are certain the Bible says so. It doesn’t. The Bible tells us quite a bit about Mary Magdalene, and none of it says she was a prostitute.

Where It Really Came From

The idea came from blending several different women into one. In the Gospels there is Mary Magdalene. There is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anointed Jesus’ feet (John 12:1-3). And there is an unnamed “woman who was a sinner in the city” who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears at a Pharisee’s house (Luke 7:36-50). Luke tells that story, and then, in the very next paragraph, introduces Mary Magdalene for the first time (Luke 8:2). Readers began to assume the two women were the same.

The blend was made official in the West in a sermon by Pope Gregory the Great in A.D. 591, who taught that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and the sinful woman of Luke 7 were one person. That view shaped Western art and preaching for well over a thousand years. In 1969 the Roman Catholic Church itself changed its calendar and stopped treating them as the same woman.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is how Luke introduces her.

> *And it came to pass soon afterward **that** He Himself was traveling throughout every city and village, proclaiming and preaching the gospel **of** the kingdom of God; and the twelve **were** with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, the one called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, wife of Chuza, a steward of Herod, and Susanna, and many others, who were ministering to Him from their possessions.* (Luke 8:1-3)

Mary Magdalene had been set free from seven demons. That is a terrible bondage, but it is not the same thing as prostitution. And notice what she did after she was healed. She traveled with Jesus and supported His ministry “from their possessions.” She was likely a woman of some means.

Here is the woman in Luke 7, the one people mix her up with.

> *And one of the Pharisees was asking Him that He would eat with him; and having entered into the house of the Pharisee, He reclined **at the table**. And look, a woman who was a sinner in the city, having learned that He was reclining **at the table** in the house of the Pharisee, having brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and having stood behind **Him** at His feet, weeping,*

> *she began to wet His feet with her tears, and she was wiping **them** with the hairs of her head, and was kissing His feet and anointing **them** with the fragrant oil.* (Luke 7:36-38)

Luke never names this woman. And he calls her "a sinner," which does not have to mean a prostitute, though many assume it does.

Now look at what the Gospels actually remember Mary Magdalene for. She stood by the cross when most of the disciples had run (Mark 15:40-41). She went to the tomb on the first day of the week. And she was the first person to see the risen Lord.

> *Now having risen early on **the** first **day** of the week, He appeared first to Mary the Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.* (Mark 16:9)

> *And having said these things, she turned backward, and she sees Jesus standing **there**, and she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus says to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, thinking that He was the gardener, says to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him off, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus says to her, "Mary!" She, having turned, says to Him, "Rabbouni!" which is to say, "Teacher!" Jesus says to her, "Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and **to** My God and your God.'" Mary the Magdalene comes, announcing to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and **that** He had said these things to her.* (John 20:14-18)

The Verdict

> **Verdict: Quashed.** The Bible never says Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. It says Jesus cast seven demons out of her, that she supported His ministry, stood near the cross, and was the first to see Him risen. The prostitute idea came from mixing her up with other women, made official by a sermon in A.D. 591, and later dropped even by the church that made it official.

I want to say one thing carefully. The woman in Luke 7 is a beautiful picture of a forgiven sinner, and Jesus said of her, "her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47). That is good news for every one of us. We just shouldn't hang her story on someone else's name.

Saying It Better

Call Mary Magdalene what the Bible calls her: the woman Jesus set free, who followed Him to the cross, and who was the first witness of the resurrection. Jesus sent her to tell the apostles. That is quite an honor.

Study Questions

1. How many different women are blended together in the popular picture of Mary Magdalene?
2. Read Luke 8:1-3. What do we learn about Mary Magdalene there?
3. Why do you think Jesus appeared first to her?

4. How does Luke 7:47 speak to your own story?

Chapter 32: “The Seven Deadly Sins Are in the Bible”

*These six **things** the LORD hates, and seven **are** an abomination of His soul*

Proverbs 6:16 (SLB)

Pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth. Most people can name at least a few of the seven deadly sins. There are movies, songs, and paintings about them. Plenty of people assume the list comes from the Bible, maybe from the Ten Commandments or from one of Paul’s letters. It doesn’t. There is no list of “seven deadly sins” anywhere in Scripture.

Where It Really Came From

The list grew up in the early church among monks. In the 300s, a monk named Evagrius Ponticus wrote about eight evil thoughts that tempt the soul. Around A.D. 590, Pope Gregory the Great revised that list in his writings on the book of Job and gave the church a list of seven. Over the following centuries the list was adjusted again, and the version most people know today settled into place in the Middle Ages. It became famous through teaching, art, and literature, including Dante’s *Purgatorio*.

These monks were trying to name the root attitudes behind many other sins, and many of their observations were wise. But the list is a human teaching tool, not a Bible passage.

What the Bible Actually Says

The Bible does have a list of seven things God hates. It is in Proverbs.

> *These six **things** the LORD hates, and seven **are** an abomination of His soul: haughty eyes, a tongue of falsehood, and hands shedding innocent blood, a heart devising plans of wickedness, feet hurrying to run to evil, a witness of falsehood **who** breathes out lies, and one sending out contentions between brothers.* (Proverbs 6:16-19)

That list overlaps with the seven deadly sins at one point, pride (“haughty eyes”), but mostly it is different. It includes lying, murder, scheming, running to evil, false witness, and stirring up division.

Paul gives longer lists, like this one.

> *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strifes, jealousies, outbursts of rage, rivalries, dissensions, factions, envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelries, and the things like these, which I tell you beforehand, just as I also said before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.* (Galatians 5:19-21)

And Jesus said that sin starts in the heart.

> *And He was saying, “That which goes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, go out the evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual immoralities, murders, thefts,*

> *covetings, wickednesses, deceit, sensuality, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil **things** go out from within and defile the man."* (Mark 7:20-23)

The bigger problem with the "seven deadly sins" idea is the word "deadly." It can make people think that some sins are deadly and the rest are not so bad. The Bible says any sin is enough to separate us from God. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and "whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles in one ***point***, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). The good news is that the same verse in Romans goes on: "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Verdict

Verdict: Quashed. The seven deadly sins are not a Bible list. They come from monks like Evagrius in the 300s and Pope Gregory the Great around A.D. 590. Each sin on the list is condemned in Scripture, but the Bible never ranks seven of them as the "deadly" ones. Every sin is deadly without Christ, and every sin can be forgiven through Him.

Saying It Better

If you want a Bible list, use Proverbs 6:16-19 or Galatians 5:19-21. And when you do, read on to Galatians 5:22-23, where Paul shows what the Holy Spirit grows in a believer instead.

Study Questions

1. Before this chapter, where did you think the seven deadly sins came from?
2. Compare Proverbs 6:16-19 with the seven deadly sins. What is the same and what is different?
3. Why can the word "deadly" be misleading?
4. Which of the things in Mark 7:20-23 do you need to bring to God today?

Chapter 33: “The Rapture Isn’t in the Bible”

> *then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in **the** clouds to meet the Lord in **the** air; and so we will always be with **the** Lord.*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (SLB)

This chapter turns the book around for a moment. Every other chapter in this part looks at something people think the Bible says that it doesn’t. This one looks at something people say the Bible doesn’t teach, when it does. You may have heard it from a coworker, a professor, or a TV special: “The word rapture isn’t even in the Bible. Somebody made it up in the 1800s.”

Where It Really Came From

Half of that statement is true. The English word “rapture” does not appear in most English Bibles. But the word comes straight from the Bible’s own language. In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Paul uses the Greek word *harpazo*, which means to snatch, seize, or catch away suddenly. The SLB translates it “caught away.” When Jerome translated the Bible into Latin around A.D. 400, in the version called the Vulgate, he used the word *rapiemur*, “we will be caught up.” Our English word “rapture” comes from that same Latin root. So the word “rapture” is just the Latin way of saying what 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says.

It is true that the teaching of a rapture before the tribulation was spread widely in the 1800s and 1900s through Bible teachers and study Bibles. But the question is never when a teaching became popular. The question is whether the Bible teaches it. The Trinity is not a word in the Bible either, and Christians have always believed it because the Bible teaches it.

What the Bible Actually Says

Here is the main passage.

> *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve, just as also the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we say to you in **the** word of **the** Lord, that we who are living, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep; because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with **the** voice of an archangel and with **the** trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in **the** clouds to meet the Lord in **the** air; and so we will always be with **the** Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.*
> (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Paul tells grieving believers that Jesus will come down from heaven, the dead in Christ will be raised, and living believers will be “caught away together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.” That is the rapture. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians.

> *Look, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in **the** blink of an eye, at the last trumpet; for **the** trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

And Jesus promised it Himself.

> *Let your heart not be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In the house of My Father are many dwelling places; but if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be.* (John 14:1-3)

As I teach in my *Revelation Bible Study* and my Daniel study, I believe this catching away happens before the seven-year tribulation begins. Here is why, in short. God promises that His Church is not appointed to wrath, and He promises to keep faithful believers from the hour of testing that is coming on the whole world.

> *because God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

> *Because you kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* (Revelation 3:10)

In the rapture, Jesus comes *for* His people and meets them in the air. At the end of the tribulation, He comes *with* His people to the earth, to judge and to reign (Revelation 19:11-16; Zechariah 14:4-5). Good Bible-believing Christians disagree about the timing, and I respect them. But the event itself, believers being caught up to meet the Lord, is plainly in the Bible.

If you want to go deeper, my *Revelation Bible Study: A Verse by Verse Study* walks through the whole book of Revelation one verse at a time, including the order of events, the seven years of tribulation, Christ's return in glory, and His thousand-year reign. It is free on my website. This chapter only answers the claim that the rapture isn't in the Bible. The Revelation study gives the full picture.

The Verdict

Verdict: The claim is quashed. The English word "rapture" is not in most Bibles, but the event is. Paul says believers will be "caught away" to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and "rapture" comes from the Latin word used for that verse. The teaching holds up. I believe, with many others, that it happens before the tribulation. For the full timeline, see my *Revelation Bible Study*.

Saying It Better

When someone says, “The rapture isn’t in the Bible,” you can answer kindly: “The English word isn’t, but the event is. Can I show you 1 Thessalonians 4:17?” Then do what Paul said to do with these words. “Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

Study Questions

1. Where does the English word “rapture” come from?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Why did Paul write this to the church?
3. What is the difference between Jesus coming for His people and coming with His people?
4. How does the hope of the Lord’s return change the way you live today?

Part Four: Sayings That Really Are in the Bible

Chapter 34: Sayings That Really Are in the Bible

Grass dries up, a flower withers, and the word of our God will stand forever.
Isaiah 40:8 (SLB)

After a whole book of "that's not in the Bible," it is only fair to turn it around. English is full of everyday sayings that really do come from Scripture. Most people who use them have no idea. Some of them came into English through the King James Version of 1611 and William Tyndale's translation before it. Here are some of the best known, with the verse each one comes from. In this chapter the verdict is easy. Every one of these is the real thing, and each one means more in its setting than it does in everyday talk.

Translating the SLB made me notice how often everyday speech borrows phrases straight from the Bible. People use biblical words every day without knowing where they came from. Knowing the source gives us an easy bridge to point a friend back to Scripture.

"The Writing on the Wall"

When people say "the writing is on the wall," they mean trouble is coming and everyone can see it. The saying comes from the night King Belshazzar threw a drunken party with the cups taken from God's temple in Jerusalem.

> *In that very moment fingers of a man's hand came out, and they were writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king; and the king was seeing the palm of the hand that was writing.* (Daniel 5:5)

Daniel read the words to the king: "you have been weighed in the scales and have been found lacking" (Daniel 5:27). That same night Babylon fell.

"By the Skin of My Teeth"

We say it when we barely escape. Job said it in the middle of his suffering.

> *My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped with the skin of my teeth.*
> (Job 19:20)

"A Drop in the Bucket"

When something is too small to matter, we call it a drop in the bucket. Isaiah used it to show how great God is.

> *Look, nations **are** like a drop from a bucket, and like the dust of the scales they are regarded; look, He lifts islands like fine **dust**.* (Isaiah 40:15)

"Nothing New Under the Sun"

> *Whatever has been, it **is** what will be, and whatever has been done, it **is** what will be done; and there is not any new **thing** under the sun.* (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Solomon wrote that after trying everything the world could offer. Without God, he said, life just goes around in circles.

"A Leopard Can't Change Its Spots"

People use this to say a person can't change who they are. In Jeremiah, God used it to show how deep Judah's sin had gone.

> *Will a Cushite change his skin, and a leopard its spots? **Then** also you, you will be able to do good, **you who are** trained to do evil.* (Jeremiah 13:23)

That is the bad news. The good news is that what we can't change, God can. "If anyone ***is*** in Christ, ***he is*** a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"The Salt of the Earth"

We call a good, honest, down-to-earth person "the salt of the earth." Jesus said it of all His followers.

> *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes tasteless, with what will it be salted? It is no longer strong for anything, except to be thrown out and to be trampled by men.* (Matthew 5:13)

"Go the Extra Mile" and "Turn the Other Cheek"

Both come from the Sermon on the Mount, in the same breath.

> *You heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, not to resist the evil **person**; but whoever will strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to the **one** wanting to sue you and to take your tunic, yield to him the cloak also. And whoever compels you **to go** approximately 1,620 yards (one mile), go with him two. Give to the **one** asking you, and do not turn away from the **one** wanting to borrow from you.* (Matthew 5:38-42)

The extra mile came from Roman law. A soldier could make a civilian carry his pack for one mile. Jesus said to carry it two.

"A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing"

> *And beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.* (Matthew 7:15)

Jesus was warning about false prophets, people who look like they belong to the flock but are out to tear it apart.

“The Blind Leading the Blind”

> *Leave them; they are blind guides of **the** blind. And if a blind **man** leads a blind **man**, both will fall into a pit.* (Matthew 15:14)

“No One Can Serve Two Masters”

> *No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You are not able to serve God and wealth.*
> (Matthew 6:24)

“A House Divided”

Abraham Lincoln made this one famous in 1858, but he was quoting Jesus.

> *And if a house is divided against itself, that house is not able to stand.* (Mark 3:25)

“Physician, Heal Yourself”

> *And He said to them, “Surely you will say to Me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal Yourself! As many **things** as we have heard having happened in Capernaum, do also here in Your hometown.’”*
> (Luke 4:23)

Jesus quoted the proverb Himself, because He knew what the people of His hometown were thinking.

“Eat, Drink, and Be Merry”

> *And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; rest, eat, drink, be merry.”’* (Luke 12:19)

This one is a warning, not a motto. It is what the rich fool said to himself. God’s answer came in the next verse: “Fool! This night they are demanding your soul from you” (Luke 12:20).

“The Spirit Is Willing, but the Flesh Is Weak”

> *Watch and pray, so that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed **is** willing, but the flesh **is** weak.* (Matthew 26:41)

Jesus said this to His sleeping disciples in Gethsemane, the night before the cross.

“You Reap What You Sow”

> *Do not be led astray; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*
> (Galatians 6:7)

“Bad Company Corrupts Good Character”

> *Do not be misled: bad associations corrupt good morals.* (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Here is a fun twist. This saying really is in the Bible, but Paul was quoting a Greek play. The line is usually traced to the Greek playwright Menander. So this time the Bible quoted a popular saying, instead of the other way around. God's Word is true wherever the truth was first spoken, and Paul was not shy about using a line his readers already knew.

"It Is More Blessed to Give Than to Receive"

> *In all things I showed you that by laboring thus it is necessary to help those who are weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'* (Acts 20:35)

These are words of Jesus that are not written in any of the four Gospels. Paul quoted them to the elders of Ephesus, and Luke recorded them in Acts.

Why This Matters

When you know which sayings really come from the Bible, you can use them to start a conversation. The next time someone says "the writing is on the wall," you can tell them about Daniel. The next time someone calls a friend "the salt of the earth," you can tell them who said it first. A Bible-shaped saying is an open door.

Study Questions

1. Which of these sayings surprised you most?
2. Pick one saying and read its verse in context. How does the setting change its meaning?
3. Why do you think so many Bible phrases became part of everyday English?
4. Which of these sayings could you use this week to start a conversation about Jesus?

A Closing Word: Chapter and Verse

Grass dries up, a flower withers, and the word of our God will stand forever.

Isaiah 40:8 (SLB)

When I was younger, there was a phrase people used when they wanted proof. “Show me chapter and verse.” If you said the Bible taught something, you had better be able to open it and point. That is the whole idea of this book.

We have looked at thirty-three sayings and beliefs. Some held up. Some were half true. Some had to be quashed. And we finished with a chapter of everyday sayings that really do come from Scripture. If you take one thing away from all of it, I hope it is this: don’t take anyone’s word for what the Bible says, including mine. Open it and read it. Read the verses before and after. Ask what it meant to the people who first heard it. Then believe it and live it.

The sayings we have looked at come and go. Poets, preachers, presidents, and comedians gave us some of them, and someday people will have new ones. But “the word of our God will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8). Jesus said, “The heaven and the earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

And here is the best part. The Bible is not mainly a book of sayings. It is the story of a God who came looking for people who could not help themselves. The truest thing in this whole book is not a proverb or a slogan. It is this: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ, that is where to start. Turn from your sin and trust Him, who died for you and rose again. My book *The Road Home* walks through that step by step, and it is free on my website.

If you already belong to Him, then keep reading your Bible. Chapter and verse.

Appendix A: Every Saying at a Glance

This chart lists every saying in the book, where it really came from, the Bible passage that speaks to it, and my verdict.

Saying	Where It Really Came From	Key Passage	Verdict
God helps those who help themselves (Ch. 1)	Ancient Greek proverb and Aesop; Algernon Sidney 1698; Benjamin Franklin 1736	Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:8-9	Quashed
Cleanliness is next to godliness (Ch. 2)	English Christian writing of the 1700s; John Wesley, "On Dress"	Mark 7:14-23; 1 John 1:7-9	Quashed as said
God won't give you more than you can handle (Ch. 3)	No known source; a misreading of 1 Corinthians 10:13	2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 12:9	Quashed
Everything happens for a reason (Ch. 4)	No single source; old philosophy and fate	Romans 8:28-29; Luke 13:1-5	Half true
God works in mysterious ways (Ch. 5)	William Cowper's hymn, 1773	Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33	Holds up
This too shall pass (Ch. 6)	Eastern legend; Abraham Lincoln, 1859	2 Corinthians 4:16-18	Holds up halfway
Love the sinner, hate the sin (Ch. 7)	Augustine, Letter 211, about A.D. 424; Gandhi, 1929	Romans 12:9; Jude 22-23	Holds up
Follow your heart; to thine own self be true (Ch. 8)	Romantic writers; Shakespeare's Hamlet	Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 3:5-7	Quashed
Charity begins at home (Ch. 9)	Old English proverb	1 Timothy 5:8; Luke 10:29-37	Holds up where it starts
Moderation in all things (Ch. 10)	Hesiod and the Delphic sayings	Galatians 5:22-23; Revelation 3:15-16	Half true
Idle hands are the devil's workshop (Ch. 11)	Isaac Watts, 1715	1 Timothy 5:13; Ephesians 4:28	Holds up
The road to hell is paved with good intentions (Ch. 12)	Uncertain; often credited to Samuel Johnson or Bernard of Clairvaux	Proverbs 14:12; Matthew 7:21-23	Holds up
When God closes a door, He opens a window (Ch. 13)	Old proverb; popularized by film	Acts 16:6-10; Revelation 3:7-8	Half true
Let go and let God (Ch. 14)	Uncertain; Christian writing and recovery groups	Psalm 46:10; Exodus 14:13-15	Holds up
God is my co-pilot (Ch. 15)	Robert Lee Scott Jr.'s 1943 memoir	Proverbs 3:5-7; John 20:28	Quashed
The devil made me do it (Ch. 16)	Flip Wilson's Geraldine, about 1969	James 1:13-15; Genesis 3:11-13	Quashed
Forgive and forget (Ch. 17)	Old English pairing; Shakespeare's King Lear	Isaiah 43:25; Ephesians 4:32	Half true
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust (Ch. 18)	Book of Common Prayer burial service	Genesis 3:19; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44	Holds up
Money is the root of all evil (Ch. 19)	1 Timothy 6:10, shortened	1 Timothy 6:6-10	Quashed as said
Pride goes before a fall (Ch. 20)	Proverbs 16:18, shortened	Proverbs 16:18; James 4:6	Holds up

Saying	Where It Really Came From	Key Passage	Verdict
Spare the rod, spoil the child (Ch. 21)	Samuel Butler's Hudibras, 1660s; Proverbs 13:24	Proverbs 13:24; Ephesians 6:4	Holds up, with care
The lion shall lie down with the lamb (Ch. 22)	Isaiah 11:6 and 65:25, blended	Isaiah 11:1-9	Holds up in idea
The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away (Ch. 23)	Job 1:21, reworded and cut short	Job 1:20-22	Holds up, said in full
In the world but not of it (Ch. 24)	A summary of John 17	John 17:13-19	Holds up
Do unto others (Ch. 25)	Jesus, Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31, reworded	Luke 6:27-36	Holds up
Adam and Eve ate an apple (Ch. 26)	Later art and tradition	Genesis 3:1-7	Quashed
Three wise men came to the manger (Ch. 27)	Later tradition; names from the 700s; December 25 from A.D. 354	Matthew 2:1-16	Quashed
Jonah was swallowed by a whale (Ch. 28)	King James wording of Matthew 12:40	Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40	Quashed in wording
Heaven gained another angel (Ch. 29)	Popular art, poems, and film	Hebrews 12:22-24; Luke 20:36	Quashed
The devil rules in hell (Ch. 30)	Dante, Milton, and popular art	Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10	Quashed
Mary Magdalene was a prostitute (Ch. 31)	Sermon of Gregory the Great, A.D. 591	Luke 8:1-3; John 20:14-18	Quashed
The seven deadly sins are in the Bible (Ch. 32)	Evagrius, 300s; Gregory the Great, about 590	Proverbs 6:16-19	Quashed
The rapture isn't in the Bible (Ch. 33)	A claim about the English word	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Claim quashed

Appendix B: Scripture Index

This index lists the Bible passages quoted or cited in this book. The numbers after each passage are chapter numbers. “Intro” is Before You Begin, and “Back” is the closing word and the appendices.

- **Genesis:** 2:16-17 (26); 3:1-7 (26, Back); 3:11-13 (16, Back); 3:13 (16); 3:19 (18, Back); 18:27 (18); 45:4 (17); 45:4-8 (17); 50:19-20 (4)
- **Exodus:** 14:13-14 (14); 14:13-15 (14, Back); 14:15 (14); 30:18-21 (2)
- **Deuteronomy:** 23:12-14 (2); 29:29 (4, 5)
- **2 Samuel:** 11:1 (11); 12:13 (16)
- **2 Chronicles:** 26:16 (20)
- **Nehemiah:** 4:9 (1)
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About This Book

Chapter and Verse, Please takes the sayings people credit to the Bible and checks them against the Bible itself.

“God helps those who help themselves.” “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” “Money is the root of all evil.” We hear sayings like these every day, and most people assume they come from Scripture. This book traces each one to its real source, whether a Greek poet, a Methodist preacher, a president, a hymn writer, a war memoir, or a comedian, and then quotes the Bible passages people have in mind, with their full context, so you can see what God actually said.

Every chapter ends with a clear verdict: the saying holds up, it is half true, or it has to be quashed. Then it gives a better way to say it, usually in the Bible’s own words, followed by study questions for personal reading or a small group.

Part One covers eighteen sayings that are not in the Bible at all. Part Two covers seven that come from the Bible but have been reworded or cut short. Part Three looks at eight popular beliefs about Bible stories and teachings, from the apple in the Garden to the three kings at the manger. Part Four is a short chapter of everyday sayings that really do come from Scripture. At the back are a chart of every saying with its source and verdict, and a Scripture index.

All Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible, which is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.