



“...you should know how to give the right answer...”
(Colossians 4:6b)

What follows is a presentation of 12 well-known phrases. The purpose is to determine which phrases have a clear biblical foundation and which were popularized by notable secular poets and writers.

1. ‘The Golden Rule’

Question: *Is the phrase, “The Golden Rule” in the Bible?*

Answer: *No. Though the principle of the ‘Golden Rule’ (do unto others as you would have them do unto you) has a biblical foundation, the actual phrase is not in the Bible.*

- Matt. 7:12, Leviticus 19:18, Matt. 5:43, 19:19; 22:39;
- Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8; Lk. 10:27

2. Cleanliness is next to godliness

Question: *Is the phrase, “Cleanliness is next to godliness” in the Bible?*

Answer: *No. There are instructions in the Old Testament verses regarding clean and unclean animals and instructions regarding washing. However, the phrase “Cleanliness is next to godliness” is not in Scripture. Note: God gave instructions regarding washing to 1) facilitate good hygiene and health and 2) to remind His people of the importance of spiritual cleansing and purity.*

- 1 John 1:9, John 15:3, 2 Corinthians 7:1; James 4:8, Ephesians 5:26-27

3. Hell

Question: *Is hell an actual place?*

Answer: Yes. *It is true that the Bible uses figurative language (such as a 'lake of fire' or Gehenna) in referencing hell—but that does indicate that hell itself should be understood figuratively. Though most in America do not believe hell is an actual or eternal place, Jesus and the New Testament writers taught that hell is real—a place of eternal torment and separation from God. It is common today for individuals to think of both the Devil and hell as being symbolic of evil. Pope John Paul II is well-known for saying that hell is "not a punishment imposed externally by God." He said the Bible "uses a symbolical language..." and that hell "is not a 'place' but a 'state, "a person's state of being." However, Jesus taught that hell is a place—associated with torment, judgment, and eternity. Jesus made it possible for humans to choose their eternal destiny—heaven or hell. People can believe in Jesus, accept His love, grace, and forgiveness, become His disciples, and receive the reward of eternal life with Him in heaven. **OR,** reject the things of God, including Jesus' offer of salvation, and thereby choose an eternity apart from God. Though God is the judge, we play the lead role in determining our fate.*

- Matt.10:28,11:23; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27; Rev. 20:13-14
- Psa. 6:5, 17:15, 30:9, 49:15, 86:13, 88:10-12, 115:17; Psa. 116:3; Prov.15:24, 21:16, 27:20; Ecc. 9:4-6; Isa.5:14

4. Women:

Question: *Does the Bible indicate that women are of lesser importance?*

Answer: No. *Some believe the Bible holds a biased view against women and that Scripture does not hold women in high esteem. That is not true. It is clear that women have been used of God in great and mighty ways in the Old and New Testaments. In Scripture, women prophesied, led in battle, served as a Judge of Israel (the head of government in the days preceding kings), prayed in church, hosted church meetings, and served in critical support roles in the ministries of both Jesus and Paul. Women are loved by God, equipped for service by God, called by God, and are a critical component in the church being able to fulfill its Great Commission calling.*

There are, however, different callings and offices in the body of Christ. Different does not indicate less importance. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul noted that in the body of Christ, "the eye cannot think itself more important than the hand or other body parts—the body parts have different roles or functions, but all are of equal importance." And so it is in the church today. We may not be given to understand all of the whys—but the fact that women have the gift and calling to nurse and nurture, does not indicate that men are somehow slighted or thought of by God to be of less importance. By the Spirit comes different gifting, callings, and 'offices.' Though some of this has a gender component, Scripture emphasizes that all callings and roles are of equal importance. It is not that only men or women receive the most important spiritual callings—the most important thing one can do is what God calls them to do.

- 1 Corinthians 12:15-26

5. Saints

Question: *Should we pray to saints? Are saints angels?*

Answer: No and No. *In Scripture, a saint is a believer in Jesus Christ. A saint can be in heaven (usually noted as being near the throne of God), but often, the term refers to living believers. It is important to note that according to Scripture, a saint is a 'holy one,' made holy by the forgiving touch of Jesus Christ. Therefore, one does not become a saint because they have done a certain number of miracles or good deeds—one becomes a saint because of what Christ has done.*

*When one is saved, they are forgiven and made holy by Christ. When that happens, that person becomes a 'holy one,' part of the body of Christ, **a saint**. The saints on earth (the church) are to focus on the 'Great Commission' work (Matt. 28:18-20) and accomplish the will of God as the Spirit leads.*

*According to Scripture, the saints on earth are to serve, help, love, and witness and teach others. The saints are to be prayed for, but **not** to—saints in heaven (believers who have died and are now with Christ) do not protect or assist humans, nor do they take our prayer requests to the heavenly Father. Their focus is to worship and praise God. When a believer prays, the believer should pray to God through Jesus. There is no biblical foundation for the idea of patron saints, praying to saints, or asking a saint to petition Jesus on behalf of someone in need.*

- Deut. 33:2-3; 1 Sam. 2:9; 2 Chr. 6:41; Job 5:1, 15:15; Psa. 16:3, 30:4, 31:23, 34:9, 50:5, 89:5
- Acts 26:10; Rom. 1:7, 8:27, 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:1-2; Eph. 1:15,18; Col. 1:2,4; 1 Tim. 5:10; Heb. 6:10

6. Tithing

Question: *Is there a New Testament commandment to tithe?*

Answer: No, but consider this...

The Old Testament directive was to give a tithe (10%), but there was more. In addition, individuals were to give special offerings and pay an additional 20% in support of the temple, spiritual work, and governance needs of Israel. Believers in God in Old Testament times were to give 30% of their income plus make provision for additional offerings and sacrifices each year.

With Jesus' death and resurrection (and the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost), the Old Covenant (based on works and fulfilling the Law) was replaced with the New Covenant (which is based on love and grace). Believers today do not secure their salvation by fulfilling the Law, but by faith in Christ. Some have suggested that because the Old Testament law no longer binds us, believers today are not expected to give a tithe. That is not correct. The Old Testament required believers to give 30% and the New Testament requires believers to give all.

*Though New Testament writers do not stress ‘the tithe,’ New Testament writers encourage what some call ‘whole life stewardship.’ This means that believers are to respond to the love and grace of God by offering their **entire life** to God. The tithe, then, is not a maximum-level gift to God, nor is it to be viewed as a kind of acceptable minimum sacrifice—believers are to give freely, for the glory of God, their love, time, focus, energy, assistance, encouragement, service and yes, money. Believers are to ‘live to give to God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:11-15 and 2 Corinthians 9:7 indicate it is this kind of joyful giving (giving in honor of God and His work) that will be honored and recognized by the Lord in the kingdom of heaven.*

- Num. 18:26; Deut. 14:22; Mal. 3:10
- Matt. 23:23; Mark 12:42; Matt. 19:21; 1 Sam 15:22; Matt. 22:37; 2 Cor. 9:7

7. Degrees of sin

Question: *Are there degrees of sin? Is one sin worse than another in the eyes of God?*

Answer: No. *It is true that some acts (sins) have greater social and spiritual ramifications. For example, a ‘white lie’ does not impact individuals (or society) the way murder does. Scripture, therefore, reveals that sin (crimes) have social and spiritual dynamics. Accordingly, Scripture addresses the social impact of sin by assigning different penalties for different crimes (sins) while making clear that all sin separates one from God.*

Though this is difficult to understand, there is only one spiritual standard. Individuals are either perfect and holy, or sinful and guilty. Sin simply represents being ‘off the mark.’ The question is not: “How many or what kind of sins can I commit and still go to heaven?” The question God will ask at the judgment is, “Has a sin been committed?” One is either pure (having never sinned), or not (and thereby can not enter heaven).

However, there is hope. God knows “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and has made a provision for our spiritual cleansing—His name is Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10), strive to live for Jesus (James 2:17-19), and confess their sins to Jesus (1 John 1:9) will be renewed, forgiven, and made pure before God.

- 1 John 3:4; Rom. 3:23, 6:23; Luke 12:47-48

8. Various Bible Translations:

Question: *Is it true that one translation is best?*

Answer: No, *but consider the following. 1) Some translations are not presented as being exact*

transcriptions from the original text. These translations, called paraphrases, include the Living Bible, the Good News Bible, the Message Translation, etc., and are designed to present the general spirit of

the original text in easy-to-understand contemporary language. These translations have value but should not be used as a primary resource in developing doctrine or determining how Scripture addresses important topics. Other translations, such as the NIV, NASV, CEV, KJV, and NKJV, strive to present the English text as an exact translation of the oldest Greek and Hebrew texts available. Though there is some variance in the wording of these translations, there is no variance in any point of doctrine. God can and has maintained the integrity of His Word. Jesus demonstrated this in Luke 4 and Matthew 4 when He responded to the temptation of Satan by quoting a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture that was about 200 years old at the time He quoted it.

- 2 Timothy 3:16

9. Numbers (144,000/666) in the book of Revelation

Question: *Do numbers have special significance in the Bible?*

Answer: Yes. *Numbers have great significance in Hebrew culture. Just as 9/11 of the Fourth of July are more than just dates to Americans, many numbers in Hebrew culture have great meaning. The number 3 can mean complete or ultimate. This is why Scripture notes that God is not just holy; He is 'holy, holy, holy.' It is also likely why the Antichrist in the Book of Revelation is assigned the number 666. Six is a number linked to incomplete or imperfection. This number, expressed three times— 666—is figurative of ultimate imperfection. The number 12 is linked to a perfect set or measurement, and the number 1000 often indicates a large, perfect, uncountable number. The 144,000 John sees in the book of Revelation (12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel) could represent a large, perfect, uncountable number. The numbers 7, 10, 12, 40, and multiples of these numbers, can have symbolic importance as well. When interpreting Scripture, it is important to view numbers in their cultural and spiritual context.*

- Revelation 7, 14; John 3:16, 1:12; Rom. 10:13; Phil. 3:20
- Revelation 13:16-18, 14:9,11

10. Spare the rod, spoil the child

Question: *Is the phrase, "Spare the rod, spoil the child" in the Bible?*

Answer: No. *The phrase, "Spare the rod, spoil the child," is not in the Bible, but the ideas of tough love, respect, boundaries, and parental discipline are. A few support verses are noted below:*

- Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 22:15
- Proverbs 23:13-14, Proverbs 29:15

11. Three Wise Men

Question: *Does the Bible indicate that there were three wise men? Are names given?*

Answer: *No and no. Only very general facts about the Magi (wise men) are provided in Scripture. The number three has been suggested because three gifts were given to the Christ Child. No names are provided in Scripture. The suggestion of the names Melchior, Belshazzar, and Kasper came centuries later. The names are ethnic and were likely offered as a way to represent how the Christ Child came for the people groups of the world (the three names noted above represent people groups from different regions (just as Ivan is associated with Russia or Hans is associated with Germany)).*

- Matthew 2:1-16

12. God helps those who help themselves

Question: *Is the phrase, “God helps those who help themselves” in the Bible?*

Answer: *No. This phrase is not found in Scripture. It likely originates in one of Aesop’s Fables and was later popularized by Benjamin Franklin. However, the teaching that hard work has virtue, personal responsibility has merit, and self-efficiency is admirable do have a biblical foundation.*

- Romans 5:6,8
- Jeremiah 17:5
- Proverbs 28:26

Also, though the following terms and phrases are not part of the biblical text, they do have strong biblical support:

- *The phrase, “Once saved, always saved”*
- *Missions*
- *The Rapture*
- *The Trinity*
- *Sunday School*
- *The ‘sinner’s prayer’*
- *The ‘Great Commission’*
- *The Lord’s Prayer*