

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Misusing the Bible

Tad Morris

Just about every false teaching can be supported by some misconstrued quote from the Bible. The Bible has been used to support homosexual marriages and abortion. It has been used to support slavery, murder, and war. It has even been used to support other religions. Of course, the Bible doesn't support these destructive teachings. But it gets carefully twisted to seem to say something that it doesn't actually say. People are quite skilled at attaching scripture to their false teachings and bad ideas. It sounds like it must be right because somebody quoted the Bible!

What are the most common ways the Bible gets misused?

ADDING WORDS

The most disturbing example is translations of the Bible that literally add words to the text to make it better align with a pre-existing belief. For example, **John 1:1** in the NKJV reads like this: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* This is one of many scriptures that affirmatively prove Jesus is God. However, the same verse in the New World Translation, produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses, reads like this: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god."* The difference of only one word completely changes the meaning of the verse. This added word implies that Jesus is a lesser God, not the same as the one true God.

We make a similar mistake when we add words to our interpretation of scripture. For example, **Ephesians 1:13**: *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."* The scripture teaches that we receive the Holy Spirit when we believe. How does this passage get misused? When someone adds the word only and teaches that we receive the Holy Spirit of God when we only believe – without repentance, without confession, without a commitment, and without baptism into Christ. The idea of believing is different than only believing.

ADDING MEANING

We have to accept the Bible for what it says without creating meaning that isn't there. A classic example of this is **Romans 5:12**: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and*

death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned." The facts of this verse are easy enough to follow: 1) Adam's sin introduced sin and death to the world, and 2) his sin brought death to all people because all people sin.

A popular preacher offered this commentary:

Death spread to all men...to every human being in the human race, beginning at the moment of conception...At the moment Adam sinned, his offense (his sin) was imputed to every person who would ever be conceived... So when did you become a sinner? Over 6,000 years ago, Adam's sin was charged to your account. Long before you entered this world, you were already condemned, you were already under the wrath of God, and you were already a sinner.

What's wrong with this interpretation? It adds an enormous amount of meaning to scripture that doesn't exist in the text. This is the doctrine of original sin that is built entirely on inferences.

DENYING THE BIBLE

If we ever find ourselves saying that the Bible doesn't mean what it says, we're probably wrong. Of course, God sometimes uses hyperbole, poetry, and symbolism, but this fact is still generally true. For example, Jesus said in **Mark 16:16**: *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."* Jesus meant what he said – salvation is promised for those who believe AND are baptized. Yet, somehow, a huge population of people in the world denies that Jesus means what he says.

IGNORING CONTEXT

The Bible, as a book, covers four thousand years of human history. It was written by forty different people, on three continents, in three different languages, and covers three separate covenants between God and his people. It should come as no surprise then that sometimes the context of scripture affects the meaning.

For example, **Galatians 2:16**:

knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

What are these references to the works of the law? Imagine how confusing it would be to interpret this passage without knowing the context that the law is the Law of Moses, the Jewish law.

continued on the next page...

IGNORING THE BIBLE'S OWN COMMENTARY

If you're looking for the meaning of a scripture or story, there's a good chance you'll find it in the Bible. When our conclusions are out of line with the Bible's own commentary, there's a very good chance we're wrong.

An example of this mistake is in the interpretation of Acts 10 when Cornelius and the first crop of Gentiles are converted. While Peter is preaching the gospel to them, something amazing happens. **Acts 10:44-46:**

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

What does this mean about our salvation? What are we supposed to conclude from this? Many people conclude that this proves we receive the Spirit before we're baptized. Some people say this represents a change in God's requirements for salvation. What did the apostles conclude? Peter concluded in **verse 48** that these people should be baptized in the name of the Lord: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." The other Jews concluded in **Acts 11:18**: "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life." Let the Bible explain itself. If we say things the Bible does not say, we're probably wrong.

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All that I Have

John Morris

Remember the children's song about the boy who gave Jesus his "two little fish and five loaves of bread"? It closes with these words:

All that I have,

All that I have,

I will give Jesus all that I have.

That is a powerful promise and not one to be made lightly. And it is entirely in keeping with what Jesus taught:

- "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (**Matthew 13:44**).
- "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (**Matthew 13:45-46**).
- "So, likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:33**).

All that I have. Have you ever wondered what exactly Jesus meant by that? How He intended it to be applied? Most of us have, probably. For years, I didn't have a clear answer. But I think I understand it better now. Jesus is calling us to change the way we think. He is calling us to decide that all that we have (resources, relationships, possessions, pleasures, comforts, habits, preferences, life, everything) is at His disposal (nothing is off the table) and will be used or held in reserve, kept or discarded as His purposes dictate.

This is Jesus' description of a person's state of mind when they come into His kingdom. And as if to remove the possibility of any misunderstanding, He expresses it another way, again three times:

- "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:26**).
- "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:27**).
- "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (**Luke 14:33**).

"Forsake all," says the Savior. "Put Me before all," says the Son of God. "Or you cannot be My disciple."

This is the radical nature of true Christianity.

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis tells the following story:

When I was a child, I often had toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother, she would give me something that would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother—at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not was this. I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist the next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie; if you gave them an inch they took a [mile] (p. 171).

Lewis's account humorously illustrates a profound point. In a sense, the Lord is like the dentist. Some go to Him looking for a cure for some particular sin of which they are ashamed or which is ruining their lives. And He will cure it. But He will not stop there. He has much bigger plans—plans to set the whole person permanently right, plans which involve all that we have.

And that's more than most want to give. They want Jesus as their Savior, but not as their Lord.

But giving Him all is the only way. Submitting our will to His will until His will becomes our will is the only way. Double-mindedness (trying to have it both ways) doesn't work:

- "...let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (**James 1:7-8**).
- "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...purify your hearts, you double-minded" (**James 4:8**).

If we struggle with double-mindedness, David gave us just the prayer to pray: "Teach me your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name" (**Psalms 86:11**).

Finally, borrowing from Lewis again, we are like eggs. An egg must hatch into a chick or break for a breakfast. But it can't just remain an unbroken egg indefinitely. Eventually, it will go bad. But we weren't meant to be bad eggs! So may we break, brethren. May the words of Christ, like a hammer (**Jeremiah 23:29**), break our self-centered will. May His words break our desire to preserve ourselves and life's blessings for a life that is only going to last a few more decades at most. Let us break, brethren, and pour out before Him all that we have. It is the only way.



Please check your expiration date!

Glory to God!

The brethren in **Nixa, MO** were pleased to receive **Benny and Brenda Bogard** as members of the church.

The church in **Summersville, MO** rejoiced when **Garrin and Lacie Grear** were buried with Christ in baptism on July 31.

Blessed Are the Dead

Leona Ruth Deckard Bishop Miller passed gently from this life to the next on the evening of August 23. Leona was born on February 5, 1922, in the southern Indiana town of Lyons to **Ezra and Malinda Deckard**. Leona was blessed with exceptionally long life and good health until near the end. Leona married **Joe Bishop** after graduating from Indiana University with a degree in Home Economics and English. After more than fifty years of marriage, Joe succumbed to Parkinson's disease and a few years later Leona married Bob Miller, a longtime friend and fellow member at the **Chapel Glen Church of Christ**. She is survived by five children, sixteen grandchildren and twenty five great-grandchildren. She will be missed by many, but celebrated for a life well lived, knowing that the best is yet to come.

Julia Anavee Gordon Owens, 90, of the **Chapel Glen Church of Christ, Indianapolis, IN**, went to be with Jesus on August 24. Julia was born in Pike County, IN to **Rudolph Gordon and Rosa Barrett Gordon** on May 25, 1932. Julia attended Lincoln High School in Vincennes. She met **Glen Owens** at vacation bible school at the Church of Christ. They were married on June 14, 1953. After giving birth to their first three children, Glen and Julia began fostering children, eventually adopting three of them. Sister Julia served the church as the wife of an elder until Glen's death. She is survived by six children, fourteen grandchildren, and eighteen great-grandchildren.

Tom Howard of the **South Fairfax** congregation in **Bakersfield, CA** passed away August 24. Tom was 80 years old and is survived by his wife, **Wanda**, as well as numerous scattered children and grandchildren. Tom and Wanda became a part of the body of Christ 20 years ago, and his warm, enthusiastic greetings and obvious pleasure to be with the saints is sadly missed.

Special Meetings

The **Rock Creek Church of Christ, Ottawa, KS**, plans their second annual **Youth Workshop** for October 29-30 beginning at 10:00 a.m. on both days. Evangelists **Rick Sparks, Doug Twaddell, and John Lee** will present Saturday classes on "Holy and Righteous Living" and the young men who attend will lead the Sunday worship. Meals and housing will be provided.

2022 Meetings

- September 30-October 2.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
- October 15-16.....Nixa, MO
- October 29-30.....Youth Workshop, Ottawa, KS
- December 27-29.....Winter Youth Rally, Gregory Blvd.
- December 27-29.....College Rally, Lone Jack, MO

The Gospel Message

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