

5 Bible Verses You Might Be Unintentionally Misquoting

Have you ever heard someone quote the Bible and think to yourself, “Umm, I’m not sure that’s what it really means…”?

Unfortunately, this happens all too often. What we think a Bible verse means can profoundly affect our understanding of its message. When we study the Bible in context and fill our lives with Scripture, we regain a proper view of God and invite Him to work powerfully in our lives.

Let’s explore some of the most misquoted and misused verses in the Bible and uncover their true meanings:

1. Matthew 17:20 – What you might think it says: If you have faith like a mustard seed, you can move mountains.

What it actually says: “Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move. And nothing will be impossible for you.’” People often misquote this verse, believing that if they just had more faith, they could do impossible things. But Jesus didn’t say we can move mountains; He said, “it will move,” which means God is the One doing the impossible, not us.

Why it matters: Sometimes God calls us to do outrageous things that require His mighty intervention. When we trust and obey Him, the pressure is off. We don’t have to perform or impress; we simply obey, and God takes care of the rest. God works miracles, not us, so we can point people to Him, saying, “Look what God did!” That’s an incredible way to live.

2. Jeremiah 29:11 – What you might think it says: God has plans to prosper you.

What it actually says: “For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” This verse is often misused to support the idea that God wants us to be wealthy and healthy. However, the Hebrew word “prosper” here means shalom, which encompasses completeness, safety, peace, welfare and prosperity. In context, it assures Israel of God’s faithfulness despite their exile.

Why it matters: God’s plans for us include peace, completeness and safety in His faithfulness. It doesn’t always mean wealth and health, but it ensures a deep relationship with God.

3. 1 Corinthians 10:13 – What you might think it says: God won’t give you more than you can bear.

What it actually says: “No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” This verse addresses temptation, not life’s trials.

Why it matters: God doesn’t promise we’ll handle everything in life; we’ll often face situations beyond our ability. These moments drive us to God in surrender, seeking His grace. When we trust Him in our incompetence, He leads us to abundant life.

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4. Proverbs 3:6 – What you might think it says: Tell God everything you’re planning to do, and He’ll make it work out.

What it actually says: “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.” This verse encourages a personal, intimate relationship with God, not just informing Him of our plans.

Why it matters: Seeking a deep relationship with God leads to submitting to His direction and reaching His desired outcome for our lives, which is for our good and His glory.

5. Revelation 3:20 – What you might think it says: “Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.” We often see this of this picture as Jesus standing outside an unbelievers house (heart) asking to come in. In other words, it’s a passage that’s addressed to the unbeliever.

What it actually says: The problem is this verse isn’t addressed to the unbeliever. It’s addressed to Christians. More specifically it’s addressed to a church.

Why it matters: It is about how we as believers can become lukewarm and feel we are self-sufficient. In doing so we push Jesus out and leave Him standing on the outside of the door. That’s the picture this verse is painting, Jesus standing outside a Christian’s heart asking to come in.

Understanding the Bible’s true meaning deepens our understanding of God and invites His powerful work in our lives. The next time someone misquotes a verse, gently point them to the beautiful truth found in a proper understanding of Scripture: God is good, and our deepest joy is found in Him.
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