



## BIBLE/GOD'S LOVE

### SCRIPTURE VERSES (NIV)

#### **John 3:16**

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

#### **Romans 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

#### **Ephesians 2:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

#### **1 John 4:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

#### **Zephaniah 3:17**

<sup>7</sup> The Lord your God is with you,  
the Mighty Warrior who saves.  
He will take great delight in you;  
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,  
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

#### **Psalms 86:15**

<sup>15</sup> But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

#### **Deuteronomy 7:9**

<sup>9</sup> Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

#### **Jeremiah 29:11**

<sup>11</sup> For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

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## IT'S YOUR CALL

**Rick Warren — Mar 28, 2015**

There are more than 7,000 promises in the Bible from God to you. They're like blank checks just waiting to be cashed by you. And with every promise, there's a premise.

In the Bible's most famous promise, John 3:16, Jesus tells us, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (NKJV). God promises we won't perish if we believe in him.

God's free gift of salvation is offered to everyone. It doesn't matter your religion or cultural background. Jesus Christ died for you.

How do we receive this free gift?

The Bible says, *"God says he will accept and acquit us — declare us 'not guilty' — if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like"* (Romans 3:22 TLB).

Though anyone can come to faith in Jesus, the only way we can get to Heaven is by placing our trust in Jesus Christ. You can't trust Jesus unless you know him. I believe in Marx, Stalin, and Khrushchev, but I'm not a Communist. The way I believe in Jesus is different. I know him, and I trust him.

It's the difference between your head and your heart. I know many famous people. I know Bill Gates. We've spoken on the same platform together. We've been at parties together. I've sat on a couch and explained The PEACE Plan to him. I know Bill Gates. But I don't really know him. He's not a close, personal friend. I don't really know what makes him tick.

But I do know my wife. We've been married for close to 40 years. I know her inside and out. I know what makes her tick.

That's what it means to know God. It means having a real, living relationship with him. That's what it means to trust God.

Do you know God that way? You can.

### **Talk It Over**

- ◆ God's free gift of salvation is available to everyone. How do you respond to that?
- ◆ What might it look like to know about God but not really know him?

## NOT JUST A COINCIDENCE

### Rick Warren

***“No prophecy ever originated from humans. Instead, it was given by the Holy Spirit as humans spoke under God’s direction.” (2 Peter 1:21 GWT)***

The Bible is the most read book in history. It’s also the bestselling book in history and the most translated book in history.

Yet it’s more than that. It’s also God’s Word — God’s very breath. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”* (NIV).

That means the Bible isn’t just a good idea. It is God’s Word to us. One of the reasons I can know that the Bible is true and trustworthy is that it has thousands and thousands of prophecies that have come true and will come true in history. Every one of the Bible’s prophecies have either come true exactly as God predicted or will come true sometime in the future.

The Bible contains more than 300 prophecies about Jesus alone — all written 1,000 years before he was born. The Bible prophesied about when he’d be born, where he’d be born, and how he’d be born. He couldn’t have manipulated his birth to fulfill those prophecies.

It also predicted how he would die. A thousand years before Jesus died, David described Jesus’ death on the cross in one of the psalms. He didn’t use the word “crucifixion” because no one knew that word then. Long before the Romans were even thinking about crucifying people, David described it. Only God could have known that.

What are the odds that I could make 300 predictions about you and every one of them would come true? It’s so astronomical you couldn’t write the number down. It takes more faith to believe that the Bible’s prophecies were a coincidence than to believe that God planned them.

The Bible says, *“No prophecy ever originated from humans. Instead, it was given by the Holy Spirit as humans spoke under God’s direction”* (2 Peter 1:21 GWT).

During Bible times, nobody wanted to be a prophet. The law in Israel was that a prophet of God had to be correct 100 percent of the time. If you were wrong just once, then you were considered a false prophet and would have been put to death. A prophet better be right!

And the biblical prophecies were right — every one of them. You can trust the Bible because what the Bible predicts comes true.

### Talk It Over

- ◆ Biblical prophecies may seem irrelevant or unimportant in your life. Why do you think God wants you to study, understand, and care about them?
- ◆ Do you trust that the Bible is true? How does your doubt keep you from hearing what God wants to say to you?
- ◆ How is the Bible useful in your life? Do you only use it for encouragement, or is it also a tool for rebuking, correcting, and training in your life?

## GOD'S WORD: YOUR SIGNPOST FOR LIFE

### Rick Warren

***“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)***

One night after teaching at a pastor's conference, my family decided to go to the beach at about 9 p.m. — that's typical for the Warrens. So there we were at Capistrano Beach, frolicking in the ocean, and having fun. Then someone in our family saw this little sign that was posted in the sand that said, “Contaminated water. Stay out.” That sign represented an authority and very clearly told us, “Don't you dare put even a toe in this water!”

Why was that sign posted? To ruin my fun? To make my life a big bummer? No! It was there for my own health. How should I react to that authority? I could reject that authority and say, “This is a stupid sign! I know better than this sign, so I'm going to go ahead and play in the water anyway.” Or I could say, “This sign is out of date. It was for another time and another age. And it really doesn't apply to me because it's out of date, I'm sure.” Or I could say, “This sign doesn't really mean what it says. When it says ‘Stay out,’ that's just someone's interpretation. I interpret the words ‘Stay out’ as meaning ‘Go right ahead!’” Or I could say, “I'm sure God would want me to ignore this sign, because God wants me to have fun.”

Throughout the Bible, God says things like “Don't have premarital sex.” You may say, “That's out of date. That's wrong. I don't like it. That's your interpretation,” but it's still the truth. Why was the sign set up there on the beach? To keep me from disease, from danger, and possibly even death. It was for my own benefit.

The Bible is filled with all kinds of rules and commands. Why? Because God is a loving God. Everything that's in the Bible is not there to make your life miserable; it's there to protect you. It's there for your health. It's there for your good. A loving God who knows more than you gave you the rules for life. If you ignore them, you only get hurt.

The Bible says, *“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right”* (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT). God's Word is your signpost for life.

In fact, making God's Word the authority of your life is a stress reliever, because if you don't have an authority in your life, you're going to listen to all kinds of conflicting opinions. One day you'll decide this, another day you'll decide that, and then one day you can't decide, and indecision causes stress. But if you decide that God's Word is going to be the authority of your life, it simplifies your decision-making.

### Talk It Over

- ◆ How would you describe your attitude toward the Bible?
- ◆ What is the evidence in your life that God's Word is your authority for how you live?
- ◆ Describe a time in your life when you followed God's leading from his Word and as a result felt relief from stress or pressure.

## PERSONALIZE GOD'S WORD TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Rick Warren

***“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”  
(Philippians 1:6 NLT)***

God's Word will never change your life until you let it become personal. It's not about your neighbor, your friend, your spouse, or the stranger down the street. God's Word must be applied to your life. The Bible won't become dynamic until it becomes specific.

How do you make God's Word personal? Try the **personalize-it method** of Bible meditation. Anybody can do it. You don't need any special tools or advanced theological training.

You simply put your name in the place of pronouns or nouns in Scripture. For example, if I were personalizing John 3:16, I'd write something like this: *“For God so loved Rick, he gave his one and only Son so that Rick would not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Or, for Philippians 1:6: *“He who began a good work in Rick Warren will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

Put your name in the text, and you'll strengthen your faith and encourage yourself.

You can also re-write the verse as if God is talking directly to you. For example, Philippians 1:6 would be: *“I, who began a good work in you, Rick, will carry it on to completion.”*

Do this, and many passages of Scripture will literally bring tears to your eyes. You'll start to read the Bible as God's love letter to you. It'll be God's gift to you! Reading your Bible isn't just about getting to know the content of the Word; it's about getting to know the author of the Word — personally!

### Talk About It

- ◆ Have you ever thought about the Bible as a love letter to you?
- ◆ What does it look like when you believe that God wrote the Bible just for you? What does it look like when you treat the Bible and your quiet time with God as a personal conversation and lesson for life?
- ◆ How will you personalize what you're reading today?

## FOLLOWING THE BIBLE

### Rick Warren

***“I will never lay aside your laws, for you have used them to restore my joy and health.” (Psalm 119:93 TLB)***

God’s Word is full of commands that are meant to protect you and give you life. If God says to do something, he means for you to do it, and if he says not to do something, you shouldn’t do it. So why should you follow God’s Word? Why should you make this book your standard?

Because the Bible is dependable because it doesn’t change. Fads change, opinions change — even science changes. By the time a science textbook is in print, it’s already out of date! A few weeks ago I threw out a thick stack of computer books because they’re all worthless and irrelevant — wrong operating systems and wrong programs. Everything changes, but God’s Word doesn’t change, because the truth never changes.

During an interview, Alan Shepherd, the first American astronaut in space, was asked, “What are you depending on?” Shepherd replied, “That God’s laws will not change.” That’s a pretty good answer! What if gravity worked every other day?

God’s laws are immutable. They are unchanging. If you want to get healthy again emotionally, relationally, physically, or any other way, you need to make Jesus Christ the manager of your life and you need to make God’s Word the authority of your life.

And, you need to make the commitments David did in Psalm 119:112 — *“I have made up my mind to obey your laws forever, no matter what”* (CEV) — and in Psalm 119:93: *“I will never lay aside your laws, for you have used them to restore my joy and health”* (TLB). Have you made the commitment to obey God’s laws forever — no matter what? God promises to restore your joy and health if you’ll just do what he says to do and exhibit true meekness, where you let go and let God.

### Talk It Over

- ◆ What parts of the Bible are more difficult for you to obey or follow?
- ◆ How have you seen God restore your joy because of your obedience?

## GET TO KNOW YOUR HEALER

**Rick Warren — November 10, 2016**

***“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing” (1 Peter 3:9 NLT, second edition).***

Nothing crushes the spirit more than abuse — to feel devalued, unimportant, and misused. Jesus knows that. And he says, “I will care for you.”

The starting point in your healing is to get to know your Healer. You need to say, “Jesus Christ, I don’t know how you did this, but you took the guilt for every sin in the world — the ones done to me and the ones done by me. I want to learn to love you. And I want you to come in and heal my heart and my mind and my body.”

And he will. He will!

When Jesus was abused, did he retaliate? Absolutely not! The Bible says, *“Christ never verbally abused those who verbally abused him. When he suffered, he didn’t make any threats but left everything to the one who judges fairly”* (1 Peter 2:23 GW).

One day, God is going to balance the books. One day God is going to settle the score. One day God is going to right all the wrongs. You think the abusers won’t have to answer for the abuse? You think all the evil that’s happened in the world will go unpunished?

No. One day God is going to settle the score. It is his alone to settle.

God is a truly just God. He can do a whole lot better job at settling the score than you can. He wants you to leave it in his hands, because he’s God, and you’re not.

One of the reasons why we have to deal with abuse is because of this: It is contagious. It gets passed on from generation to generation.

If someone saw abuse growing up or experienced it in their family, they learned some patterns. And those patterns can be passed on, not to everyone, but to some.

This year millions of kids in America will watch their parents in a domestic violence situation. Study after study has shown that those kids are twice as likely to abuse their own family once they’re grown. Somebody’s got to break the chain!

Let it be you. Starting today. Starting now. Starting with the power of the Holy Spirit.

God, I pray a blessing of courage on everyone reading this, that many will say, “I’m not keeping it a secret any more. I’m going to name the abuse. I’m not going to minimize it or rationalize it. If I need to get to a safe place for a while, then so be it. God, give me the courage to talk with a safe person who can help me make a plan to experience health and healing. Save my life; save my relationships. Let the healing process begin. And God, I’m going to let you settle the score. In your name I pray. Amen.”