

THE BIBLE FLOW HISTORICAL STUDIES

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# IS THAT REALLY IN THE BIBLE?

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*40 Scripture Claims, Church Traditions,  
and Cultural Sayings Examined with Reverence*

★ 5 RIGOROUS HISTORICAL & EXEGETICAL CATEGORIES ★

Sayings · Nativity · Isolated Verses · Angels · Apostolic Traditions

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OXFORD RESEARCH GRADE · ACADEMIC THEOLOGY FOR BELIEVERS

# Introduction: The Art of Biblical Discernment

Every culture carries a rich repository of religious folklore, memorable adages, and traditional assumptions. Over generations, lines from Shakespeare, Aesop's fables, medieval poetry, and church traditions blend so seamlessly into popular memory that millions of sincere believers believe they are quoting Chapter and Verse.

The purpose of this study is not to mock genuine faith or dismiss valuable cultural wisdom. Rather, it is to cultivate the noble spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17:11), who 'examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.' Knowing what the Bible actually says—and what it does not say—protects us from unrealistic expectations, theological confusion, and distorted views of God's character.

## Our Five Analytical Categories

Each of the 40 items in this book is classified under one of five clear categories:

1. Biblical Text: Directly stated in the canonical Scriptures, though often accompanied by overlooked details.
2. Inaccurate Paraphrase: A biblical truth that has been distorted, truncated, or quoted out of context in popular speech.
3. Church Tradition: Post-biblical ecclesiastical practices, patristic writings, or liturgical traditions not found in the biblical text.
4. Debated Theological Interpretation: Legitimate historical disagreements between Christian traditions (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox) regarding meaning or canon.
5. Cultural Myth / Secular Proverb: Sayings and ideas derived from secular literature, classical folklore, or modern media with zero scriptural foundation.

## How to Use This Study

Each verified claim follows a structured seven-point format: the Question, the Short Ruling, the Classification, Scripture & Historical References, Contextual Exegesis, Why the Confusion Arises, and a final Study Question for personal reflection or group discussion.

'Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.' — Acts 17:11

CLAIM #01 · PART 1: POPULAR PROVERBS & CULTURAL SAYINGS

Does the Bible say, "God helps those who help themselves"?

**VERDICT: No. This famous saying is not in the Bible and actually contradicts Scripture's central message that God helps the helpless.**

CULTURAL PROVERB / SECULAR FOLKLORE

|                              |                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical References:         | Romans 5:6; Psalm 10:14; Proverbs 28:26; Jeremiah 17:5                                                                 |
| Historical / Cultural Roots: | Aesop's Fables ('Hercules and the Wagoner'); Algernon Sidney (1698); Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard's Almanack (1736) |

✦ BIBLICAL CONTEXT & EXEGESIS

Scripture repeatedly highlights human inability to achieve salvation or spiritual renewal by self-effort alone. Romans 5:6 emphasizes that 'while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.' Biblical faith teaches human responsibility and diligent stewardship, but grounds ultimate rescue entirely in divine grace rather than self-reliance.

✦ WHY THE CONFUSION ARISES

The phrase originated in ancient Greece and was popularized in Anglo-American culture by Benjamin Franklin in 1736. Because it sounds like a practical moral exhortation akin to the Book of Proverbs, millions of readers mistakenly assume it is biblical chapter and verse.

✦ STUDY & REFLECTION QUESTION

"How does resting in God's grace for the helpless differ from passive complacency in our daily responsibilities?"

CLAIM #02 · PART 1: POPULAR PROVERBS & CULTURAL SAYINGS

Does the Bible teach that "Money is the root of all evil"?

VERDICT: No. The Bible states that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, not money itself.

INACCURATE PARAPHRASE / COMMON MISQUOTE

|                              |                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical References:         | 1 Timothy 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:17–19; Ecclesiastes 5:10; Hebrews 13:5                                          |
| Historical / Cultural Roots: | Popular English abbreviation of the King James Bible text ('For the love of money is the root of all evil') |

✦ BIBLICAL CONTEXT & EXEGESIS

In 1 Timothy 6:10, Paul uses the Greek word 'philargyria' (literally, affection for silver, greed). Money is an inanimate tool used throughout Scripture for commerce, charity, and temple worship. The spiritual danger is the idolatrous affection, trust, and covetousness that people place in material wealth, which leads to spiritual ruin.

✦ WHY THE CONFUSION ARISES

Dropping the three words 'the love of' turns a penetrating psychological and spiritual warning into a simplistic criticism of currency, making it easier to quote but distorting the apostolic intent.

✦ STUDY & REFLECTION QUESTION

"What practical guardrails can a Christian establish to ensure money remains a tool for generosity rather than an object of devotion?"

CLAIM #09 · PART 2: FAMOUS STORIES & MISLABELED DETAILS

# Does the Bible state that there were three wise men who visited Jesus?

VERDICT: No. The Gospel of Matthew mentions three distinct gifts, but never specifies the number of Magi.

CHURCH TRADITION / NARRATIVE DEDUCTION

|                              |                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical References:         | Matthew 2:1–12; Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72:10–11                                                                                |
| Historical / Cultural Roots: | Origen, <i>Homilies on Genesis</i> (c. 240 AD); 6th-century Western mosaic in Ravenna naming Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar |

♦ BIBLICAL CONTEXT & EXEGESIS

Matthew 2:1 simply speaks of 'Magi from the east' arriving in Jerusalem. They presented three royal gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). The early church deduced three travelers from the three gifts, though Eastern Christian traditions (such as the Syriac church) historically commemorated twelve Magi.

♦ WHY THE CONFUSION ARISES

Carols like 'We Three Kings of Orient Are' (John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1857) and countless nativity displays have made three travelers a permanent cultural fixture.

♦ STUDY & REFLECTION QUESTION

"What is the prophetic significance of the three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—regarding Christ's identity and mission?"

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CLAIM #10 · PART 2: FAMOUS STORIES & MISLABELED DETAILS

# Was the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden an apple?

VERDICT: No. Scripture never identifies the species; it is simply called 'the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.'

ARTISTIC TRADITION / LINGUISTIC PUN

|                              |                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical References:         | Genesis 2:9, 16–17; Genesis 3:1–6                                                                                                      |
| Historical / Cultural Roots: | Latin Vulgate wordplay ('malus' = bad/evil, 'mālus' = apple tree); John Milton, Paradise Lost (1667); Renaissance art (Dürer, Cranach) |

✦ BIBLICAL CONTEXT & EXEGESIS

Genesis 3:6 says Eve saw that 'the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye.' Rabbinic commentators speculated about figs, grapes, wheat, or pomegranates. The identification with an apple arose in Western Europe through the Latin word 'malus,' which puns on both evil and apple.

✦ WHY THE CONFUSION ARISES

Renaissance painters depicted apples in Eden, and John Milton solidified the imagery in English literature with \*Paradise Lost\*. The phrase 'Adam's apple' entered human anatomy as a lasting linguistic reminder.

✦ STUDY & REFLECTION QUESTION

"Why is it important to recognize that humanity's fall was caused by disobedience to God's command rather than any magical property in the fruit?"

CLAIM #17 · PART 3: VERSES FREQUENTLY TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT

Does Philippians 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ") promise worldly success or athletic victory?

VERDICT: No. It is Paul's testimony of supernatural contentment while enduring poverty and imprisonment.

BIBLICAL TEXT / FREQUENTLY MISAPPLIED

|                              |                                                                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biblical References:         | Philippians 4:10–13; 2 Corinthians 11:23–27; 1 Timothy 6:6–8        |
| Historical / Cultural Roots: | Letter of Paul to the Philippians (c. 61–62 AD from a Roman prison) |

✦ BIBLICAL CONTEXT & EXEGESIS

In verses 11–12, Paul writes: 'I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry.' 'All things' refers to enduring every trial, deprivation, and hardship through Christ's sustaining power.

✦ WHY THE CONFUSION ARISES

Modern athletes, motivational speakers, and commercial merchandise quote the verse in isolation to claim divine backing for personal ambitions, trophies, and business triumphs.

✦ STUDY & REFLECTION QUESTION

"How does learning Christian contentment in seasons of lack provide greater spiritual stability than pursuing constant worldly victory?"

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