

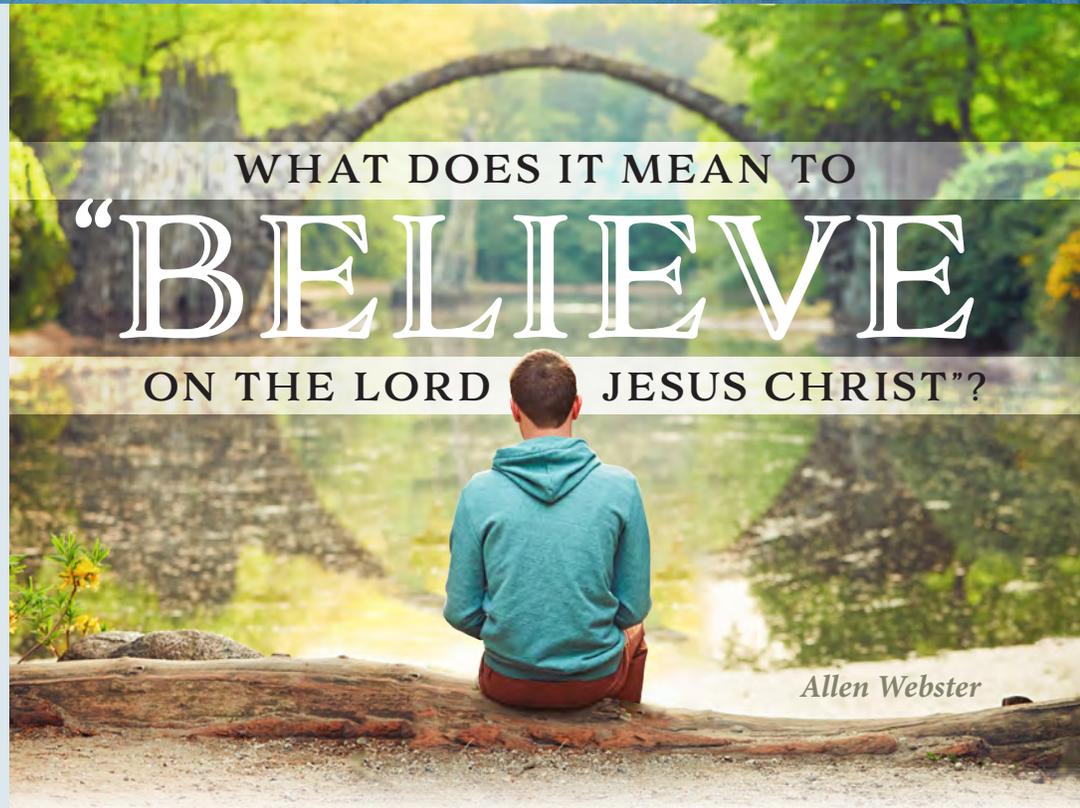


HOUSE to HOUSE
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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 7



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”?

Allen Webster

Paul gave God’s greatest answer to man’s greatest question by relating Christ’s greatest news. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you, and your household” (Acts 16:31).

This answer has two parts:

- Blessing promised: Will be saved.
- Condition required: Believe on Jesus.

Controversy has surrounded Acts 16:31, but it should not. This passage is one of the great verses of the New Testament. It fits perfectly with all the gospel says of man’s response to God’s grace.

ACTS 16:31 CONNECTS TO THE GREAT COMMISSION.

Paul and Silas were sent out under Jesus’ command to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15–16).

The book of Acts is simply the record of the apostles fulfilling this commission. Every conversion recorded in Acts conforms to Mark 16:15–16.

For instance, Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:35).

- The eunuch asked, “Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (8:36).
- Philip replied, “If you believe with all your heart, you may” (8:37).
- He responded, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
- Then “Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (8:38).

ACTS 16:31 CONNECTS TO OTHER “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?” PASSAGES.

“What must I do to be saved?” (or the equivalent) is asked three times in Acts.

It was asked by the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2:37). Peter replied: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The result: “Those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

It was asked by Saul of Tarsus. When he saw the Lord in a vision, he asked, “What shall I do, Lord?” Christ directed him to go into Damascus where he would be told all things appointed for him to do (Acts 22:10). After three days of Saul’s penitent prayer, Jesus sent Ananias to him, saying, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16). The result: “He arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18).

It was asked by the jailer (Acts 16:30).

Note that, surprisingly, a different answer was given each time. Does God have no definite plan? Does He require different things of different people? No, God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34–35; Romans 2:11). Everyone is required to make the same trip; some are just farther down the road than others.

Suppose one was going to Philippi and asked a passerby, “How far to Philippi?” He answers, “Ten miles.” He walks farther and asks, “How far to Philippi?” “Six miles.” Later he asks, “How far to the city?” “Only half a mile.”

The traveler received three answers to the same question, yet each was correct because he was in a different place.

The same is true with salvation. To

- The Jews: “Repent . . . and be baptized.”
- Saul of Tarsus: “Be baptized.”
- The jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Combined, the three answers were (a) Believe; (b) Repent; (c) Be baptized. Each questioner was in a different place:

- Those on Pentecost had met requirement (a) and were told (b) and (c).
- Saul of Tarsus was a believer (a) who was penitent (b), so he was told (c).
- The jailer had fulfilled no requirement, so he was told to do (a); then (b) and (c) were explained to him. Believing (a) did not exempt him from (b) and (c).

A modern illustration might make it clearer. Suppose a high school student asked, “What must I do to get a PhD?”

Her friend might say, “You’ll have to go to college.” Her advisor would reply, “Complete high school, get your college undergraduate degree. Then enroll in graduate school and obtain a master’s. After that, apply for candidacy in a doctoral program.”

If a college graduate asked that question, he would not be told to finish high school and complete undergraduate work. He would be instructed to “enroll in graduate school, get a master’s, and apply to a doctoral program.”

If one with a master’s degree asked this, she would be told, “Apply to be a candidate in a doctoral program.” Each is at a different point.

“Go to college” is the short answer. It implies all that is in the long answer. “Believe on Jesus” is the short answer. It implies all that is in the long answer.

ACTS 16:31 CONNECTS TO ACTS 16:32.

Paul’s answer must be understood in its context. As an unbeliever, the jailer did not know who “the Lord Jesus Christ” was. He was like the blind man who said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” (John 9:36).

Probably, up to that night the jailer had never even heard Jesus’ name. He had certainly never attended a church service or listened to a gospel sermon. He could not believe in Jesus until he learned about Him (Romans 10:17).

Paul responded with the general command to believe and then taught him who Jesus is and what He requires (Acts 16:31). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” was the summary, shorthand answer—the introduction, not the conclusion.

Acts 16:31 is not God’s complete plan of salvation (no single verse is). For instance,

- It does not mention repentance, yet Jesus wanted repentance preached in His name (Luke 24:46–47), which the apostles did (Acts 2:37–38; 3:19; 17:30–31).
- It does not mention confessing Christ, yet Jesus wanted this preached (Matthew 10:32–33), which the apostles did (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9–10; 1 John 4:15).

“Believe on Jesus” is condensed gospel followed by blessed commentary.





ACTS 16:31 CONNECTS TO OTHER PASSAGES ON FAITH.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus” is consistent with Jesus’ teaching that believing in the Son is the key to having eternal life (John 3:36; 8:24; 20:30–31). Paul doubtless told the jailer that whoever believes in Jesus should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

It is important to use the term “believe” as the Holy Spirit did. What does it mean to believe? In Scripture, faith has these characteristics:

Faith includes the intellect. Sinners must believe **in** Jesus. Believe what? That He is “the Lord Jesus Christ,” indicating His deity, humanity, and Messiahship.

Faith is only as good as its object.

- A pagan believes an idol will save him.
- A moralist believes his goodness can save him.
- A humanist believes he can save himself.
- A Christian believes Jesus can save him.

Idolatry, goodness, and humanism have no power to save (Isaiah 45:20; Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:10), for the One who will judge accepts only those rescued by Jesus’ blood (John 14:6).

Faith includes the emotions (conscience). We must believe **on** Jesus. Faith is not merely believing facts. It is trusting Christ to rescue from sin’s dominion (Romans 6:14; Hebrews 7:25) and relying upon Him to remove sin’s guilt (Romans 8:33).

Faith includes the will. Faith is consummated by an obedient response (Romans 16:26). It involves a decision. Believers receive the right to become sons of God (John 1:12).

A patient relies on a physician, the accused on an advocate, and a player on a coach. A patient that fails to take medi-

cine the physician prescribed, the accused who disregards the counselor’s advice, and a player who runs a different play than his coach called—all show a lack of faith by disobedience.

The jailer’s faith led to actions. He

- brought his household to hear (16:32),
- washed stripes (16:33),
- was baptized (16:33),
- and served food (16:34).

ACTS 16:31 CONNECTS TO OTHER CASES OF CONVERSION.

If one takes only Saul’s case (Acts 22:16), then he might teach salvation by baptism alone. If one takes only Pentecost (Acts 2:38), then he might teach only repentance and baptism. If one takes the jailer alone, then he might say salvation is by faith only.

Some make this mistake by saying things like, the jailer “did not have to move his body an inch to be converted.” Acts 16:31 teaches salvation by faith, but it does not teach salvation by faith only. There is no “only” in the verse. James declared “faith only” does not save (James 2:17–20, 24).

There is consistency in the conversion cases in Acts. “Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8) is a simple summary. Compare the other conversions in chapters 2, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 19.

The jailer is a good example of what to do upon learning the gospel. When Paul finished their study, the jailer obeyed the same hour of the night. He did not argue, make excuses, or procrastinate.

Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you have not been baptized yet, or if you did so for the wrong reasons, “why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.”

We will be happy to help.



Get into Circulation

During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver for its coinage.

Lord Cromwell sent his men on an investigation of the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there. After investigating they reported, “The only silver we could find is in the statues standing in the corners.”

To this the radical soldier and statesman of England replied, “Good! We’ll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!”

Get into circulation. Find your place of service with your talents. Make a difference in this world. —Author Unknown

“A merry heart does good”

PROVERBS 17:22

God’s Plan for Saving Man

Divine Love: John 3:16

God’s Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ’s Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit’s Word: Romans 1:16

Sinner’s Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner’s Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner’s Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner’s Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian’s Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian’s Work: James 2:24

Christian’s Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian’s Endurance: Revelation 2:10



28 Things We Need to Know about God

1. God is self-existent and eternal; He had no beginning and will have no end (Genesis 1:1; 21:33; Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 90:2).
2. God is the creator of all things, including mankind (Genesis 1:1–2:1; Exodus 20:11; Acts 17:26–28).
3. God is Almighty God; He is omnipotent (possessing all power) (Genesis 17:1; 18:14).
4. God is the Lord God (Genesis 15:2; Numbers 14:17; Deuteronomy 3:24; Matthew 4:7; Hebrews 1:10).
5. God is “the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts” (Jeremiah 32:17–19).
6. God is the “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14).
7. God is invisible (Colossians 1:15).
8. God is all-wise and all-knowing (omniscient) (Romans 16:27; Hebrews 4:13).
9. God is present everywhere (omnipresent) (Psalm 139:7–12; Jeremiah 23:23–24).
10. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).
11. God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24).
12. God is the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9; Matthew 16:16; Hebrews 9:13–14; 10:31).
13. God is the only acceptable object of man’s worship (Exodus 20:3; Matthew 4:10; Acts 17:22–31; John 4:24).
14. God is the God of glory (Acts 7:2).
15. God is the first member of the Godhead (the Divine Nature) (Matthew 28:18–20; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
16. God is holy (separate) (Isaiah 6:1–3; 1 Peter 1:15–16).
17. God is love (1 John 4:8–10).
18. God is a God of grace (1 Corinthians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Ephesians 1:6).
19. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).
20. God gave His Son as a sin-offering (an atonement) for all mankind (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 3:21–26).
21. God is merciful (Ephesians 2:4; 1 Peter 1:3; Hebrews 4:16).
22. God has blessed Christians with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3).
23. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3).
24. As the creator of all mankind, He is the God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:6).
25. To Christians (those who have become His spiritual children), God is “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; Galatians 3:26–27; Philippians 4:20).
26. God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).
27. God gave the Scriptures as His complete, final, perfect and all-sufficient guide to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16–17).
28. God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:10–12; cf. Psalm 102:25–27).

—Hugh Fulford (adapted)

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 24:7

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Chapter to Chapter – 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State: _____
 Phone: _____

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 24:5 Revelation: God's Final Words: 1. John (Revelation 1:1) 2. Patmos (Revelation 1:9) 3. Seven stars (Revelation 1:16) 4. Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7–11) 5. Ephesus (Revelation 2:1–4) 6. 24 (Revelation 4:4) 7. 4 (Revelation 4:6) 8. The 4 creatures with 6 wings and eyes all around (Revelation 4:8) 9. 7 (Revelation 5:1) 10. Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (Revelation 5:5) 11. 4 (Revelation 6:1–8) 12. Pale (Revelation 6:8) 13. Wormwood (Revelation 8:11) 14. He ate it (Revelation 10:10) 15. A garland of 12 stars (Revelation 12:1) 16. 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2) 17. Into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15)

V. 24:6 Bible Curses: 1. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10) 2. Gospel (Galatians 1:8) 3. Christ (Galatians 3:13) 4. Deaf (Leviticus 19:14) 5. Job's (Job 2:9) 6. Malachi (Malachi 4:6) 7. James (James 3:10) 8. Paul (Acts 23:12) 9. Satan (Job 2:4–5) 10. Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 10:20)

Moses and Egypt

Directions: Find answers in the following passages: Genesis 41:30; 47:11; Exodus 1:9–10; 2:1–10; 2:11–12; 2:15; 2:21; 3:5; 4:10; 4:14–16; 7:10; 7:20; 8:22–23; 9:26, 10:23; 12:22; 13:21; 14:21–22, 29; 15:22; Hosea 7:16. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

1. Why did the king of Egypt put the children of Israel into bondage? _____
2. How many years of famine did Joseph predict would strike Egypt? _____
3. Who adopted Moses? _____
4. Why did Moses kill the Egyptian? _____
5. Where did Moses flee to after killing the Egyptian? _____
6. Who was Moses' wife? _____
7. What did God tell Moses to do before approaching the burning bush? _____
8. What was Moses' concern about his ability to lead the children of Israel? _____
9. Who was to be Moses' spokesperson? _____
10. What did Aaron turn his rod into? _____
11. What did the children of Israel do to protect their firstborn sons from being killed in the Lord's last plague on Egypt? _____
12. True or False: The children of Israel had to suffer from all of the same plagues as the Egyptians. _____
13. The Lord showed the children of Israel the way to travel in the wilderness by using _____
14. Through which body of water did the children of Israel pass safely? _____
15. What was the first plague sent upon the Egyptians? _____
16. To what part of Egypt did Joseph relocate his father and brothers? _____
17. Which line of Israel's family bore Moses? _____
18. In chapter seven of Hosea, the rage of the princes' tongue would be their derision in what land? _____

—<http://www.religionresourcesonline.org>

Hidden Treasures

A South Dakota rancher and his bride received a nice Bible as a wedding gift from his grandfather.

They wrote a thank you note and stowed the Bible in a closet. The grandfather asked every so often how they liked it.

Eventually, they became curious, dug it out, and leafed through it. They found 66 twenty-dollar bills—one in each book.

The grandfather left \$1320 in monetary treasure to be discovered, but God

has left inestimable eternal spiritual riches (story adapted from Kathleen Norris, *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*). Understanding the Bible takes effort (2 Timothy 2:15), but its treasures are worth the investment.

"Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them"

PSALM 118:19



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free, and they never ask for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems as well as through their smartphone apps, the Roku device, and at gbntv.org.

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- Sin's Lens



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Jesus and the Oppression of Women



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Lessons from the Book of Ruth



7 Lessons Asaph Learned The Hard Way



Look, There's God



In Pursuit of Hope



I'm Looking for a Church That Is Not So Negative



Don't Get Carried Away



Why Do Bad Things Happen?

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THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Jerusalem

Damascus

SEA OF GALILEE

JORDAN RIVER

DEAD SEA

The conversion account in the New Testament with the most detail is that of Saul of Tarsus. It is told three times (Acts 9, 22, and 26). With so much information, there is much to be learned that helps us understand what is involved in conversion to Christ.

ACTS 8:1–3 Saul is introduced as a persecutor of Christians in Jerusalem.



ACTS 9:1–3 Saul journeys to Damascus to persecute the church there.

ACTS 9:3–6 Saul is struck blind, calls Jesus Lord, but is not saved. He is told to go into the city where he will be told what to do.



ACTS 9:9, 11 Saul fasts and prays for three days, but is still lost.

ACTS 9:10–15 Ananias is told to go to Saul.



ACTS 9:17–18 Ananias restores Saul's sight and teaches him further about Jesus. Saul is baptized, washing away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).



Amazingly Small

The Bible is amazingly small. The Sunday newspaper has more words than the New Testament.

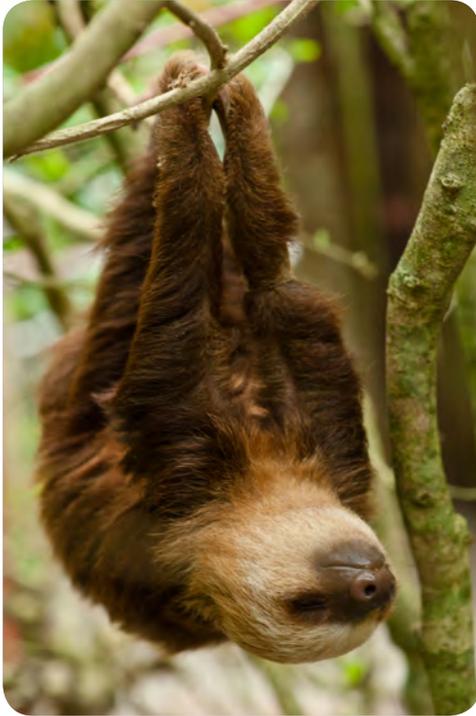
Imagine a book that fits in one hand that describes

- the creation of the universe and man (Genesis 1);
- more than four thousand years of human history, including much recorded nowhere else;
- a comprehensive history of the Jewish nation;
- the lives of forty-seven kings (1 Samuel–2 Chronicles), including such renowned men as David and Solomon;
- more than 300 fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah;
- the birth, life, deeds, words, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the world's Savior (Matthew–John);
- the gospel—its facts, commands, and promises (Matthew–Acts; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4);
- the establishment, growth, and fifty-year early history of the church (Acts–Revelation);
- a comprehensive system of ethics and a daily guide for a happy life (e.g., Matthew 5–7; Titus 2:11–14; 1 Peter 3:10–11);
- organization, leadership qualifications, and rules of conduct for the church (Romans–Jude);
- a missionary plan to cover the whole world in every generation (Mark 16:15–16; Acts 1:8); and
- a prophecy of what happens beyond this life and into eternity (Revelation).

—Author Unknown

"I have written to you in few words."

HEBREWS 13:22



THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE

Elie Wiesel, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald death camps in WWII, said, “Indifference, to me, is the epitome of evil. The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it is indifference. Because of indifference, one dies before one actually dies.”

When Paul came to Athens, Luke describes the condition of his heart as “his spirit was provoked within him” (Acts 17:16). He saw heathen gods everywhere. He saw a people in the darkness of ignorance. And that kind of “provocation” within led to action.

Someone has said, “The busy man is troubled by one devil, and the idle by a thousand.” We must labor if we are to enter the rest (Hebrews 4:11). Solomon adds that whatever we do, we must do it with our might (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

—Author Unknown



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7/19

WOULD YOU LIKE TO Study the Bible?



Contact us to set up a Bible study, or find answers to Bible questions at housetohouse.com/freestudies/