

UNLESS

I. "UNLESS YOU EAT THE FLESH OF THE SON OF MAN AND DRINK HIS BLOOD, YOU HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU"

A. **John 6:53-63**

No one can have life, of the everlasting variety, without consuming Jesus' word.

B. **1st Timothy 4:13, 16**

This is why we give heed to reading and teaching, because it has saving power.

II. "UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME"

A. **Acts 8:26-31**

The treasurer of Ethiopia humbly admitted he could not comprehend the prophecy of Isaiah without guidance.

B. **1st Peter 1:10-12**

Even the prophets who foretold Jesus' coming could not fully grasp what they were writing.

C. **Ephesians 5:17**

Understanding the Lord's will is required, though.

D. **Nehemiah 8:8**

Because understanding is essential, but some things are difficult to understand, God uses men to explain His word.

E. **Matthew 15:14**

Caution must be exercised in choosing a guide.

F. **Acts 17:11**

Ultimately, we are each personally responsible for understanding the word.

III. “UNLESS YOU UTTER BY THE TONGUE WORDS EASY TO UNDERSTAND, HOW WILL IT BE KNOWN WHAT IS SPOKEN?”

A. 1st Corinthians 14:7-9

Although presented in the context of exercising the spiritual gift of tongue speaking, it remains ever true that comprehension is impossible without the use of comprehensible words. There is no need to use fancy, ten-dollar words that go over the heads of the hearers. Complicated words should generally be avoided, but if they are used, they should be defined and explained.

B. 1st Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul never sought to impress anyone by his dynamic personality and charismatic oratory. He wanted his audience impressed with Christ, not Paul.

C. Habakkuk 2:2

God told His prophet, “*make it plain*”.

D. Mark 12:37

When Jesus spoke, “*the common people heard Him gladly*”. That could not have been the case if he used a lot of words they didn’t understand.

Audiences don’t need to be insulted with baby talk, but neither should they be insulted with words that go over their heads. We need to communicate by speaking directly to people at their own level.

IV. “UNLESS I SEE... I WILL NOT BELIEVE”

A. John 20:24-31

Thomas refused to accept the eyewitness testimony of his brethren that Jesus had risen; he insisted on being an eyewitness himself, but Jesus blessed those who would believe without seeing.

B. Luke 16:30-31

Those who do not accept the written word of God will not be persuaded by witnessing miracles. Consider how many people personally beheld Christ

raising the dead, healing the crippled, and restoring sight to the blind, but still demanded His crucifixion.

C. 2nd Corinthians 5:7

Many say, "Seeing is believing", but the opposite is true for Christians. We see because we believe. Faith is our sixth sense.

D. Hebrews 11:1

This is the very nature of faith.

V. "UNLESS YOU REPENT YOU WILL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH"

A. Luke 13:3, 5

Everyone will perish, everyone will suffer the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone, except those who repent.

B. 2nd Peter 3:9

In His longsuffering, God presently refrains from the earth's destruction because He does not desire our deaths. He provides us the opportunity to repent.

C. Romans 2:4

It is owing to God's infinite goodness that we are afforded further opportunity to repent.

D. Acts 17:30

Repentance is universally demanded by our Maker and Judge. Ignorance of His will is no excuse.

E. 2nd Corinthians 7:10

True repentance is precipitated by remorse. Whereas worldly sorrow brings about death, such as in the case of Judas, godly sorrow brings about life, such as in the case of Peter. Repentance is impossible without regret.

F. Acts 26:19-20

True repentance is followed up with actions that prove the individual's heart has changed.

VI. “UNLESS YOU ARE CONVERTED AND BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN, YOU WILL BY NO MEANS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN”

A. Matthew 18:1-5

His disciples asked Jesus what was probably a very leading question, likely anticipating that one of them would be named the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus responded unexpectedly by presenting a little child to them and demanding childlike humility as prerequisite to acceptance into the kingdom. No one can get in otherwise.

B. 1st Corinthians 14:20

The Lord wants us mature in some respects, such as in our understanding, but in other ways He insists on childlikeness, such as in malice. Children do not understand, nor do they practice evil; therefore we should be like them in that respect.

C. Ephesians 5:1

Our God wants us to imitate Him the way children imitate their parents. In recent weeks or months, my two-year-old sons have taken up the habit of observing me in my morning routine. They sit on the bathroom counter and watch me shave and tell me what I need to do next. God wants us to be fascinated with Him, the way our little ones are fascinated with us.

D. 1st Peter 1:13-16

We teach our children respect, to do what we say when we say it. God also requires “*obedient children*”.

VII. “UNLESS ONE IS BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

A. John 3:1-5

Entrance into God’s kingdom is forbidden to everyone, except those who are reborn. This rebirth is of water and of the Spirit.

B. Acts 8:35-36

Water enables baptism.

C. Acts 10:47-48

Lack of water prevents baptism.

D. 1st Peter 3:20-21

The baptism that saves is one which corresponds to the watery salvation of Noah.

E. Titus 3:4-5

Not only is water an essential element to rebirth, but salvation is also *“through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”*.

F. 1st Peter 1:23

God’s word makes it possible to be born again.

G. 2nd Peter 1:20-21

The Holy Spirit provides the word of God. Thus, rebirth of the Spirit is rebirth according to the Spirit inspired word, the holy scriptures.

VIII. “UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE, THEY LABOR IN VAIN WHO BUILD IT”

A. Psalm 127:1

No house will remain standing that God Himself did not construct.

B. 1st Timothy 3:15

God does have a house; it is the church.

C. Matthew 16:18

The church was built by Jesus.

D. Matthew 15:13

God did not build religious colleges, camps, retreats, foundations, societies, and institutions. Therefore, He will tear them down.

IX. “UNLESS YOU ABIDE IN ME”

A. John 15:1-6

None of us can be fruitful outside of Christ. There is no concept of once saved, always saved in the scriptures. We will wither and die without Him.

B. 2nd John 9

To abide in Christ, is to abide in His word. To go beyond that word is to leave Jesus Himself behind.

C. John 8:31-32

Jesus has no disciples who don't abide in His word. There is no truth and therefore no freedom outside of Jesus.

X. "UNLESS HE COMPETES ACCORDING TO THE RULES"

A. 2nd Timothy 2:5

Anyone who breaks the rules is disqualified from victory in athletic competition. The same is true spiritually. God awards no prizes to those who disregard the rules or try to cheat.

B. 1st Corinthians 9:24-27

Discipline and self-control are essential in our pursuit of victory.

XI. "UNLESS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU WILL BY NO MEANS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"

A. Matthew 5:20

Despite their current ignoble reputation, Jesus did acknowledge the righteousness of the Pharisees and, in fact, demands greater from us. Our goal of heaven will be withheld otherwise.

B. Matthew 23:1-4, 28

The problem with the Pharisees is not that they demanded strict adherence to the laws of God, but that they were hypocritical in their "do as we say, not as we do" mentality.

C. Philippians 1:9-10

God insists on sincerity in our service.