

[View this email in your browser](#)



January 2025

Small But Powerful Words

Vol. 9 No. 1



Small But Powerful Words: "IF"

By Elizabeth Turner Beall

If . . .

If only . . .

If I could just . . .

What if . . .

These words cross our minds often during each day, especially if we are trying to make good decisions or trying to figure out what's best for ourselves in some given situation. This small 2-letter word is a word of condition that shows uncertainty because something has not been decided. On the surface it may appear insignificant, but in reality, especially in our relationship with God, it holds great importance.

Consider the book of 1 John. There are sixteen "if" statements in this short

book, each having significance in our lives as Christians. Let's look at the first six:

1. **"If** we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:6). This could be a fatal **"if"** by not choosing to live our lives according to His Word.

2. **"If** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This is an assuring **"if"** because God has promised us a continual cleansing based upon our commitment to Him.

3. **"If** we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). This **"if"** is a deceiving statement. Even though we have obeyed His Word through repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of our sins, we still sin even though our lives are not a sinful lifestyle.

4. **"If** we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This **"if"** is a blessing we receive for confessing our sins, keeping our lives right with God, and enjoying many blessings from God.

5. **"If** we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). This **"if"** is an insult to God! We need God's Word in our lives, hearts, and minds to the point where we KNOW what God says to us, KNOW what He wants from us as His children, and make sure we DO as He says. We should NEVER come close to offending God, our Father.

6. **"If** anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1). This **"if"** is a promise of advocacy, of having Jesus at God's right hand mediating, interceding, for us as needed.

Such a small word, but easily seen as a very important word, depending on the choices and decisions we make in our lives. Let's encourage each other to hold fast to our commitment to God, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

The remaining “if” statements in the book of 1 John:

1 John 2:3

1 John 3:17

1 John 2:15

1 John 3:21-22

1 John 2:19

1 John 4:11-12

1 John 2:24

1 John 5:12-13

1 John 2:29

1 John 5:16-17



In Christ

By Wilburta Arrowood

Ephesians 1 is an amazing chapter in our Bibles. Paul was writing to faithful Christians in Ephesus. The emphasis of this whole chapter is explaining their relationship in Christ. He makes it very clear their position with God is dependent on their position **in** Christ. So, what does it mean to be **in** Christ, and how did they get there?

Paul says there are specific blessings when one is **in** Christ. Verse 3 says there is every spiritual blessing **in** heavenly places for them. Verse 5 says they are adopted sons and daughters of God. Verse 6 tells us they are favored with Christ’s grace. Verse 7 assures they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of their wrong doings, according to the riches of His grace. Verse 11 says they have an inheritance waiting for them. Verse 13 explains they were sealed **in** Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise

Paul told those faithful Ephesians in verse 18, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance **in** the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe.”

With all that available to those **in** Christ, it is important to know exactly how to get **into** that relationship, so that we, too, can share those blessings. Romans 6:3-4 tells us, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized

into Christ Jesus have been baptized **into** His death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism **into** death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.” When Paul first taught the Ephesians in Acts 19, they had been baptized with John’s baptism, but Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe **in** Him who was coming after him, that is, **in** Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized **in** the name of the Lord Jesus.” The Ephesians were baptized **in** the name of the Lord Jesus, and that is how they gained the status of being “**in** Christ.”

We can gain the same status today by doing that same act of being baptized **in** the name of the Lord Jesus. When we do that and continue faithful to His commands, we will enjoy all the blessings Paul described to those faithful Christians so long ago.



Small But Powerful Words: “But”

By: Amanda Stephanus

According to Merriam-Webster, the Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, has approximately 470,000 words. The longest word in the English dictionary is “pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis” with forty-five letters. The smallest word is “a”. Regardless of if a word contains one letter or forty-five, we know that all words have meaning, some more significant than others. Consider the word “**but**”: this tiny word carries more power behind it than some may realize. According to the Cambridge Dictionary Online, “but” is a conjunction used to connect contrasting ideas. I have heard various preachers say, “**But** is a particle of sharp contrast”. The Bible is replete with instances where sharp contrasts are made.

One such passage is Genesis 6. God grieved over the wickedness of man and saw that “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5-6). Evil was everywhere and because of it, God was going to destroy the world. “So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. **But Noah** found grace in the eyes of the Lord.’” (Genesis 6:7-8, Emphasis AS). Noah stood in opposition to the evil deeds of the world and was the contrast in a dark, lost world. It is no different for us today. God had revealed His wrath towards unrighteousness (Romans 1:18) and He will not tolerate or accept the ungodliness the world engages in. However,

we stand in contrast to the world, and just as Noah found favor, we too can find favor with God for being a light in a dark world (Matthew 5:16).

Another instance that we can draw lessons from is Matthew 5. Jesus was preaching the Sermon on the Mount, and in verse 21 He began to correct the teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes. Six times in the rest of this chapter, Jesus told the multitudes “ye have heard” or “it has been said”. In each instance, Jesus said, “**but** I say unto you” (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44, Emphasis AS). In the context of these verses, Jesus was not giving a new law but was narrowing down things the Pharisees had loosed. For example, the Pharisees and Scribes said do not kill (Matthew 5:21), **but** Jesus said whoever was angry with their brother needed to sort it out before offering alms to God. Jesus was correcting their way of thinking by teaching that what is in the heart matters. In all six instances, Jesus made a sharp contrast between what the Pharisees and Scribes taught and what God required. Sometimes, it is the case that we need to correct our way of thinking and compare and compare our actions to what we read in Scripture. Our motivations, our thoughts, and our reasoning are important, and God requires that we have the right motivation and mindset when we obey Him.

One passage where the word “**but**” helps give hope and comfort is in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In this context, Paul rebuked the Corinthians for taking their brother to court for things that could be dealt with in the church. He told them the unrighteous will not inherit heaven, and he gave examples of evil deeds that will keep people from entering heaven. Paul contrasted the unrighteous and the righteous: “And such were some of you: **but** ye are washed, **but** ye are sanctified, **but** ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11, Emphasis AS). Such a beautiful separation between who the Corinthians once were to who they were in the present – they had been saved, set apart, and made free from sin. There is a distinct difference between their past to present, and Paul reminded them who they currently were was what mattered. What a great assurance that when we become a new creature in Christ, we are no longer our old selves, we have been made holy, and we are sanctified in God (2 Corinthians 5:17). We do not need to remember who we once were, except to remind ourselves why we do not go back to that old life of sin.

While nowhere near an exhaustive list, these few examples give us a glimpse at how small words can carry such powerful meanings. When we study the Bible, we need to pay attention to these things and ensure we understand the context of what we read and the reason God makes a contrast or distinction between differing thoughts/ideas. Whether it is for correction, teaching, or encouragement, every instance is there for us to learn and grow.

Sources:

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/help/faq-how-many-english-words>



Questions for discussion and/or meditation:

1. What does it mean to be “In Christ”?
2. Discuss the contrast between what the Old Law/Pharisees/Scribes had said and what Jesus said (“But I say”) in Matthew 5, verses 22, 28,32,34,39, and 44.
3. Discuss what the other “If” statements mean in 1 John (see the verses listed after the article).

Application ideas for this topic:

1. How do any/all of these “if” statements apply to us today? Or were they meant only for the people John was writing to.
2. Evaluate your life to make sure you are “in Christ” and “walking in the light.” Plan to correct that if you are not.
3. What can you do to make sure you are “steadfast, immovable” in your work for the Lord?

Prayer suggestions:

1. Pray for yourself, that you remain in Christ your entire lifetime.
2. Pray for others around you, that you can teach them and convert them to become “in Christ.”
3. Pray for understanding as you read God’s Word, to know what He wants you to do, and how He wants you to live your life.

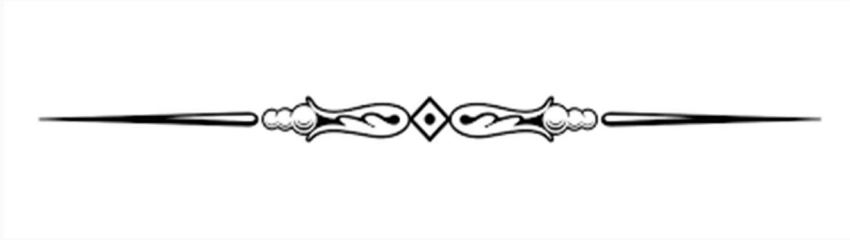


Puzzle:

Find the following words in the puzzle below:

| | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------|
| ADVOCATE | BLESSING | BUT |
| CONFESS | CONTRAST | DECEIVE |
| FATAL | GODLINESS | INHERIT |
| INSULT | JUSTIFIED | LIGHT |
| SANCTIFIED | SERMON | SIN |
| UNRIGHTEOUS | TALK | WASHED |

S D K T H N W B L U E N T E D
F H M B O A U T M R C P Q V L
Z R U M E T R M S H T J K I W
X H R M A D V O C A T E N E A
D E I F I T C N A S R H F C L
S T H G I L C B G X E T A E K
J V Q I J N I S N R C G N D P
D U A L J C W E I K O J D O I
Y E S A X L R T S O N B M H C
V U H T G L V E S Q F Z E T O
F P U S I T H W E H E Q E E C
M A A U A F D T L J S Q Y W A
Z T T X J W I B B G S Q N L S
D E F A S U O E T H G I R N U
I N S U L T G O D L I N E S S



Please share this with your friends. Encourage them to subscribe at this link. Use it as your private study or a group study. Pass it along to others who might be encouraged by it.

Thank you.



Copyright © 2024 Women Building Godly Lives, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

