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What does the bible say about god working in mysterious ways

An interesting press release hit my inbox this week, citing a recent survey by the Barna Research Group. As it turns out, many people don't know that some of their favorite biblical quotes aren't actually from the Bible. See how much you know—which of these famous phrases is found nowhere in scripture: “To thine own self be true.” “God helps those who help themselves.” “The truth will set you free.” “God works in mysterious ways.” As much as we at Mysterious Ways like that last one, the only phrase above that is in the good book is “the truth will set you free,” in the Gospel of John. According to Barna's poll, only 24% of adults knew that. However, that doesn't make these oth lines any less divinely inspired. Take the quote that inspired our magazine's title. While it wasn't written by God, the prophets, or the apostles, it does have divine origins. In our inaugural issue of Mysterious Ways, contributing editor Rosie Schaap told the story behind these well-known words: Late one stormy London night in 1763, a broken man was determined to end his life. He hired a coach to take him to the river. Only when he cast himself into the roiling Thames and drowned, he thought, would his agonizing trials finally end. He was unwavering in his resolve. He stepped down from the coach and walked through the fog toward the river's edge. When he reached the quays, he noticed a strange man sitting there, staring at him, as if on guard. Moreover, despite the rainfall, the tides were low—too low to drown a man. Returning home, the desperate man decided to poison himself with an overdose of laudanum, a potent drug derived from opium. But he couldn't raise the bottle to his lips. He tried again and again. Each time, it was as if an invisible hand were pushing it away. Finally, he tried to hang himself. The rope snapped, and his housekeeper rushed in, responding to the noise. The man gave up. For reasons he could not conceive, the life that brought such despair and misery could not be ended... That man was William Cowper, the famous English poet. It had not been the first time he had contemplated suicide, only to be held back by forces greater than himself. Four years after his dark evening in London, he sought a fresh start and moved to the village of Olney in Buckinghamshire. There, he met another man who had witnessed God's grace at a moment of great desperation. That man was John Newton, the celebrated Anglican preacher. Appointed to serve in Olney, Newton earned such a reputation for the power of his preaching and the depth of his convictions that people who desperately needed guidance and hope—like William Cowper—moved to town to benefit from his ministry. Cowper took residence in a house adjoining Newton's, and took a measure of peace in Newton's friendship and care. Newton understood that for the fragile poet's mind to find peace, writing would have to be part of the recovery. He encouraged Cowper to turn his creative talents to the composition of hymns, and the two collaborated on a collection of nearly 350 works known as the Olney Hymns. In the centuries since, countless people have similarly found comfort and spiritual sustenance in the hymns written by these two men. Newton, of course, is best known for his most famous work, “Amazing Grace,” inspired by his miraculous rescue at sea. And Cowper? He composed a hymn titled “Light Shining Out of Darkness,” about the hidden workings of the world that had prevented his suicide and led him, against all odds, to where he was meant to be. It begins with a line we all know well: God moves in a mysterious way. . . So don't feel too bad if you're one of those 76% who don't know their Bible inside out. After all, the words in those pages aren't the only ones God uses to reach us. What's your favorite biblical—or non-biblical—quote? Why does it have special meaning to you? Score: 0% Rank: Correct Answer: Start Quiz >> Home > Index > God > The Basics > God works in mysterious ways When someone says that God works in mysterious ways, they often mean that God does something completely opposite of our expectations. There are many places in the Bible that tell stories of God's direction in someone's life that leads that person down a road they never thought they would tread. Sometimes God tells His people to do things that seem strange or even meaningless, but end up being a redemptive or victorious part of their story. This can be seen in Joshua 6:1-5 when God commands His people to march around the city of Jericho. Why would they need to march around it when they could just storm it and capture the city? Because Joshua and the children of Israel obeyed God's command, the walls crumbled and God gave them the city (Joshua 6:6-27). A constant characteristic of God's nature is how He turns situations and problems upside down to work for the good of His people (Romans 8:28). The Bible is full of stories of God astonishing His people when they realize how He had orchestrated situations in their lives. Desmond Tutu called God, “A God of Surprises.” It is our role as believers to dwell in thanks and trust, even when our situations seem out of our control (especially when they seem out of our control). Psalm 147:5 states that God's understanding is beyond our measure, which means that we cannot possibly comprehend all the ways that He works throughout our lives. An excellent example of God's mysterious ways is exemplified in the life of Joseph. Joseph suffered isolation and pain when his brothers sold him into slavery. After Joseph endured extreme hardship and ended up in the palace, he told his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good ...” (Genesis 50:20). He had the wisdom and trust that everything he went through was because of God's good plan for his life. Joseph's brothers were evil to him, but Joseph acknowledged that God desires to save His covenant people from the evil in this world (Genesis 15:13-14). Joseph brought the Hebrew people out of Canaan, where they experienced famine, and into Egypt (Genesis 43:1; 46:26-27). He was able to save his people because as governor of the land, he bought and sold the food (Genesis 42:6). Joseph was in Egypt because his brothers sold him into slavery. The people who sold their own brother into slavery were then dependent on him for nourishment (Genesis 37:28). Although this part of Joseph's story is remarkable, it is only a sliver of how God used Joseph's suffering and obedience to shape history. There would be no story of Moses or an exodus from Egypt four hundred years later if Joseph had not been governor of Egypt and lead his people from Canaan (Exodus 6:1-8). Would Joseph still have been able to save his family and be a catalyst for huge events in Hebrew history if he was not first a slave? Would he have had the influence in Egypt he did had he not first been falsely accused and jailed (Genesis 39:1-20)? We cannot say for sure. But we do know that Joseph's life displays God's glory and the surprising way that He turns our stories upside down for the sake of His exaltation. Through Joseph's story, we see that the Lord was with him, and opened the doors for Joseph to save his people. It is a joy to be a follower of Christ, because we are assured that God uses every event in our lives for His ultimate plan (Isaiah 14:24; Romans 8:28). Many events that occur in our lives are beyond our understanding. As linear thinking beings, we cannot fathom what God has planned from beginning to end (Isaiah 46:10-11). If we walked by sight and not by faith our journeys would be very discouraging (2 Corinthians 5:7). As Christians we can trust that God's mysterious ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). Related Truth: Does the sovereignty of God have an impact on everyday life? Does God care about everything in my life, even the little things? How can I tell what God's plan is? Why does God seem hidden to us today? The attributes of God, what are they? Return to: Truth about God Subscribe to the CompellingTruth.org Newsletter: Preferred Bible Version: CompellingTruth.org is a ministry of Have you ever had a conversation with someone and at some point in the conversation they say “you know God works in mysterious ways”? I haven't heard this saying in a while but I remember having a very similar conversation with someone a few years ago, and these exact words came out of his mouth.If you search for this term on Google you will discover 52,000,000 results. So people are wondering about it, or at least searching. What should we say about this term? Is God works in mysterious ways a Biblical truth or a myth? The only way to know if something is a Biblical truth is to go to the Bible, so let's do just that.The Truth about the Ways God Works”For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).When you read these verses, they teach you two critical lessons about God's ways.1. His ways are different than yours.The way God does things, or the way God instructs us to do things, is totally different than how we would do it. Take salvation for instance. For you and I to receive the gift of life, God himself took on human flesh and had to die. I certainly would not have done it that way. I am a father and I love my son. I am not sacrificing his life so that someone else could live. That seems like it goes against the parent code, and this is just one issue. There are so many others in the scriptures. For exampleWho would tell someone to love the one who is against you and pray for the one who is persecuting you?Who says if you want to be great or first, you must humble yourself and be a servant to everyone?Who tells an army leader you have too many men? You don't need 32,000 men fighting you only need 300Who tells a man with leprosy to go wash himself seven times in the dirty water of the Jordan river to be cleansed and healed?Who would think that it would take blood, one of the hardest stains to remove, to wash our sins away and make us clean?None of this is logical and none of this is the way we would do it. That's because these are not our ways. God's ways are different than yours and mine. Photo credit: Unsplash/Priscilla Du Proez 2. His ways are higher than yours. Not only are God's ways different, but they are also higher. This means that God thinks at a level far above our thinking. Just consider the fact that he can see the whole picture played out before it even begins. This gives him a great advantage. Imagine how you would react if you knew the outcome before you ever did something? Have you ever watched a movie knowing how it will end? Or watched a football game when you already know the final score? When you know, you think differently about it. There is no anxiety, no worry because you are confident in what is going to happen. In a sense, it elevates your thinking. This is the advantage God has with us.Does This Mean That God's Really Does Work in Mysterious Ways?Let's take this information and get back to the question. Is God works in mysterious ways a Biblical truth or a myth? We have already seen that God's ways are different and higher than ours but does that make them mysterious?The word mysterious, according to the Oxford Dictionary, means difficult or impossible to understand, explain, or identify. Let me ask you then, has God ever done something in your life that was difficult or impossible to understand, explain, or identify? I don't need to wait for the answer because I know the answer is yes. Everyone of us has experienced this and not just us. Look at just about every story in the Bible and you will see things happen that goes beyond our ability to explain.Using that definition and that understanding, you would probably have to conclude that God works in mysterious ways is a biblical truth and not a myth.Can You Trust Your Own Ways?We live in a world today where the prevailing thought is that I am my own person. I can figure it out. I will make my own way. While all of that sounds good (a little bit puffed up as well) there is a reality and truth that is missing. We can't totally trust our way of thinking. Consider what the Proverbs say: “There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).God's ways may be higher than ours and mysterious so that we don't always understand them, however we can trust that they are good. There are too many pitfalls that we can fall into when we trust our own ways. The Proverbs remind us that the end is death. Photo credit: ©Getty Images/Zbzynek PospisilHow Should You Respond to God's Ways?God's ways are not only higher than ours, they are better than ours. The big struggle we have is whether or not we will embrace them. There is a blessing and a hope that comes from embracing God's ways. The good news is that the blessing comes even when you don't understand what God is doing.I want you to remember these four words in relationship to God's ways. Show. Go. Trust. Live. Here is what I mean.1. Show “Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths” (Psalm 25:4).2. Go “Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them” (Hosea 14:9).3. Trust “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).4. Live “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:16-17).Show, Go, Trust, Live.The promise and blessing that comes in life is when you line up your life with God's ways. You don't have to understand them, you simply have to follow and trust them.Yes, God Does Work in Mysterious WaysDoes God work in mysterious ways? Is it a Biblical truth? I believe the answer to these questions are both yes. While you may not find this exact verse in Scripture, you can be confident that you can build your life on the ways that God has lined out.Let me repeat, it does not mean that you will always understand them, but you can always trust them. At the end of the day God's ways and thoughts towards you are good. God's plan and purpose for you are good as well. This is what you are trusting in. “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” (Jeremiah 29:11).Walk in God's ways and watch him bring to pass this good plan that he has for your life even if sometimes it seems mysterious.Photo credit: ©Getty Images/Anyaberkut Clarence L. Haynes Jr. is a speaker, Bible teacher, and co-founder of The Bible Study Club. He is the author of The Pursuit of Purpose which will help you understand how God leads you into his will. He has also just released his new book The Pursuit of Victory: How To Conquer Your Greatest Challenges and Win In Your Christian Life. Do you want to go deeper in your walk with the Lord but can't seem to overcome the stuff that keeps getting in the way? This book will teach you how to put the pieces together so you can live a victorious Christian life and finally become the man or woman of God that you truly desire to be. To learn more about his ministry please visit clarencehaynes.com.

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