

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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## SERMON TITLE

God's Guidance over Cosmic Karma

## SERIES

Truth or Trend

## DATE

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## KEY SCRIPTURE

Various scriptures

## SYNOPSIS

There are many popular ideas that often sound good, but aren't really biblical. We must distinguish truth from trend and follow God's lead instead of our own.

## HIGHLIGHTS





## ☞ Sermon Series: Truth or Trend

We've been talking about truth for several weeks now. Last week, in Scripture Over Self, we talked about phrases like "Follow your heart" and "Do what's right for you" which are found in songs, social media, and self-help books, often promising a feel-good message. But the truth of the Gospel is not about making people feel good—it's about making people new. There are many popular ideas that sound good but aren't actually biblical. In our "Truth or Trend" series, we're examining these pop-culture ideas ☞ and comparing them with the Word of God. Again today, let's try our "Bible or Not?" quiz.

☞ "This too shall pass." Answer: Not Biblical. From Persian or Jewish folklore, popularized in the 19th century. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is similar but not exact.

☞ "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Answer: Not Biblical. Attributed to John Wesley, possibly inspired by purity laws in Leviticus.

☞ "Go the extra mile." Answer: Biblical. From Matthew 5:41.

☞ "The lion shall lie down with the lamb." Answer: Not Biblical (Misquote). Isaiah 11:6 says, "The wolf will live with the lamb." The lion is mentioned separately.

☞ "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Answer: Biblical. Mark 3:25. Often credited to Lincoln.

## ☞ Sermon 2: God's Guidance Over Cosmic Karma

### 1: "What Goes Around Comes Around"

The phrase "What goes around comes around," suggests that your actions, whether good or bad will come back to you in similar form. So... good actions return good results, and bad actions return bad results. You hear it in self-help books or in songs like Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around... Comes Back Around." Deepak Chopra says, "The universe returns to you what you send out." Oprah Winfrey adds, "The energy you put into the world is the energy you get back." There is some truth in these ideas, but they are incomplete.

Scripture does say our actions have consequences, but God's grace can break that cycle with mercy. Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows," which seems to agree with "What goes around, comes around." But Romans 6:23 adds another layer to it: "For the wages of sin is death, (*what goes around...*) but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (*doesn't necessarily come around*) Romans 5:6: "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."



☞ God can intervene and change the outcome. Max Lucado says, “God’s grace breaks the cycle of retribution with love.” And C.S. Lewis wrote, “God’s mercy doesn’t give us what we deserve but what we need to live.”

*There’s a story of Maria who was betrayed by a coworker spreading rumors. She wanted karma to hit back, holding onto anger. But a Bible study reminded her that God’s grace forgave her when she didn’t deserve it. So, inspired by God’s grace toward her, she forgave her coworker and reached out gently. Their relationship started healing—not by karma, but by God’s mercy.*

☞ The prodigal in Luke 15 is another example. His reckless living should’ve left him in the pigpen, reaping what he sowed. But his father welcomed him home, showing that our Father’s love is greater than any cosmic cycle.

What goes around doesn’t always come around. God’s grace changes the equation. So, you might think of someone who’s hurt you. Don’t wait for karma—forgive them, and pray for them so that you can let go of bitterness. Trust God’s justice, not some cosmic cycle.

## ☞ 2: “Everything Happens for a Reason”

This one is common, especially when life gets tough. It’s in Hallmark cards and books like Rhonda Byrne’s *The Secret*: “Every event in your life is part of a larger plan.” It sounds comforting, but it’s vague and tends to disregard our understanding of a personal God. If you’re a believer and take this at face value, it can even make God seem like a puppet-master, forcefully making every little detail and choice in our lives for us.

But scripture actually says God gives us freedom to choose many aspects of our life events, indicating ☞ he is not a puppet-master. Rather, God works purposefully in all things. Romans 8:28 promises, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

☞ This sounds somewhat like “everything happens for a reason,” but the focus here is on God’s ability to redeem situations, not that every event is planned and perpetrated for a specific reason.

If we take “everything happens for a reason” too far, it can easily lead to a judgmental attitude. Jesus confronted this notion a few times when people thought that because something bad happened to a person, they must have been guilty of some horrible sin. But, Jesus said that was not the case – we all sin and need a savior. There is not always a direct and immediate correlation between actions and results. In fact, some things (particularly bad things) happen simply because we live in a fallen world.



Plus, if we assume there's always a direct reason, it can take faith out of the equation, as we put all our efforts into finding the reason, rather than simply trusting God in every situation. I personally struggled with this four years ago when my brother-in-law died. We prayed and felt assured that he would recover, but he didn't. I tried to make sense of it, wondering why he died. I even doubted my beliefs to a degree. I couldn't give up my faith, but I sure struggled with understanding God. Ultimately, it always comes down to simply trusting the Lord.

Everything doesn't just "happen for a reason" – that's too simplistic. But God does have an overall purpose, and he can turn any situation into good for his people. So, we should always focus on trusting him, no matter the circumstances.

### ☞3: "The Universe Has Your Back"

This one is big in New Age circles. Gabby Bernstein actually wrote a book with this title. She said, "Trust that the universe is always conspiring in your favor." It's a feel-good idea, but it makes the universe sound like a deified genie and rejects the idea of a personal God who loves you.

The Bible says our heavenly Father, not some vague force, cares for us. Matthew 6:26 says, "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds ☞them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" And 1 Peter 5:7 urges, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

Charles Spurgeon said, "The God who counts the stars calls you by name." Before cell phones were common, Tony Campolo said, "God carries your picture in his wallet." There is far more than just some ☞impersonal universe watching over you. Our personal, loving God is the one taking care of us. Here's just how personal he is:

☞Psalm 139:1–4 "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely."

Tim Keller says, "God's love is not just a general truth; it's a specific, personal reality. He knows you, pursues you, and loves you in the details of your life." In Matthew 14, Jesus fed 5,000 because he was there in person and had compassion on the people. God's care is real and intimate. The universe doesn't have your back—God does.

### ☞4: "Life Is What You Make It"

You hear, "Life is what you make it," in songs like *Switchfoot's "Meant to Live"* or from people like Will Smith: "You have to take control of your own destiny." It puts all the pressure on you, as if you're the





master of your fate. Now, hard work matters, and so does your response to life's circumstances, but God's purpose is bigger.

Let's let God's Word be our guide: Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." James 4:13-15 warns, "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow... Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live ☞ and do this or that.'" Jeremiah 10:23 adds, "I know, LORD, that our lives are not our own. We are not able to plan our own course."

Charles Spurgeon said, "When we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in the Lord; our success comes not from our own power but from His might." Oswald Chambers added, "The only way to find your life is to lose it for Christ's sake."

Compare that to Henry David Thoreau: "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined." It's a little bit like last week's "Follow your heart," which is self-focused and driven by feelings to get what you want out of life.

Mother Teresa responds, "Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things..." I quoted Elisabeth Elliot last week, who said, "True freedom comes in doing what's right for God, not ☞ you." Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "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 direct your paths."

In Acts 16, Paul planned to preach in Asia, but God sent him to Macedonia instead. Ultimately, his submission spread the Gospel further than he dreamed. Life isn't just what you make it—it's what God makes it. Whatever plans you may have, be open to God's redirection, and when you submit to him, notice how it brings peace. One of our plumb lines here at OBC is "We will plan in pencil. Always be ready to adapt as needed. Sometimes a mid-course correction is the best option." Ultimately, we don't make our own way, we want to follow God's way.

Choose God's Guidance over Cosmic Karma: We don't live in an impersonal universe which requires us to pave our own paths. Neither are we painstakingly controlled and manipulated by a puppet-master God. Rather, we know there's a loving Father watching over us, offering us mercy and grace through Jesus Christ. We also see that there's a meshing of our choices with God's overall purposes.

☞ Once again, we see that God wants to partner with us to fulfill his purpose, which then brings deep contentment and peace in our hearts. So, forget Cosmic Karma and instead, trust God's Guidance, and He will lead you to a life of purpose and peace.



## Four Day Devotional: God's Guidance Over Cosmic Karma

### Day 1: God's Grace Over Cosmic Retribution

Galatians 6:7 – “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

#### Cross-References:

Proverbs 22:8 – “Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity, and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.”

Ephesians 2:8–9 – “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

**Reflection:** The idea of “What goes around comes around” implies our actions dictate our outcomes, like a cosmic law. Galatians 6:7 supports the principle of consequences, but Romans 6:23 shows God's grace can intervene, offering life instead of death. Maria's choice to forgive her coworker, inspired by God's grace, broke the cycle of bitterness and began healing. God's mercy, not karma, transforms our stories.

**Application:** Think of a situation where you're tempted to seek “karma” for someone's wrong. How can you extend grace instead? Pray for that person today and consider a kind gesture.

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for Your grace that frees me from sin's cycle. Help me to forgive others and trust Your justice. Amen.



## Four Day Devotional: God's Guidance Over Cosmic Karma

### Day 2: God's Redemption Over Random Reasons

Romans 8:28 – “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

#### Cross-References:

Genesis 50:20 – “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Philippians 1:6 – “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**Reflection:** “Everything happens for a reason” can feel comforting but risks oversimplifying life or portraying God as a puppet-master. Romans 8:28 assures us that God doesn't cause every event but works through all things for our good. When I grieved my brother-in-law's death, I found peace not in a reason but in trusting God's redemptive plan. God turns pain into purpose.

**Application:** Recall a challenging moment where you sought a “reason.” How might God be working for good in it? Journal one way you can trust Him with this today.

**Prayer:** Lord, I trust You to redeem every situation for good. Help me focus on Your purpose rather than searching for reasons. Amen.



## Four Day Devotional: God's Guidance Over Cosmic Karma

### Day 3: God's Personal Love Over a Vague Universe

Psalm 139:1–4 – “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”

#### Cross-References:

Matthew 10:30 – “And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

Isaiah 43:1 – “But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’”

**Reflection:** The notion that “the universe has your back” suggests an impersonal force guiding us, but Psalm 139 reveals a God who knows us intimately. Unlike a cosmic genie, our Father cares personally, as seen in Jesus feeding the 5,000 out of compassion (Matthew 14). As Charles Spurgeon said, God calls us by name, offering love that’s specific and real.

**Application:** Reflect on a time you felt God’s personal care, like a timely encouragement. Write a short note thanking Him for knowing and loving you so deeply.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank You for knowing me completely and loving me personally. Help me rest in Your care today. Amen.





## Four Day Devotional: God's Guidance Over Cosmic Karma

### Day 4: God's Purpose Over Self-Made Plans

Proverbs 3:5–6 – “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 direct your paths.”

#### Cross-References:

Psalms 37:5 – “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.”

Jeremiah 29:11 – “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.”

**Reflection:** “Life is what you make it” puts pressure on us to shape our destiny, but Proverbs 3:5–6 calls us to trust God's guidance. Paul's redirected mission to Macedonia (Acts 16) shows how God's plans surpass our own, leading to greater impact. Submitting to Him, as Mother Teresa urged, brings peace and purpose beyond our imagination.

**Application:** Identify an area where you're clinging to your own plans. Pray about surrendering it to God, and note one step you can take to follow His lead.

**Prayer:** Lord, I submit my plans to Your purpose. Guide my steps and fill me with peace as I trust Your path. Amen.