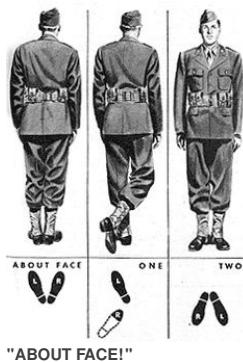


HOW UNDERSTANDING ONE WORD CAN CHANGE THE WAY YOU READ THE BIBLE



"ABOUT FACE" is a common command in the military and signifies a complete reversal of direction. While this is an excellent "metaphorical" description of the term "CONTRAST," it is also an excellent description of repentance, a complete reversal in thinking which results in a complete reversal in one's behavior! Too often I fear my "about face's" turn into 360's rather than remaining firm at 180, if you understand what I am saying! But that's another subject for another time. "About Face" is an excellent metaphor for the small conjunction **BUT**, the most common word marking CONTRAST (>4000x in Scripture) which will give you many opportunities to interact with this word.

Contrast is the juxtaposition of dissimilar elements, things that are unlike. Contrast sets off their dissimilar qualities and in so doing makes something sharp and clear by highlighting the differences. Contrast focuses on the differences, whereas comparison focuses on similarities.

John Phillips once quipped "Oh, those revealing '**BUTS**' of the Bible. They are **SMALL HINGES** on which great truths and destinies swing." You will be amazed at some of the "large doors" of understanding that your Teacher, the Spirit, will swing open for you as you begin to practice the discipline (cf 1Ti 4:7-8+) of carefully observing and insightfully interrogating the little word **BUT**.

*Consider the "5P's" - Pause to Ponder the Passage
then Practice it in the Power of the Spirit*

Always pause to ponder this little "**HINGE WORD**." You never know what great truth your Teacher the Holy Spirit might illumine as you read the text and context! As you pause and ponder, you will be forced to reread the previous text to discern what the Spirit is contrasting. This slows you down and allows you to perform what I like to call a "mini-meditation" (always a worthwhile discipline - see the blessings in Psalm 1:2-3+, Joshua 1:8+). Also the fact that you have just re-read the text helps to "hide it in your heart" (Memorization, also a great discipline with great blessing - see Psalm 119:9-11+).

C H Spurgeon once said that the little word "**BUT**" is a very useful pause for all of us very busy saints of God. "Amen" or "O My!"

Ray Stedman comments on "So Peter was kept in prison; **BUT** earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church." (Acts 12:5+) stating that **BUT** "is always a **CRISIS WORD**. It indicates a change in direction." It resulted in a change of destiny for Peter! Little wonder that Dr Stedman was such an excellent expositor of the Scriptures!

Ray Stedman adds that "If you want a wonderful experience, take your New Testament and use a concordance to look up the two little words, "**but God**." See how many times human resources have been brought to an utter end; despair has gripped the heart and pessimism and gloom has settled upon a people; and there is nothing that can be done. Then see how the Spirit of God writes in luminous letters, "**But God**," and the whole situation changes into victory."

Ken Hemphill has written an excellent devotional book based on the one phrase "**BUT GOD**" ([borrow](#) or [buy](#)). Indeed, the central event of the history of the world pivots on one supernaturally strategic "**BUT**." Would you like to know to which **BUT** this refers? "**BUT** God raised Him from the dead." (Acts 13:30+) What question does this prompt? "What is the contrast?" Great question! Now read the end of Acts 13:29+ which says "they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb." Now you can understand why this **BUT** is so strategic!

*Only ONE THING
is necessary*

Here's another one to pause and ponder "The battle is not yours, **BUT** God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15) That's an easy one to observe and interrogate, and has powerful personal application. Perhaps you are like Martha and need that reminder during this busy season where we often lose our focus on the "one thing" that really matters. You might consider making an "about face!" Or as Jesus put it "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things **BUT** (THERE'S OUR LITTLE "HINGE WORD") only ONE THING is necessary (SITTING AT THE MASTER'S FEET), for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42+)

In 2 Kings 5+ we have the famous story of **Naaman the leper** and **Gehazi the servant of Elisha**. 2 Kings 5 is remarkable for containing two strategic **but**s, hinge words that signal a decisive change of direction—two lives altered for all eternity. The **firstbut** in 2 Kings 5:1+ introduces Naaman's leprosy, a wound that became the doorway to humility, faith, and life. The **secondbut**, 2 Kings 5:20+, exposes Gehazi's greed, a sin that hardened his heart and sealed his ruin. One**BUT** led to cleansing and salvation; the other **BUT** to corruption and judgment. A single word, yet in this incredible chapter, it marked the difference between eternal life received and eternal life lost.

May our Father Who art in Heaven grant each of you a Word centered, Spirit filled, Christ exalting experience as you dig deeply into the Word of Truth, by which we are sanctified (Jn 17:17+). Amen

Related Resource:

- [Youtube Video on Hinge Words](#)
- [Term of contrast](#)