

What Does It Say?

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In the early 1970s, I was part of Camp CACY, Central Alabama Christian Youth camp, for several years. It was there that I became friends with Hudson Nichols, Gus Nichols' youngest son. He was older than me, but wiser beyond the years he had lived. Hudson and I became close friends during that week, and we worked together every summer. I learned so much about dealing with camp life and young people. He was the best "camper" I have ever known.



Does It Say Baptized?

There was an even greater lesson he taught me in those late night Bible studies (some of which lasted all night), and that is how to look at a verse and see exactly what boundaries are established by that verse. Those who sit in my classes will recognize his influence. After reading a verse, I often ask, "Now what does this verse say?"

Hudson and I would look at a passage, and he would ask me a series of questions. (1) What does it say? (2) What does it *not* say? (3) What does it imply? (4) What does it *not* imply? This approach to Bible study helps so much, especially when dealing with a difficult passage.

Let me illustrate how difficult this is. [Mark 16:16](#) says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." We would read this verse, and Hudson would ask me, "What does it say?" How would you answer that? I would answer various ways. I would say something like, "It says one cannot go to heaven without being baptized." Hudson would kindly say, "No, it does not." I might try again, saying, "It says baptism is essential for

salvation.” He would reply, “No, it does not.” Frustrated, I might try again, saying, “It says that one is not saved by faith alone.” Again his reply was, “No, it does not say that.” I would ask him to help me. He would ask me to read the verse again. Do you know what it says? It says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” That is what it says! He would then ask me, “What does it *not* say?” There are several answers to this question, but an obvious one is that it does not say that he who believes and is not baptized will be saved.

What does it imply? It certainly implies many of the answers I gave after his first question. However, to find the implications one must first look carefully at what it actually says. What does it *not* imply? Among other things, it does not imply that unbaptized infants are lost.

Now, [Mark 16:16](#) is rather easy, but the process is more difficult in other passages. However, the rewards of this approach are so helpful in dealing with very difficult verses. For example, what does [Matthew 24:35](#) say? What does [Revelation 1:1](#) say? What does [Acts 8:15](#) say? I owe a debt to Hudson and to all those who have helped me learn how to study.