

Falls Church Youth Group "Bible 101"
How to Read the Bible- Lesson 2: Context

How would you respond if someone said...?

1. Exodus 21:23-25- *"...you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."* **This means that** God's understanding of justice is out of control, extremely violent, and based on retribution and vengeance. God's justice isn't *actual* justice... it's legalized brutality!
2. 1 Kings 18:21- *"And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "...How long will you go limping between two different opinions? ... Baal [is god] ... follow him."* **This means that** Elijah wants people to worship Baal because he believes in many gods.
3. 2 Chronicles 7:14- *"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."* **This means that** America needs to get back to our roots- vote Republican, love guns & freedom, and get back into church. That's the only way that we can take our country back, and we've got God's promise on it!
4. Psalm 105:15- *"Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"* **This means that** you shouldn't criticize modern-day prophets and televangelists, even though they preach heresy and they lead an excessively lavish and licentious lifestyle.
5. 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."* **This means that** God's plans for me only include success and prospering, so good things will happen to me and I will be successful no matter what because I am a Christian.
6. Matthew 6:33 – *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* **This means that** Jesus promises to give me anything that I want, but all I have to do is pray for it.
7. Matthew 7:1- *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."* **This means that** pointing out sin in someone else's life is judging them and wrong, so I shouldn't do it and neither should you!
8. Luke 22:15- *"...I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you..."* **This means that** Jesus wanted to tell disciples how highly he thinks of them and how important they are.
9. John 3:16- *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* **This means that** God has unconditional love for the world. He isn't angry with the world at all. He just loves it, unconditionally.
10. Romans 12:2- *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."* **This means that** you shouldn't do whatever is popular because that's sinful. You shouldn't listen to worldly music, follow worldly fashions, watch worldly movies, or read worldly books. If you do, you're being conformed to this world.
11. Philippians 4:13- *"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."* **This means that** I can do anything I want because I'm a Christian. Anything is possible for me now!
12. James 1:5- *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."* **This means that** if you ever need to find out what to believe, you need to let the Lord reveal that to you in prayer.
13. James 2:18- *"You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."* **This means that** the Reformed church is entirely wrong. They believe that you are justified by faith alone, when you are *really* justified by faith and works.

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1. Context- The entirety of the original thoughts that are communicated
 - a. Every passage in the Bible needs to be considered in its own context
 - b. Only what the Bible communicates in its context is what it communicates at all
 - c. Even quotations of the Bible itself can be used against the Bible's own teachings
 - d. Bible passages are often misapplied because we don't bear in mind its context
 - e. Context should make us wary of...
 - i. Interpreting passages "out of context"
 - ii. Actively reading vs. Passively reading
 - iii. Inserting our own context into the Bible's context
 - iv. "Bumper-sticker theology"- Love wins; Coexist; Judge not; *The same Bible used to bash gay people forbids the eating of shellfish; WWJD?*
2. Historical Context- Considering the passage within its own time period
 - a. To determine the historical context, ask...
 - i. What is the time-period that this passage is written about?
 - ii. What is the time-period that this passage is written in?
 - iii. What ideas are bound to the time-period of the passage?
 - iv. What material is bound to the time-period of the passage?
 - v. What are the circumstances of the author?
 - vi. What are the circumstances of the recipient?
 - vii. What customs are normal during this time?
 - b. Some specific examples...
 - i. Politics- World powers; suzerain/vassal relationship; law; covenants
 - ii. Economy- Currency; wages; wealth/poverty; weights & measures
 - iii. Religion- Priests/prophets; beliefs; types of laws; worship practices
 - iv. Institutions- Family life; slavery; social structures; morals & customs
 - v. Geography- Nations; land-features; climate; names of places
3. Literary Context- Considering the passage within the larger purposes of the book
 - a. To determine the literary context, ask...
 - i. What does the passage plainly say?
 - ii. How does this fit into the surrounding words or phrases?
 - iii. How does this fit into the sentence?
 - iv. How does this fit into the string of sentences?
 - v. How does this fit into the paragraph?
 - vi. How does this fit into the chapter?
 - vii. How does this fit into this part of the book?
 - viii. How does this fit into the other parts of this book?
 - ix. How does this fit into the entire book?
 - x. How does this fit into this section of books?
 - xi. How does this fit into this genre of literature?

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- xii. How does this fit into this Testament?
- xiii. How does this fit into the Bible?
- b. Some specific examples...
 - i. Matthew 24:36-42 and the pre-tribulation rapture of the church
 - ii. Philippians 4:12-13, contentment, and "all things"
 - iii. 1 Timothy 6:10 and money is the root of all evil
 - iv. James 2:14-26, Abraham, faith alone, and the priority of good works
- 4. Contemporary Context- Considering the passage within our own day and age
 - a. To determine the contemporary context, ask...
 - i. What material does the passage take for granted that we don't today?
 - ii. What customs are common that aren't common anymore?
 - iii. What principles are communicated from the Bible's (full) context?
 - b. Some examples where the Bible's context IS like our own...
 - i. We are still within the activity of the Covenant of Grace
 - ii. God, sin, and the plan of reconciling us to God still exists
 - iii. Right & wrong, truth & falsehood, logic & reason still exists
 - iv. People still deliver their messages according to genre and context
 - v. We have similar style of political leaders, economy, and institutions
 - vi. Many other gods are still worshipped (in some sense) by many people
 - vii. We still await the second coming of Christ as Paul did
 - c. Some examples where the Bible's context IS NOT like our own...
 - i. Kings in the Bible are not like leaders are today
 - ii. The Bible's maps were oriented to the east, not to the north
 - iii. Representation-via-kings is not like the way we are represented today
 - iv. Slavery in the Bible is not the same as 1800's chattel slavery
 - v. Sexual ethics in the Bible are no longer "politically correct"
 - vi. The common everyday diet in the Bible is nothing like our own
 - vii. The geography of Israel is nothing like the geography of Midwest-America
- 5. When people take passages out of context, they will typically...
 - a. Treat the passage as though it directly speaks to their side of a modern-day topic
 - b. Impose their understanding of the topic upon their interpretation of the passage
 - c. Be VERY reductionistic, short, simplistic, unguarded, broad, and/or shallow
 - d. Ignore or pay little attention to what surrounds the passage
 - e. Ignore or pay little attention to other passages that speak to the same issue
 - f. Ignore or pay little attention to the features of the time-period of the passage
 - g. Associate politically-correct statements with their interpretation of passages
 - h. Some (more) examples of people taking passages out of context...
 - i. God approved having multiple wives in the Old Testament
 - ii. The Ethiopian eunuch (1st convert to Christianity, Acts 8) was transgender
 - iii. Jesus was a refugee, a person of color, and had a single-parent household
 - iv. The virgin birth of Jesus rendered him (genetically) as a sexual minority

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- v. Women were second-class citizens in the Bible
- vi. The Egyptians paid reparations to Israel, like whites need to do today
- vii. Live-streaming into church is the same as physically coming to church