

Handling the Word

Lesson 4 - Context: Never Read a Verse Alone

Conversation Notes

Today we are asking one simple question

What surrounds this verse?

Every verse belongs somewhere. It belongs in a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a book, and the larger story of Scripture. Context helps us hear what God has actually said instead of rushing ahead with what we assume it means.

Philippians 4:10-13; Matthew 7:1-5; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Romans 8:28-30; Luke 24:44-47

A few things we are looking for today

- We learn why context matters.
- We practice reading the verses before and after.
- We ask who is speaking, who is being addressed, and what is happening.
- We look for the main point of the paragraph or section.
- We remember that the whole Bible points us to God's redemptive plan in Christ.

Let's check in honestly

How did you go with the pre-reading for this session?

Was there a verse or thought that encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out to you?

Have you ever heard a Bible verse quoted in a way that seemed to miss the bigger picture?

A kind reminder before we read

You do not need perfect answers. We are learning to slow down, read around the passage, and let the Word of God speak in its proper place.

Context is not meant to make Bible study harder. It is one of the ways we handle Scripture with care.

A simple Bible study principle

A verse without context can be misunderstood. Before we decide what a verse means, we should look around it. What came before? What comes after? Who is speaking? Who is being addressed? What is the flow of thought?

What can go wrong if we read only one verse by itself?

What are some clues around a verse that can help us understand it better?

What is context?

Context is the surrounding information that helps us understand a passage. Here are a few simple places to look:

- Sentence - what is the whole sentence saying?
- Paragraph - what point is being made around the verse?
- Chapter - what is happening before and after this section?
- Book - who wrote it, to whom, and why?
- Whole Bible - how does this fit with God's redemptive plan in Christ?

Read and talk together

Philippians 4:10-13

This passage is often quoted, especially verse 13. Today we will read the surrounding verses and ask what Paul was actually talking about.

Philippians 4:10-13 continued

What situation is Paul speaking about?

What has Paul learned?

How do verses 10-12 help explain verse 13?

What do we learn when we read verse 13 in context?

Another example

Matthew 7:1-5

This passage is often reduced to the words, "Judge not." But Jesus gives more than one sentence. We need to listen to the whole section.

What warning does Jesus give?

What does Jesus say to examine first?

Does the context forbid all discernment, or hypocritical judgement? What do you notice?

A context example from the Old Testament

Jeremiah 29:10-14

These verses are well known, but they were first spoken to a particular people in a particular situation. Context does not make the passage less meaningful. It helps us handle it carefully.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 continued

Who is being addressed, and what situation are they in?

How does the surrounding context help us read the promise carefully?

Whole-Bible context

Luke 24:44-47

Jesus teaches us that Scripture is not random. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms point to Him and to God's redemptive purpose.

How do the Scriptures point to Him?

Romans 8:28-30

What larger purpose of God is described around verse 28?

Pulling it together

Finish this sentence in your own words: Context helps me...

Today's simple takeaway

Context helps us handle Scripture carefully.

We do not pull verses away from the passage around them. We read slowly, look before and after, and seek to understand the passage in its proper place.

This week - keep it simple

Read Philippians 4:10-20 twice during the week. Each time, write one honest sentence about what the surrounding verses help you notice.

One thing I noticed this week was...

Prayer to finish

Lord, help me not to use Your Word carelessly. Teach me to read carefully, listen humbly, and understand each passage in its proper place. Help me see Christ more clearly and respond to Your Word faithfully. Amen.