

Handling the Word

How to Study the Bible Faithfully

Lesson Four Leader Guide

Context - Never Read a Verse Alone

Private leader document

Use this guide alongside the participant notes. Keep the session practical, gentle, and confidence-building.

Lesson Overview

Main question	What surrounds this verse?
Main idea	Faithful Bible study reads each verse in context - sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, and whole-Bible storyline - so that we hear what God has actually said.
Key text	Philippians 4:10-13
Supporting passages	Matthew 7:1-5; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Romans 8:28-30; Luke 24:44-47
Suggested length	60 to 75 minutes. Let Philippians 4 and Matthew 7 carry the main practice. Use Jeremiah, Luke, and Romans more briefly if needed.

Intended outcomes

- He understands that verses are not isolated sayings.
- He practises reading before and after a verse.
- He asks who is speaking, who is addressed, and what is happening.
- He sees that context protects and deepens understanding.
- He leaves with one simple context practice.

Leader emphasis

- Keep the lesson practical, not technical.
- Do not shame past misunderstanding.
- Use familiar verses gently, not mockingly.
- Affirm simple observations from the surrounding text.
- Show that context often deepens comfort.

Helpful phrase to repeat

A verse is not a loose brick. It belongs in a wall. Context helps us see where it belongs and what God is actually saying.

Recommended Session Flow

Time	Section	Purpose
5 min	Welcome and check-in	Review Session Three practice with grace.
2 min	Opening prayer	Ask God to help you read carefully and humbly.
8 min	Review pre-reading	Draw out what he noticed about context.
5 min	Today's question	What surrounds this verse?
8 min	Simple principle	Every verse belongs somewhere.
15 min	Philippians 4:10-13	Main practice: contentment and strength in context.
12 min	Matthew 7:1-5	Context protects against shallow readings.
10 min	Jeremiah 29:10-14	Historical context and careful application.
8 min	Luke 24:44-47 / Romans 8:28-30	Whole-Bible context and God's purpose in Christ.
8 min	Pull together and practise	Summarise and set one weekly practice.

Leader posture

Context should not feel like a barrier to Scripture. Keep returning to one simple habit: read before, read after, and ask what is being said.

1. Welcome, Prayer, and Pre-Reading - 15 minutes

Aim: Begin relationally, remove pressure, and connect this lesson to observation.

Prompts: How has your week been? Did slowing down with Mark 4 help? What stood out from the Session Four pre-reading? Did any passage show why context matters?

Listen for / draw out

Shame if practice was not completed; signs he is noticing more from the text; concern that Bible study is becoming too technical; a simple awareness that verses belong in a bigger setting.

Suggested prayer: Lord, open our eyes to Your Word. Help us read carefully, listen humbly, and understand each passage in its proper place. Teach us to hear what You have said and respond faithfully. Amen.

2. Today's Question and the Context Principle - 13 minutes

Aim: Introduce the question: What surrounds this verse?

Ask: What does it mean to read a verse in context? Why might it be risky to build a conclusion from one verse alone? What should we look at before deciding what a verse means?

Brief teaching summary

Every verse belongs somewhere: in a sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, and the larger story of Scripture. Context is careful listening. Start simply: read before, read after, notice who is speaking, and ask what point is being made.

3. Main Practice - **Philippians 4:10-13** - Strength in Context

Aim: Practise reading a familiar verse in its immediate context. Many quote verse 13 as a slogan for personal success. The surrounding verses show Paul speaking about contentment and endurance in every circumstance. Ask: What situation is Paul speaking about? What has he learned? What situations does he list in **verses 11** and **12**? How do verses **10-12** explain verse **13**?

Listen for / draw out

Paul is speaking about receiving care from the Philippians. He has learned contentment in plenty and need. Christ strengthens him to endure and remain faithful in all circumstances. Context does not weaken the verse; it deepens the comfort.

Pastoral note

This can encourage someone who feels weak. Christ strengthens His people in real hardship, not only in moments of outward success.

4. Read **Matthew 7:1-5** - Judge Not in Context

Aim: Show how context protects us from shallow or distorted readings.

Ask: What warning does Jesus give? What does He tell us to examine first? What do the speck and plank show us? Does the passage forbid all discernment, or hypocritical judgement?

Brief teaching summary

Jesus is not forbidding all moral discernment. He is confronting hypocritical judgement and calling His people to deal honestly with their own hearts before helping others.

Pastoral note

Do not use this passage to invite harshness. The tone should remain humble and self-examining.

5. Read **Jeremiah 29:10-14** - Hope in Historical Context

Aim: Consider historical context and careful application of Old Testament promises.

Ask: Who is being addressed? What situation are they in? What time period is mentioned? What does God promise to do? How does the surrounding context help us read the promise carefully?

Listen for / draw out

The passage is addressed to the exiles in Babylon. Seventy years are mentioned. God promises restoration and calls them to seek Him. It shows God's faithfulness, but should not be reduced to a quick promise of personal comfort or prosperity.

Pastoral note

Context does not make this passage less hopeful. It helps us understand the kind of hope God was giving.

6. Whole-Bible Context - Luke 24:44-47 and Romans 8:28-30

Aim: Show that individual passages also belong within God's redemptive purpose in Christ.

Ask: In **Luke 24**, what parts of Scripture does Jesus mention? How do the Scriptures point to Him? In Romans 8, what purpose surrounds the promise of **verse 28**? How does **verse 29** help explain the "good" God is working toward?

Brief teaching summary

Jesus teaches that Scripture reveals His suffering, resurrection, and the message of repentance and remission of sins. Romans 8 shows that God's good purpose includes conforming His people to the image of His Son. Whole-Bible context keeps hope centred on Christ.

7. Pulling It Together and This Week's Practice - 8 minutes

Ask him to finish: "Context helps me..." Then ask: What is one familiar verse you want to read more carefully in context? What is one simple step you can take this week?

Practice: Read **Philippians 4:10-20** twice this week. Each time, write one honest sentence about how the surrounding verses help you understand **Philippians 4:13**.

Closing encouragement

One honest sentence is enough. The goal is not a heavy assignment, but the simple habit of reading around the verse.

If He Gets Stuck

Situation	Gentle response	Next step
This feels too technical.	Let us make it simple: read before, read after, and notice what is happening.	Return to one verse and its paragraph.
I do not know the context.	That is okay. The first step is to look at the verses around it.	Read the paragraph aloud together.
I have heard this taught differently.	That happens. Let us humbly see what the passage itself says.	Ask what the surrounding verses show.
Does this mean I cannot claim promises?	No. It means we receive them in the way God gave them.	Look at the original setting and larger biblical truth.
This feels less comforting now.	Context does not take comfort away. It helps us find the right comfort.	Return to God's faithfulness and Christ-centred hope.

Key truths to reinforce

- Every verse belongs in a context.
- Context means looking at what surrounds the verse.
- Reading before and after is a simple first step.
- Context protects us from forcing meaning onto Scripture.
- Context often deepens comfort rather than removing it.
- The Bible is one story of God's redemptive plan through Christ.

What to avoid

- Making context sound like an academic burden.
- Mocking familiar misquoted verses.
- Shaming him for things he has heard before.
- Giving too much background information too quickly.
- Suggesting only experts can understand Scripture.
- Taking comfort away without showing truer comfort in context.

Optional Extra Scriptures

Use only if the conversation naturally opens up. Do not overload Lesson Four.

- **2 Timothy 2:15** - rightly dividing the Word of truth.
- **Nehemiah 8:8** - the Word was read clearly, and the sense was given.
- **Acts 17:10-12** - the Bereans searched the Scriptures.
- **Romans 15:4** - Scripture was written for learning, patience, comfort, and hope.
- **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11** - Old Testament events were written for instruction.
- **John 5:39** - the Scriptures testify of Christ.

Suggested closing prayer

Father, thank You for giving us Your Word. Help us handle it carefully and humbly. Teach us to read what comes before and after, to notice who is speaking, and to understand each passage in its proper place. Help us see Christ more clearly and respond with faith and obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Leader Reflection After the Session

What encouraged him? _____

Where did he seem unsure, anxious, or confused? _____

What should I follow up next time? _____

Preparation for Lesson Five

Lesson Five will focus on interpretation: What does it mean? Session Three helped him observe what the text says. Session Four helped him read the passage in context. Next time, bring those together so he can ask what the passage meant before applying it to himself.