



4: How Do We READ It RIGHT?

'That's just you're interpretation' is the common mantra quickly quoted when someone dares to point to the Scriptures as being objectively true. Are there multiple meanings? If not, how can we learn to read it right? Today we find out.

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VISUAL NOTES

Author's Intent "WHAT does this MEAN?"

The author actually wants you to understand what he/she intended to write. You can't twist what an author wrote and make it mean something the author never meant.

Reader's Response "What does this mean TO ME?"

Reader-Response doesn't work in real life. In real life, most authors actually MEAN something when they write, so it is the author's intent that matters most, not the reader's response. Examples include: *STOP sign, bills we owe, written rules*, etc.

- Some texts are obviously written to communicate important messages to their readers.
- To ignore the author's intention destroys the reason why the author wrote in the first place!

In our day and age where personal preferences often rule over truth, this mindset has filtered into the church and our view of the Scriptures.

How could this happen?

1. Some intentionally twist the text to deflect the conviction, OR
2. Some genuinely think this is how Scripture is to be read.

Multiple warnings command us to hold to good teaching, confront false teaching, & live the message of Jesus.¹

Paul's Challenge to Timothy

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, **rightly handling the word of truth**. [NET: teaching the message of truth accurately]

Rightly handling and **accurately** are translated from a Greek word *orthos*, ("straight"), from which we build words like *orthopedic* and *orthodoxy*.² Timothy was to teach & live God's truths without deviating or diluting the truth. Paul is aware of those who interpret, handle, teach, & live out the gospel message **WRONGLY**.

Sadly, in our day there is MUCH teaching that has veered off the straight path. Again, there are only 2 reasons for this:

- 1) intentionally twist the Scripture OR
- 2) Don't know how to read it right.

To those people, we should kindly say...**"YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG."**
That's really tough when WE realize...that person is ME.

¹ 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 18-20; 4:1-4, 13-16; 6:1-5; 20-21; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2:1-4; 14-18, 24-26; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5; 1 Peter 5:1-9; 2 Peter 1:20-2:3;
² R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 209.

Why does sound doctrine matter?

2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NIV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of **teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear**. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Christians should always check what others say compared to what the Scriptures say.

1st Rule to Read the Scriptures Right

Never Read A Bible Verse. *Read the entire chapter or writing - before and after.*

The chapter & verse references/addresses we have today were added almost 1500 years after the New Testament was written (1551).³ This is a great *TOOL* when many people have personal Bibles, but it can also be *DANGEROUS* when we lift a verse out of context instead of reading it as part of a letter.

Let's apply our principle - **Never Read a Bible Verse** - to the story about the lady who quoted '**put off the old man**' (from Col. 3:9) and see what happens.

Catch the Context

Colossians 3:4-8 (NET) When Christ (who is your life) appears, then you too will be revealed in glory with him. So **put to death** whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: **sexual immorality**, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. You also lived your lives in this way at one time, when you used to live among them. But now, **put off** all such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, abusive language from your mouth.

Do you see how Paul is using '**put off**' in this passage?

It's imagery for throwing off sinful actions & attitudes like you would take off dirty clothes.

Put off the old man?

Colossians 3:9-10 (NET) Do not lie to one another since you have **put off the old man with its practices** and have been **clothed with the new man** that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the one who created it.

WE don't *DETERMINE* the meaning, we DISCOVER the meaning. The question isn't "*What does it mean TO ME*", but "**What does it MEAN?**" The meaning is the same for the Colossians 2000 years ago, as well as for us, and that lady. *The very thing she claims God said through the Bible is actually saying the EXACT OPPOSITE!*

Putting off the 'old man' or 'old self' = getting rid of sin...sexual immorality is the first thing mentioned in the passage!

Never Read A Bible Verse.

✗ DON'T ASK: "What does this mean TO YOU?"

✓ DO ASK: "What does this MEAN...and how should you apply it to your life?"

✓ **Context is the KEY to understanding what the text means.**

"God has tells us to speak to those things which are not as if they are..."

Romans 4:16-21 (NIV) Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the **God** who gives life to the dead and **calls into being things that were not**. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that **God had power to do what he had promised**.

God gave **LIFE** to these 'dead' bodies so they could have Isaac - the promised son through whom Abraham would become **the father of many nations** (Rm 4:17). This is speaking about GOD enabling Sarah's dead womb to have a child, NOT about our ability or authority to speak that into existence.

³ Robert Stephanus divided the verses for his Greek New Testament. It was published in 1551. The first entire Bible in which these chapter and verse divisions were used was Stephen's edition of the Latin Vulgate (1555). * see more: https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_273.cfm

God is within HER - Who is That?

Psalm 46:4-5 (NIV) There is a river— its streams delight **the city of God**, the holy dwelling place of the Most High. God is within **her**; **she** will not be toppled. God will help **her** when the morning dawns.

This was referring to Jerusalem, not a woman.

The truth will set you free

John 8:31-36 (CSB) Then **Jesus** said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you **continue in my word**, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and **the truth will set you free.**"

"We are descendants of Abraham," they answered him, "and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free?'"

Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. So **if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.**

When we read the passage (context) and not just a verse, look how the words of Jesus flow together in vv.31-32 & 36!

This is not a promise that telling the truth will get you out of trouble.

Jesus is the TRUTH. His words are TRUTH. Those who follow HIM will be set free!

We discover this meaning because we apply the principle to

Never Read A Bible Verse.

❓ Have YOU been set free from your sin or are you still a **slave to sin**? Are you a disciple of Jesus or just intrigued by Jesus? Are you a FAN or a FOLLOWER?



Here are some questions for you to ponder this week:

1. **John 3:16**: Who had Jesus just been talking to and what was it about?
2. **Jer 29:11**: *Who* is being written to and *how* will God prosper [read chapter]?
3. **Phil 4:13**: Often quoted, but what is the surrounding passage about?
4. **Mat 18:20** says "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." What is that passage all about?

🌿 Mother Stashes Baby In Trash Can

When you only hear a PIECE of the story, you might not get the POINT of the story. The same is true of the Scripture, so...

Never Read A Bible Verse.

Read the entire chapter or writing - before and after.

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What challenged or encouraged you most from today's teaching? Look back in your notes to help explain your answer.
2. How did the stories like 'put off the old man', 'grace be unto you', and 'Mother Stashes Baby In Trash Can' help you see the importance of context & why we should **never read a Bible verse**?
3. Should it frustrate us if someone who took a 'Reader Response' approach to something you wrote or said - if they dismissed your intent and even redefined the words you used? How might you respond to that?
4. Why is it that many people don't gently correct another when he/she misuses the Scriptures?
5. **Read 2 Timothy 4:1-4**. Why does sound doctrine (correct beliefs & teaching) matter?
6. Today's **BIG TRUTH** was: **Never read a Bible verse**. How does this challenge to read a chapter or entire letter frustrate or excite you? Explain your answer.
7. Read the chapters surrounding the FEET2FAITH passages and discuss the answers to the questions.
8. Have you been reading the Scriptures this week? What questions/insights have come up? How have you been impacted? Who are you accountable to talk with this week about these passages?
9. Share prayer thanks & needs. Then pray for one another.