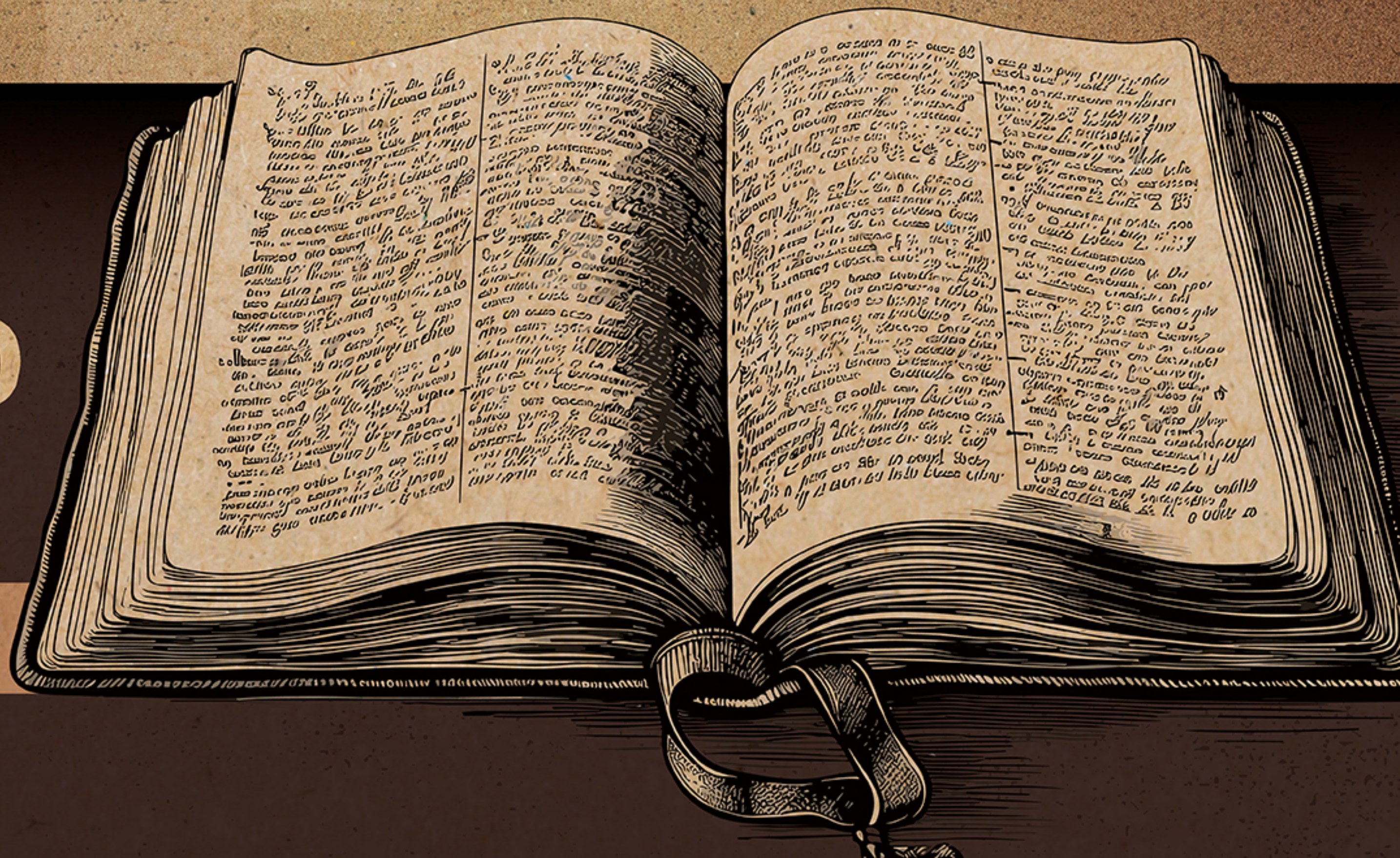


FORGED BY THE WORD

**LEARN TO READ
AND UNDERSTAND
GOD'S WORD**

MEN'S MORNING STUDY



HAVE YOU BEEN TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT?



Why Context Matters?

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- **Misunderstandings happen when words are taken out of context**
- **The same is true when we read the Bible**
- **Our Aim: Understand what God meant, not just what we want to hear**

Reading in Context

In our interpretation and application of any part of the Bible, we must make sure that we fully evaluate and comprehend every part of the context of the passage so that we can understand why the passage was written by the author and how it was understood by the original recipients.

How to Read in Context?

- **Context: A principle for faithful Bible interpretation**
- **Helps us avoid misreading Scripture**
- **Key truth: 'God's word can never mean what it never meant'**

“The Bible is written for us (i.e., we are supposed to benefit from its divine message as we interact with our cultural river), but it is not written to us (not in our language or against our culture). The message transcends culture, but it is given in a form that is fully ensconced in the ancient cultural river of Israel. This message may well give us meaningful information as we think about our cultural river, but it does not address the specifics of our cultural river.”

JOHN H. WALTON

Three Types of Context

- **Historical:**
 - **When was this book written?**
 - **Who was the original audience?**
 - **What was the political and cultural situation of the time?**
 - **What was different for them then—and what is still the same for us today?**

Three Types of Context

- **Literary:**
 - What type of writing?
 - What does the text say?
 - How does it fit in the sentence, paragraph, and the book as a whole?

Three Types of Context

- **Canonical:**
 - Where does this passage fit in the overall arc of the biblical story?
 - Where is it in God's plan for redemption?

Dangers of Ignoring Context

- **False interpretations**
- **Missing the main point**
- **Abusing historical background**
- **Ignoring divine inspiration**

Benefits of the Context Tool

- **Discover author's intended meaning**
- **Hear it like the original audience**
- **Find God's real relevance for today**

Case Study: Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Historical Context: Jeremiah 29:1

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining exiled elders, the priests, the prophets, and all the people Nebuchadnezzar had deported from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Literary Context: Jeremiah 29:10

For this is what the Lord says: “When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place.

Canonical Context

- While some of God's people enjoy peace and material blessings, many suffered greatly.
- Examples: Job, David, Paul, Jesus
- Not a guarantee of a comfortable life

Case Study: Jeremiah 29:11

- Not a promise of health, wealth, success
- Context: exile in Babylon, 70 years of suffering
- True meaning: God's long-term plan through Christ

Case Study: Philippians 4:13

I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

Historical Context: Philippians 1:7

Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Literary Context: Philippians 4:10-12

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.

Canonical Context

- Christ accomplishes amazing things in and through his people for his purposes.
- Only rarely is about their accomplishments. Never ultimately about earthly glory or fame.
- God strengthens people for His purposes, not theirs.

Case Study: Philippians 4:13

- Misused for achievement motivation
- Context: Paul is in prison
- True meaning:
 - Christ gives strength for contentment
 - Jesus really is enough

Case Study: 1 Corinthians 13

- Often read romantically at weddings
- Context: a rebuke to an unloving church
- True meaning: a call to humble, Christlike love

Historical Context: 1 Corinthians 13

- Paul writes to the church in ancient Corinth—a city known for sin and excess.
- The Corinthian church is spiritually gifted but deeply immature.
- Major issues include:
 - Lawsuits among believers (ch. 6)
 - Divisions during the Lord's Supper (ch. 11)
 - General lack of love and unity (ch. 3)

Literary Context: 1 Corinthians 13

- 1 Corinthians 13 uses words repeated earlier in the letter.
- Paul's "love chapter" is not sentimental—it continues a rebuke.
 - "Love is not arrogant" (13:4) ↔ Corinthians were arrogant (5:2)
 - "Love does not insist on its own way" (13:5) ↔ Divisions (1:10–17; 3:1–9)
 - "Love bears all things" (13:7) ↔ Believers suing each other (6:1–11)
- Paul contrasts true love with the Corinthians' behavior.

Canonical Context: 1 Corinthians 13

- Many NT letters address a lack of love, grace, and forgiveness in the early church.
- Paul's rebuke aligns with the broader NT message.
- 1 Corinthians 13 holds up a picture of Christlike love.
- Paul calls the church to repent and reflect true love.

Review

- **Context is essential to interpret Scripture rightly**
- **Apply Historical, Literary, Canonical lenses**
- **Avoid good-intentioned misreadings**

Final Reminder

- **“There is nothing more relevant than hearing from our Creator.”**
- **Using the Context Principle helps us hear God’s Word as intended.**

Prayer

- **Ask God to help you hear His voice in Scripture**
- **Seek transformation, not just information**