

To What Extent are Passages of the Bible Limited by the Culture?

1. Some situations, commands, or principles are repeatable, continuous, or not revoked, and/or pertain to moral and theological subjects, and/or are repeated elsewhere in Scripture, and therefore are permanent and transferable to us.

“All Scripture should be received as normative for every person in all societies of all time unless the Bible itself limits the audience. When the Bible clearly gives a command and nowhere else nullifies that command, it must be accepted as the will of God and a mandate to mold our personal and group behavior (our culture) in the form of this instruction” - McQuilkin

2. Some situations or commands pertain to a cultural setting that are only partially similar to ours and in which only the principles are transferable.

3. Some situations, commands, or principles to an individual’s specific nonrepeatable circumstances, and or nonmoral or nontheological subjects, and/or have been revoked, and are therefore not transferable to us today.

4. Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings with no similarities but in which the principles are transferable.

5. Some situations or commands are timeless principles.

A Quick Guideline

1. Does the behavior in the biblical culture mean something different in ours?

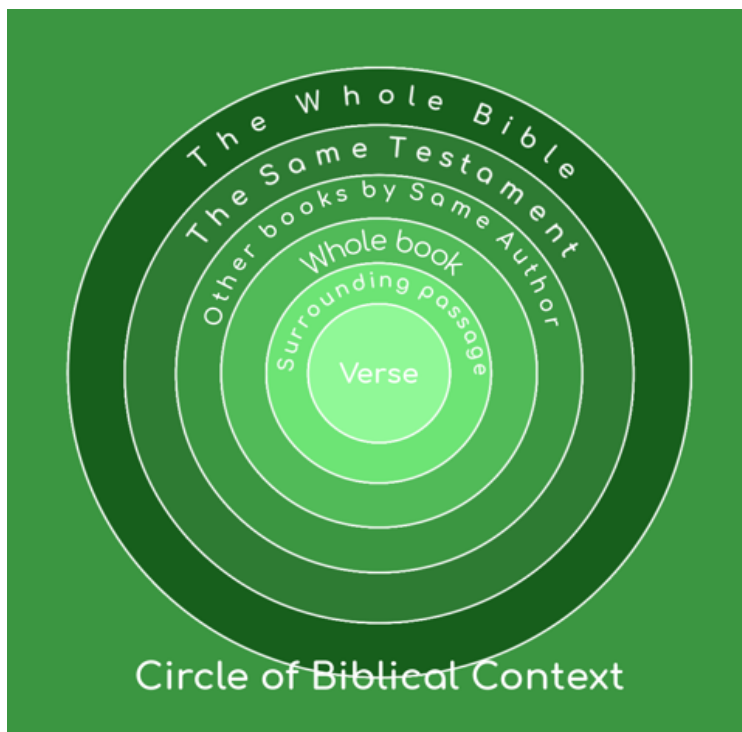
-- Is our culture getting it wrong?

2. If the behavior means something different in our culture, determine the timeless principle expressed in that practice.

3. Determine how the principle can be expressed in a cultural equivalent.

Written Contextual Analysis

- I. Important principles to guide our interpretation.
 - A. Each statement must be understood according to its natural meaning in the literary context in which it occurs.
 - B. The literal method of interpretation is the usual practice in the interpretation of Scripture—the “dictionary sense.”
 - Only in the literal exegesis is there control on the exegetical abuse of Scripture.”
 - C. The simplest meaning is the preferable meaning.
 - D. A text without a context may be a pretext.
 - E. The smaller the passage being studied the greater the chance of error.



- II. Circles of a Literary Context Study
 - A. The different domains of context—How do they relate to the overall message?
 1. The immediate context

2. The chapter context
3. The book context
4. The author's complete collection of writings
5. The testament context
6. The Bible context

III. Procedure

- A. Read the passage.
- B. Identify any conjunctions (in and surrounding the passage)—to put into context.
- C. Consider the six domains of context (above).
- D. Develop a theme statement—what the passage means in its context.