
Fort Hill Christian Youth Camp 2026

Class Curriculum - Back to the Bible

Age - Senior Campers

Friday - Context

Summary

1. Subject: Teach the campers that all scripture is written in its own context.
2. Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15-17, Acts 17:10-12, Philippians 4:10-13, Jeremiah 29:11
3. Grade/Level: Senior Campers
4. Objective: Learn that all scripture should be read in its context, both internally and externally. All verses should be understood within the context of the chapter/book in which they are written, as well as the context of the time/genre of their writing.
5. Time Allotment: 1 Hour

Prayer: Don't forget to begin and end your class with a prayer! If possible, have a camper lead one or both of these prayers.

Lesson

Overview: This week's classes will focus on "Back to the Bible". This entails an overview of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture. By the end of the week, all campers should be confident that the Bible is the complete and perfect word of God: sufficient for everyone to have an everlasting relationship with God.

Today's lesson will focus on the importance of context. Context is crucial in effectively understanding the Bible. Internal context is easy to find; each verse should be read in the context of the chapter/book that surrounds it, so that readers can understand the real point of each verse. External context—like culture, date, authorship, etc—is harder to find as it often requires knowledge outside of the Bible itself, but can be equally as valuable to gathering insight into the Bible. That being said, context helps us to understand parts of the Bible that seem confusing; it does not override the eternal truths revealed in scripture.

2 Timothy 2:15-17, Acts 17:10-12

2 Timothy 2:15-17

In this passage, Paul is writing to Timothy—a young preacher—and advises him to “rightly handle the word of truth”. This clearly implies the ability to “wrongly” handle it. Paul goes on to mention specific people who had mishandled the scriptures, and he calls it “irreverent babble”. There are many other times in the New Testament where Paul refers to “false teachers,” and in many of these instances, the teachers used parts of the gospel of Christ (or parts of the Old Testament) in combination with their personal ideas to create false teachings. In this day and age, anyone can take a single verse in isolation and twist it to mean nearly anything. It is important that we “rightly handle” the scriptures and interpret them within the context in which they are written to understand the true nature of God’s will.

Acts 17:10-12

In this passage, we see an account of Paul traveling to a church in Berea and teaching them about Jesus. They are described as “more noble” than others because they checked what Paul said against the Old Testament prophecies to see if his claims about Jesus were true. As a result, they verified it and believed in the Gospel. These days, if anyone takes a verse and makes a wild claim about its meaning, it is important that we test that teaching against the totality of scripture. This is more than just learning the context immediately surrounding the verse; it is about learning the context of all of scripture and realizing that certain verses will have different implications within the context of the entire Bible.

Reading Comprehension:

- What does Paul mean when he says that Timothy should “rightly handle” scripture? Can you think of any examples in your life when someone mishandled scriptures?
- Context becomes especially important when reading the Old Testament. Out of context, reading parts of OT law may seem like they are binding to us today. How can we tell the difference between verses in the Old Testament that we do not need to adhere to today, versus verses that are still applicable? (Many examples of these laws, like those concerning the Sabbath and sacrifices, are directly referenced in the New Testament; we ARE adhering to the command, just within the fulfilled new covenant. Some are explicitly done away with, like the dietary restrictions removed in Acts 10. Others are clearly described to be eternal, like the ten commandments and the greatest command)

Example of Context

The following exercise is an example of how a single verse can change when taken in and out of multiple contexts. Read the verse by itself and discuss the surface meaning. Then read the surrounding verses and discuss how the meaning may change. Then discuss the book in which it is written for greater context, and how that book fits into the totality of scripture.

Philippians 4:13, 11-3

By itself, Philippians 4:13 may seem to indicate that Christians are capable of anything through the power of Jesus Christ, like running marathons, moving mountains, or anything else imaginable. This is a pleasant thought, and the idea that the power of Christ greatly empowers us is present in scripture, but when read in context (verses 11-12), we see that 4:13 does not refer to “all things” as any (im)possible feat. Instead, the context describes the author’s ability to be content in all circumstances, even bad ones. Verse 13 means that Christians can endure even the worst circumstances due to the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

Backing out further, the book of Philippians was written by the apostle Paul to a faithful church that he loved deeply. The following verses (14-19) describe, in part, his relationship to the church and the love he shares with them. Throughout the book, he warns them of the persecution they will face for their faith. Verse 13 is a consolation to them that they don’t need to worry about him, as well as an encouragement to feel the same contentment and trust that God will provide.

Backing out even further, this verse is enriched when put into the context of Paul’s life and struggles. The book of Acts, parts of 2 Corinthians, and other scriptures outline the many hardships that Paul endured, including beatings, stonings, imprisonment, a shipwreck, and more. These words of finding contentment are especially powerful coming from someone who faced such difficulty.

Jeremiah 29:11

By itself, this verse seems to guarantee that God has a plan for each one of us to find prosperity in this life. From our personal experiences, we know this is not always the case; God often does not reward righteousness with earthly blessings. The context of the surrounding verses (10-14) gives us more information. God is speaking to Israel concerning their time of Babylonian captivity. His guarantee is that His covenant people will find prosperity, not any one individual. The same is true today: God has a plan for His people, the church. If we follow His will, the Church will prosper. We will face challenges and adversities, maybe even as extreme as Babylonian captivity, but God will not abandon His covenant people.

DISCUSSION

We discussed two examples of how the context around a verse can help to accurately understand its meaning. Ask, “How can cultural/historical context help us to understand certain verses more clearly?” Some examples would be the agricultural context of ancient Israel, which gives greater understanding to verses about sheep/shepherds, gleaning fields of grain, etc., or the social norms between Samaritans and Jews, which gives greater understanding to Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4.

“Are there ever times when context can be misused, and lead us to misinterpret a passage?”

- Context should inform us about how events/teachings would have been understood at the time. It tells us more about the audience than the author. Some people try to negate biblical commandments by attributing the command to the context. For example, some argue that the biblical model for the roles of husband and wife is due to the culture of the time. This is not true: biblical commands are eternal.
- Some *applications* of biblical commands are contextual, and it is a mistake to treat the application as eternally binding. For example, 1 Peter 3:3 forbids women from braiding their hair or wearing jewelry. This is not to say that every woman today sins when they braid their hair. This is a cultural application of the eternal command that we should all find our beauty in our relationship with God, not our outward appearance.
- The context of language can be both helpful and misleading. The bible was not originally written in English, and sometimes an explanation of the original languages can help us better understand certain words or verses. However, some people will use fringe/false translating to twist words and phrases to mean something entirely different than what God intended.

“What are some resources that you can use to help you learn more about the historical/cultural context of the Bible?” There are thousands of sources of information, and many are unreliable. In the modern age of technology, it can feel overwhelming to sift through the vast amount of biblical information to find things that are academically reliable and consistent with God’s word. You cannot trust every article, social media, or book. Discuss with your campers how you have learned about these things, and various sources you may recommend. The best source of information will be older Christians at your local church who have been dedicated to the truth of God’s word for much of their life.