

BIBLE 101 — Week 5

Why Context Changes Everything

Scripture Focus: 1 Corinthians 8 · Luke 15 · Acts 10

KEY VOCABULARY — scan this before you watch

Term	What It Means
Cultural Context	The unwritten rules, customs, and assumptions a society takes for _____ — the air they breathe
Historical Background	The specific events and _____ actually happening when a book was written
Anachronism	The mistake of reading our modern ideas back into the _____ text — literally means "against time"
Ekklesia	The original Greek word for "church" — it didn't mean a building but a _____ of people
Invited Eavesdroppers	What we are when we read the Bible — listening in on a _____ between God and His people throughout history

I. THE PROBLEM: READING IN BLACK AND WHITE

We've all hit passages that feel completely _____ — written for another time, maybe even another planet.

Example: Paul writes about food offered to _____ in 1 Corinthians, and we can't relate at all.

It's easy to glaze over and skip those parts. But what if understanding that one weird phrase could unlock the entire _____ of the chapter?

II. THE BIG IDEA: READING SOMEONE ELSE'S MAIL

The critical principle:

The Bible was written _____ us, but it wasn't written _____ us.

Its message is _____, but the original letters were addressed to real people in a very different world.

That makes us invited _____ — we get to listen in on an incredible conversation between God and His people.

To understand that conversation faithfully, we have to do a little _____ — learning about their world, customs, and real-life situations.

III. THE ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR YOUR TOOL BELT

Tool 1 — Cultural Context

- All the stuff in a culture that never needs to be _____ — like why we stop at red lights or tip a waiter
- The biblical world had its own unwritten rules about _____ and shame, hospitality, and family

Tool 2 — Historical Background

- The specific stuff that was actually _____ when a book was written
- Example: Paul writes about finding _____ in every circumstance in Philippians — he wrote it from prison, chained to a Roman guard

Tool 3 — Avoiding Anachronism

- The classic mistake of taking our _____ ideas and plopping them on top of the ancient text
- Like cramming 21st-century IKEA furniture into a _____-century living room
- Example: We read "church" and picture a building with pews and a _____. But ekklesia just meant a gathering — usually in someone's house.

TOOL	WHAT IT MEANS	EXAMPLE
Cultural Context	Unwritten rules a society takes for _____	Honor/shame culture shaped how people _____ everything
Historical Background	Specific events _____ when the book was written	Paul wrote about joy while _____ to a Roman guard
Anachronism	Reading _____ ideas into an ancient text	Picturing a building with pews when Paul wrote " _____ "

IV. CONTEXT IN ACTION: THREE PASSAGES TRANSFORMED

1 Corinthians 8 — Meat Offered to Idols

- **Without context:** A weird passage about food _____
- **With context:** Most meat sold in Corinth came from _____ temple sacrifices — suddenly it's a powerful lesson on how love for a brother should limit our personal _____

Luke 15 — The Lost Sheep

- **Without context:** A sweet story about God _____ for people
- **With context:** Shepherds were social _____, and a religious leader eating with sinners was absolutely scandalous — it becomes a radical defense of God's love for the _____

Acts 10 — Peter's Vision

- **Without context:** God is changing the _____
- **With context:** God is completely demolishing the thousand-year-old barrier between _____ and Gentile

⏸ PAUSE & REFLECT

Pick one of the three passages above. How does knowing the cultural or historical background change what you thought the passage was about?

V. THE THREE-STEP PLAYBOOK

Step 1 — Investigate First

Before figuring out what it means for you, ask: Who _____ this? Who were they writing to? What was the situation on the ground?

Step 2 — Get One Good Tool

You don't need a seminary library. A _____ Bible or a Bible dictionary is all you need.

- Recommended: The NIV Cultural Backgrounds _____ Bible
- A Bible _____ lets you look up words like "Corinth" or "Pharisee" and get the backstory

Step 3 — Practice on a Familiar Verse

Take a verse you think you know well, look up the _____, and see what happens.

The bottom line: Context doesn't _____ the meaning — it reveals it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that the Bible was written "for us but not to us"? How does seeing yourself as an "invited eavesdropper" change your approach?

2. Think of a passage that has always felt confusing or irrelevant. What cultural or historical question could you investigate to unlock its meaning?

3. Have you ever read a modern idea into an ancient text without realizing it? What's one anachronism you want to watch out for going forward?

