



| **SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES** |

WALKING
THE TEXT

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| LENSES OF CONTEXT |

SERIES SUMMARY

One of the most frequent questions we get is, “How do I learn to study the Bible in context on my own?” That’s exactly the question we want people asking! And that’s why we created a free e-book called *The #1 Mistake Most Everyone Makes Reading the Bible*. In it, we unpack the 6 lenses of context: historical, cultural, geographical, visual, linguistic, and literary. This brand-new mini-series, Lenses of Context, is an illustrated version of our e-book (with some exciting additions) and is thus done in conjunction with our e-book. In the series, we examine each lens of context, exploring specific examples (different from those in the e-book), and then offering you tools and techniques to enhance your study of the Scriptures. If you don’t have your free copy of *The #1 Mistake Most Everyone Makes Reading the Bible*, you can download it [HERE](#).

THIS CURRICULUM IS REALLY EASY TO USE

STEP 1: Click the link in each lesson to watch the video teaching.

STEP 2: Reflect on the discussion questions with our group.

STEP 3: Start seeing the text in fresh and compelling ways by utilizing the 6 lenses of context!



PART 1 | HISTORICAL

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ruth 1:1; Luke 2:1; Revelation 3:1-6

DESCRIPTION

Perhaps the most frequent question we hear is, “How do I learn to study the Bible in context on my own?” That’s why we wrote a free e-book called *The #1 Mistake Most Everyone Makes Reading the Bible*. In it, we unpack six lenses of context: historical, cultural, geographical, visual, linguistic, and literary. In this brand-new mini-series, *Lenses of Context*, we’ll explore each lens, citing specific examples of how that particular lens amplifies the meaning of the Text. In this episode, we unpack how the surprising history of the ancient city of Sardis informed Jesus’s warning to the church there in Revelation 3:1-6. By the end of this episode you’ll be equipped with a set of five questions to ask any passage you’re reading in order to understand the historical context.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- What are some other Biblical passages or stories where you’d really like to know more about the historical context?
- Why do you think our first impulse when reading the Bible is typically, “What does this mean for me, now” rather than “What did this mean for them, then?”
- The city of Sardis trusted in the height of their walls and became complacent. What are some of the ways we often “fall asleep” and begin trusting in ourselves rather than being awake and alert and trusting in God?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 2 | CULTURAL

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Ephesians 5:6-13

DESCRIPTION

If you've ever felt confused by the Bible, chances are you're suffering from biblical culture shock (and probably don't even know it). One way out of the confusion and into understanding is by learning to see any biblical passage through the cultural lens of its day. By way of illustration, this episode explores a well-known expression from the apostle Paul about walking in the light. As the cultural context of Paul's Roman connection is brought into view, you'll see a stunning new reality emerge of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Furthermore, by the end of this episode, you'll be equipped with a set of questions and resources to help you learn the cultural background of any biblical passage you read.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- How does understanding the background of the Vigiles Urbani enhance your understanding of what it means to “walk in the light?”
- Paul says, “for once you were darkness.” What darkness has God rescued and delivered you from in your life? (P.S. The more specific and concrete you are, the better).
- This cultural insight highlights the importance of people walking in the light together in groups in order to create a safe space for others on their journey. Take some time to discuss if and how your circle/community has created this safe space for others.
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 3 | **GEOGRAPHICAL**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

John 1:28; Luke 1:16-17; Matthew 3:4, 13; 2 Kings 1:8; 2 Kings 2:15; Joshua 3:16-17

DESCRIPTION

The Bible often uses an economy of words to convey extremely significant information. Nowhere is this more obvious or glaring than when it comes to geography. Scripture is loaded with subtle hints and references designed to show us the connection between place and purpose, but if we don't know the geography, we completely miss out on the insight. In this episode, we explore several examples from the Bible (including why Jesus was baptized where he was – hold on to your seats for this one) to show you how important geography is when it comes to reading the Bible better. By the end of this episode, you'll have a whole new set of questions to ask of any passage you're reading so you don't miss the connections between place and purpose.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Reflect for a moment on the connection between location and memory. What is a particular place or location that elicits strong memories in your life?
- Of the four examples given in the episode, which made the strongest impression on you? Why?
- What are some other examples/locations in the Scriptures where a previous event enhances the meaning of an event occurring in that same location at a later time?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 4 | VISUAL

VIDEO

Click to Watch

DESCRIPTION

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” “Seeing is believing.” “I saw it with my own eyes.” We humans are deeply visual creatures. In fact, mirror neurons in our brains give us the unique capacity to empathize and embody what we see. Unfortunately, many of us fail to engage the visual aspect of the Bible. Simply seeing photos, videos, or artist renderings of Bible stories can unlock a depth of understanding we can’t access any other way (outside of traveling there). By the end of this episode, you’ll have a list of visual resources and key questions to help you see the Bible in a whole new light, literally!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Of all the visual examples shared in the episode, which one stood out to you most? Why?
- Think for a moment about the image of the Nubian Ibex standing confidently on the dangerous heights. What thoughts or sensations did that image bring to mind from your life?
- When most of us think of the “green pastures” from Psalm 23, the image we imagine is nothing like the image in this episode. How did the image of “green pastures” in this episode challenge your understanding of “green pastures?”
- What are one or two passages/stories from the Bible you’d especially like to see? Why?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



PART 5 | LINGUISTIC

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Genesis 2:18; Exodus 18:17-18; Jonah 3:4; John 18:18; John 21:9

DESCRIPTION

Languages often reveal the values of a culture, which is one of the reasons why understanding the original languages of the Bible is so important. Hebrew and Greek can be intimidating, but here's the good news: you don't need formal training in these ancient languages to improve your Bible reading. There are multiple tools and techniques to help you get the most out of the languages of the Bible. By the end of this episode, you'll know where to search and what to look for to unlock the language of the Bible!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Of the various kinds of Bible translations (word for word, thought for thought, or idea for idea), which are you most drawn to and why?
- What's a word or phrase from the Bible that has special meaning to you? Why? ”
- Read Lamentations 1 and try to identify a word that gets repeated multiple times. Then read it again and identify a phrase that is repeated multiple times. Finally, ask what the context of Lamentations is and how this word and phrase is significant.
- How will you begin living out the truths or strategies from this teaching this week?



PART 6 | LITERARY

VIDEO

Click to Watch

DESCRIPTION

Our final episode in the Lenses of Context series examine the brilliant and highly intentional literary background of the Bible. We don't read a legal document the same way we read a poem or a historical account. We're mindful of the context. Unfortunately, many of us miss the literary clues in the Text that help us know HOW to read that particular section in context. Thus, we need to engage the four aspects of the literary lens: genre, design, what we call "the W's," as well as placement. By the end of this episode, you'll have specific tools to help you engage the literary context of the Bible to ensure you're reading it the way it was intended to be read. And as you do so, always remember that the end goal isn't to be smarter, but to be more faithful!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- What is your favorite Bible passage? (Or have your small group pick a well-known passage) Now, which of the 8 genres is the passage?
- Go to <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters> and download the biblical design poster that corresponds to your passage. (For example, if you chose Micah 6:8, download the Biblical Design poster for Micah). What stand out to you from looking at the overall design of the book.
- Next, fill in the W's. Who wrote this book? When? Where? Why? If you need help, consult a study bible.
- Finally, where does this passage fit within the overall storyline of the Bible and how might that be significant?
- How will you begin living out the truths of this teaching this week?



FOR FURTHER STUDY

Find all resources in our free e-book *The #1 Mistake Most Everyone Makes Reading the Bible* by joining our email list at <https://walkingthetext.com/join/>.

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