

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

Lesson 30 – Knowing the Context (Teacher's Lesson)

Opening: Answer the opening question.

Study Notes:

Nehemiah 8

Verse 3 – What did Ezra do for the people? Read the Book of the Law.

Verses 7-8 – What did the Levites do for the people? Explained the reading, making the meaning clearer.

It is not clear from the context whether the Levites explained, translated the passage or did both. Whatever the case, the people were so distant in time and location that not everything was exactly clear. They need to have the meaning of the Scripture explained to them.

Psalm 62:1-2

1. ~~God is a rock.~~
2. God gives strength and peace.

John 3:36

1. ~~The one who rejects Jesus-
has eternal life.~~
2. Everyone who believes in Jesus has eternal
life.

The answers for The Passage and The Purpose:

1-E, 2-G, 3-A, 4-H, 5-F, 6-D, 7-C, 8-B

Summary: Understanding the historical and literary context is important to understanding the meaning of the biblical text.

Application: Be cautious as we discuss deeper issues of interpretation. It is easy for students to focus on the information when learning new information. Remember that the information from which we are learning is only a tool to draw closer to God.

Lesson 30 – Knowing the Context

There Must Be Some Misunderstanding

Has anyone ever understood what you said out of context?

To truly understand the Bible, we must understand the context of the passage being studied. Sometimes clarification is needed. Read Nehemiah 8:1-8 and answer the following.

Verse 3 – What did Ezra do for the people?

Verses 7-8 – What did the Levites do for the people?

As we studied last week, it is not enough simply to know what the Bible says; we must know what it means. To understand this, we must know what it meant. To know this, we must know the context of the passage we are studying.

Literary Context

The first type of context is literary context. That simply means, why type of literature is it? The Bible is not just one type of Scripture. There is poetry and prose. There is prophecy, history, narration, law, wisdom literature, and others. The type of writing influences how we understand the passage. For example, read the passages and circle the best meaning for each one below.

Psalm 62:1-2

1. God is a rock.
2. God gives strength and peace.

John 3:36

1. The one who rejects Jesus
eternal life.
2. Everyone who believes in Jesus has
eternal life.

As you can see, these passages are interpreted differently. This passage in John is more “literal,” where the Psalm is taken more figuratively, because it is poetry. It may be simple, but it is important to know the difference. Fortunately, it can usually be easily understood.

Another important part of literary context is what comes before and after the passage. that is why it is good to read long passages and understand what is being said in relation to the rest of the book.

Historical Context

The Bible was written to people who lived in a different time, different country, and spoke different languages than we do. To better understand the Bible, it is helpful to understand the time in which it was written. The other part of that context is the purpose for which the book was written. Some of these questions can be found in a Bible handbook, or a Study Bible, but the majority of the information you need can be found in the Bible itself, if you read it carefully. Read the following Scripture and see if you can match the passage with the purpose.

<u>Passage</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
1. Exodus 20:1-20	A. Instruction the people of God in wisdom
2. Psalm 137:1-4	B. Correcting disagreements about the Gospel
3. Proverbs 1:1-4	C. Answering questions about the church in Corinth
4. Jeremiah 1:2, 17-19	D. Bearing witness of Jesus so readers can have eternal life
5. Luke 1:1-4	E. Teaching God's people His requirements
6. John 20:30-31	F. Making an accurate account of the life of Jesus
7. 1 Corinthians 7:1	G. God's people lamenting exile from their land
8. Galatians 1:1-2, 6-7	H. Telling God's Word to the people of Judah

In future lessons, we will study historical and literary issues more deeply. The most important thing to remember is that the purpose of all of this is not just to gain more knowledge, but to use that knowledge to guide us to obey God's Word more.

Scripture to memorize:

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12