

The Gospel Project for Adults, Summer 2015
Extended Instructional Approaches for Session 3

Introduction: *Engage your group members with the subject.*

Write the following quote on the board: “*Wisdom is intelligence in context.*” Ask your group members to share what the differences are between wisdom and intelligence according to this quote. Ask, “*How does context make the difference between the two?*”

Raheel Farooq, “Quotes About Context,” Goodreads [online], 2015 [cited 6 May 2015]. Available from the Internet: <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/context>.

Part 1: *Engage your group members by having them think about literary context.*

Throughout history, men and women have used the Bible for their own means. The following is an excerpt from a speech by Adolph Hitler in 1922:

My feelings as a Christian point me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded only by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them...In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and of adders. How terrific was His fight for the world against the Jewish poison!

Ask your class, “*What was the actual context of Jesus’ actions in Matthew 21:12-13? Was He trying to wipe out the entire Jewish race? Was He trying to kill anyone?*” Have them comment on Hitler’s misuse of these verses.

[Adolph Hitler, quoted in *The Most Misused Verses in the Bible*, by Eric J. Bargerhuff (Bethany House: Minneapolis, 2012), 15.]

Part 2: *Focus your group members on the historical context using their imaginations.*

Write the following quote on the white board: “*Mary crossed her fingers as she placed her arms behind her.*”

Divide the class into two groups. Give a 3-by-5-inch card to the first group saying that Mary is a teenager living in Montgomery, Alabama, in 2015. She is talking to her mother and not being totally honest. The second group should receive a 3-by-5-inch card stating that Mary is a teenager living in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. This was during the time of extreme religious fervor and the eventually killing of at least 20 people, most of them women, for being witches.

Ask each group to comment on their scenario and note the differences based on history. How would an observer of Mary act? What would they think?

Part 3: *Illustrate the principle of theological context.*

Have your students read Luke 4:1-12, focusing in on verse 11. This verse is a quote from Psalm 91:11. Because he ignored the theological context, Satan misinterpreted the verse. Ask your students, “*How is a verse that seems to indicate God’s protection over His loved ones misused by Satan?*” Ask 3-4 students for comments.

Conclusion: *Challenge for application.*

There is a tendency to view the Bible in light of our current historical context. All of us, if we are honest, have ignored the literary, historical, and/or theological context of a passage and this has kept us from understanding the Bible properly. Ask God to help you as you read the Bible this week to focus on these three aspects of context. Use a good study Bible, Bible dictionary, and/or commentary to aid you if needed.

Teaching Tip of the Week

It is easier for the participant to learn if he or she is actively engaged rather than listening passively. One of the most helpful ways to start this dynamic process is to motivate the participants to probe into the subject matter on their own without prior explanation from the teacher. The use of diagrams, pictures, or video clips can start the process. This simple strategy stimulates question asking—the key to learning. Try it the next time you teach!