

Text and Framework

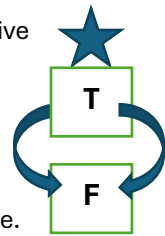
Often it is the case that we read out of Scripture what we want to suit our own interests. Our sinful and weak tendency is to filter Scripture through our own frameworks rather than repent of our agenda, change our premises, and submit to what Scripture teaches. *Frameworks* are ideas we believe to support our views and practices.

Scripture provides a total worldview and within it are contained many frameworks. Understanding these frameworks requires a particular kind of listening to the context of Scripture.



This means when we read, we read in context.

- Proper understanding of a text (a word, a statement, a whole book of the Bible) requires what is said together or alongside or *with* it.
- If we fail to locate the context of a biblical passage, we will easily impose an alternative framework and then subsequently a faulty application. The text is King.



The Literary Context

Literary context refers to how a passage of Scripture fits and functions within the greater whole.

- When we're looking at a verse, a paragraph, or even a whole chapter, we *do not* interpret that section in isolation, but we are to pay close attention to what comes before and after it.
- Philippians 4:13, "I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me." Is Paul speaking about an extraordinary ability or something else? Consider this verse in the wider context and read it slowly carefully:

¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me. ¹⁴Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. (Phil. 4:10-14)

- Paul writes of having learned what it means to be content when he has a lot of resources in gospel ministry and when he has a little. We can apply this in difficult times when we need contentment when it appears that our resources are too little to meet the demands of life, or that we would get nervous worrying about a day that we might have too little even though right now we have much.
- It's good to ask the question: How does this passage *fit* into the writers' whole argument?

- “God's word can never mean something that it never meant...We always need to work hard to see what God's word meant when it was written. Only then we will be able to see what it means for us as God's people.”¹
- We read the Bible not as a collection of great quotes but as a collected whole. Every sentence is part of a wider paragraph, and every paragraph is part of an entire book.
- It is also important to see the Bible as a literary canon with many different genres: Law, historical narratives, wisdom, poetry, prophecy and apocalyptic literature matter must matter in our observations and interpretations.

The Historical Context

No biblical writer writes in a vacuum because he lived at a point in history in a real place with real people within a real culture.

- The historical context refers to those events in that era, either events recorded in that writing or the events that form the backdrop for that writing.
- The cultural context refers to social and personal attitudes, patterns of behavior, expressions of a particular society at that point in history.
- Some fundamental historical-cultural questions:
 - When was the book written?
 - Who were the original recipients of the writing?
 - What was the political and cultural situation at the time of the writing?
- A good study Bible (ESV Study Bible) will accomplish much of what is needed to understand the historical-cultural context.
- Consider Luke 23:27-29:
 - ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' (Lk. 23:27-29)

The Canonical Context

- We must think about the whole canon of Scripture. The Bible exists now as an entire collection of books. Every single book of the Bible is part of God's ultimate story.
- This is why the Reformers taught *Scripture interprets Scripture*. We have to read any given part of the Bible in light of the rest of the Bible. We must consider the entire scope of Scripture when we study any individual text.
- We can do this because the entire inspired Bible has one Author. So our canonical question might sound like this: Where does this passage fit in the overall arc of the biblical story?
- Scripture allows us to see canonical themes that can be traced in our text through the arc of this biblical story?

¹ Jon Nielson, *Understanding God's Word: An Introduction to Interpreting the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 12.

- Type: A person, object, or an event in the Old Testament that symbolizes a greater truth, most often located in the New Testament (e.g. kings, prophets, sacrificial system, temple, etc...)
 - Antitype: The New Testament fulfillment that completes what the Old Testament type foreshadowed (e.g. Christ is ultimate sacrifice foreshadowed by the Paschal Lamb of Passover)
- For example: When reading 2 Kings we are not only situated in the days of a bad king or a good king, but in a canon of Scripture in which this bad king Ahaz or this good king Josiah is canonically in relationship with the greater King, Jesus of Nazareth, who is yet to come.
- Galatians 2:11-14:

¹¹ But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

HOMEWORK*AN EXERCISE IN FRAMEWORKS*

Reading secondary resources is important. At times, even well-intentioned Christians can misappropriate Scripture, like this author below. Read this quote and consider what false framework is present. Consider how texts of Scripture would be misconstrued to support this incorrect view of the gospel.

Proclaiming the whole gospel, then, means much more than evangelism in the hopes that people will hear and respond to the good news of salvation by faith in Christ. It also encompasses tangible compassion for the sick and the poor, as well as biblical justice, efforts to right the wrongs that are so prevalent in our world. God is concerned about the spiritual, physical, and social dimensions of our being. This *whole gospel* is truly good news for the poor, and it is the foundation for a social revolution that has the power to change the world. And if this was Jesus' mission, it is also the mission of all who claim to follow Him. It is my mission, it is your mission, and it is the mission of the Church (Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, 2010)

1. What is the writer teaching? In other words, what framework(s) do you observe?
2. Is this framework consistent or inconsistent with Jesus' mission? Why or why not?
3. Is this an accurate teaching of the gospel of Christ? Why or why not?
4. Is this framework(s) consistent or inconsistent with Scripture? Why or why not. If not, how would you correct it?

AN EXERCISE IN CONTEXTS

Take out your Bible and read aloud this well-loved text, Jeremiah 29:11.

1. Many people love to use Jeremiah 29:11 as their favorite personal verse. How have you seen this verse applied today?

Now read this verse but read all of Jeremiah 29, the whole chapter. Before answering the questions, make observations to consider the literary context, historical context, and the canonical context.

1. Who is God speaking to and what was the plan of God? (Literary/Historical)
2. How does this passage relate to Christ, his mission, and/or his church? (Canonical)
3. How are God's plans similar and/or different for Christians today? (Practical)