



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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Jump Start # 2146

Luke 10:26 "And He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?'"

I heard on the news recently of a man that was arrested in a nationally known fitness gym. The gym advertises on TV as "No judging." I always took that to mean one doesn't have to be fit, muscular to work out in that gym. A person could be overweight, capable of only doing a few exercises and that's ok. There would be no judging. Well, the man arrested the other day was working out in the buff. He was naked. When the police took him away, he said, "I thought you stood for 'No judging.'"

Now, this is a classic example of context and interpretation. Does the slogan "No judging" mean a person could do anything that they wanted, legal or illegal and there would be "No judging?" In our culture today, could a person be a racist in that gym and there would be "No judging." Could a person use drugs? Is there no limits to what a person could do? Could a person sell gym memberships to a competing gym? No judging, right?

Obviously, the company had a different meaning and interpretation of "No judging" than the naked man. The police were called and he was arrested. It's against the law to be naked in the public. Now, he may believe that's judging, but that's the law.

What does this have to do with Jump Starts? Context and interpretation are the keys to understanding the Bible. Without those two principles, the Bible can be used to say things that God never intended. God commanded Noah to build an ark. Most do not feel compelled to do the same. Why? That command was for Noah. Context. Interpretation.

In our verse today, Jesus asks two questions. They are not the same question. These questions are a reply to a question asked of Jesus. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus answered with these two questions. First, what is written in the Law? The Law is the standard. It will read the same for this person as it did for Jesus. The answer is in the Law. There are not different meanings for different people. The Law is the same. We ought to see this and understand this as we drive. The speed limit is the speed limit. It's not different for pickups or sports car. It's not different if you are a young driver or a senior citizen. The fact that so few drive the speed limit doesn't change what is written in the law.

The second question is about application. How does it read to you is asking what are you going to do with what the Law says? How are you going to apply the Law? How do you plan to live by this Law?

The danger of ignoring context leads to unsound ideas and principles that are not supported Biblically. This is why a person reading the Bible must understand who is talking, what are the circumstances, and who is being talked to. Those thoughts help frame a context. Then it is essential to read several verses above and following the verse we are looking at. Otherwise, it's like walking into a room, where two people are having a conversation, and you hear one sentence and you get all upset because of what you heard. What you missed was the context.

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They could be talking about a movie and you think they are talking about each other. They may be talking about someone else and you assume that they are talking about you. Out of context leads to wrong conclusions and wrong ideas.

A popular out of context violation today is believing that the Holy Spirit revealed things directly to Paul and so the same should happen to me. I've read modern writers who claimed the Holy Spirit led them to write certain paragraphs, led them to certain passages and paralleled that experience to what was happening to Paul in the New Testament. Out of Context! Paul was an apostle, we are not. Paul was promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of God's word, we are not. Paul could do miracles. We can not.

So, when a person is reading about the apostle Paul, he must realize that Paul wore three hats. First, he was a Christian. Second, he was a preacher. Third, he was an apostle. Before we start following Paul, we must understand which hat he is wearing. We cannot do everything he did. That's context. So, when Paul told the Corinthians, to be imitators of me, he was talking about character and behavior as a Christian. Context demands that. He wasn't saying, do miracles, like I do miracles. We can't. He wasn't saying, write books of the Bible, like I write books of the Bible. We can't. He wasn't saying, the Holy Spirit will tell you what to write, just like He tells me what to write. We can't. Context.

Many folks want to use Jesus as an example of drinking alcohol. Jesus turned water into wine, so that's Heaven's stamp of approval for you and I to hit the bars. Context. Have you noticed the passage never says that Jesus drank any of it. Also, the point isn't issuing a green light to drink. It was showing the miraculous powers of Christ to change substance. It's unlikely that it was even alcoholic. But greater than that, if we use what Jesus did to justify drinking, what are we going to do when Jesus turned tables over in the temple? Does that allow us to trash the property of those we disagree with? Can we use whips to run people off that we do not agree with? Context.

Jesus fed the crowds. Does that mean today's church ought to do the same? Context. Finding a verse that supports my ideas and agenda does not always mean that the Bible actually teaches that. There is an old, old story called "Jumbled Up Scriptures" in which a guy randomly opened the Bible. He was going to do whatever the Bible said. The gist of the story is that he opened to a passage that said Judas went out and hung himself. In his horror, he closed the Bible and reopened it. He came to another passage that told him to do it quickly.

Jesus said do not judge. Folks love that passage. Yet, more than once within that same chapter, Jesus tells us to judge. If we never judged, then we could never say anything was wrong. That would be judging. Yet, how were early preachers, such as Timothy to reprove and rebuke, as they were told to do, if they could not judge. Context. What did Jesus mean by do not judge?

The Ephesians were told that they were saved by grace through faith. The world has stopped on that verse. Saved by grace. Nothing else to do. Nothing else required. Anything further would be work and we are not saved by works. Do you have to repent? Yeah, probably. Do you have to go to church? You should. How about being baptized? No. Never, they'd declare. Saved by grace and baptism is works, they scream. Context. Jesus, Himself, told the world to be baptized. Context.

We must allow God to speak through His word. Instead of telling God what He needs to tell us, let the Bible speak in it's context. This takes a little digging. This takes some study. This takes some thinking.

Did the fitness gym judge the naked man? Yes. Did that violate their advertising campaign? No. It's a matter of context. The political battleground these days are examples of not understanding context. A statement is made. War is declared politically and in the media. It doesn't matter the context, some say, the statement was made. People are missing the point.

Using the Bible wrongly is not much different than not using the Bible at all. Using the Bible to say what it doesn't say will not find God's support and approval. Putting words in God's mouth will not make Him smile at you.

Context-observe it. Understand it. Follow it. Use it.

Roger Shouse
