

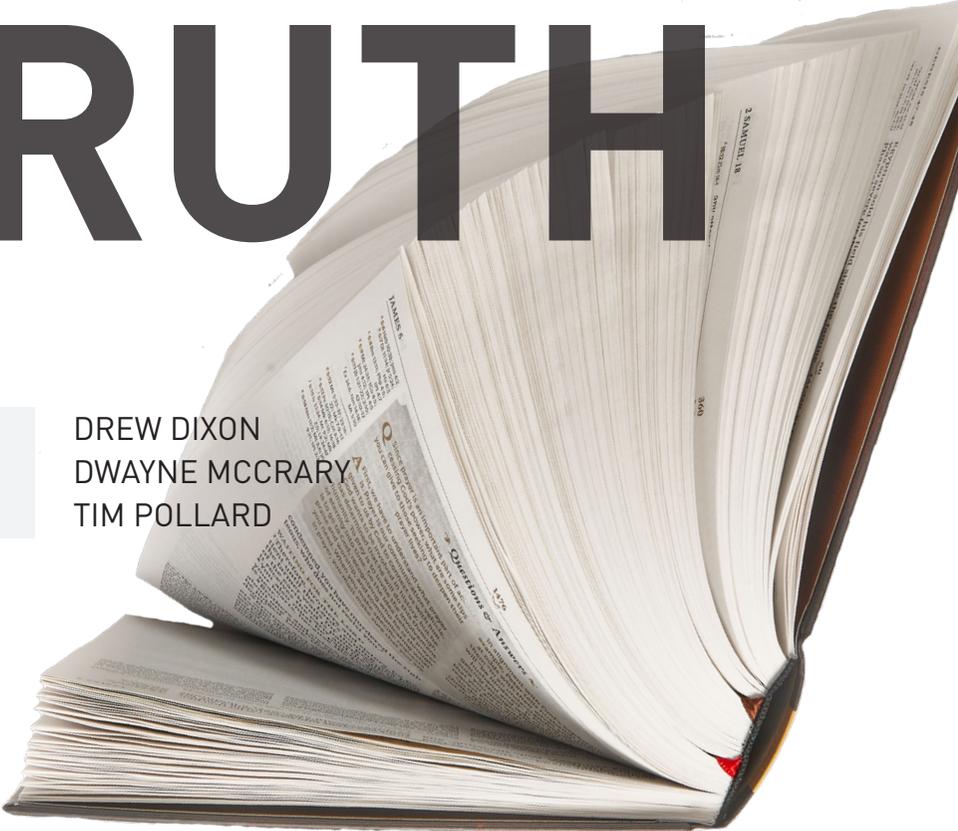
# THE TRUTH ABOUT

(WHAT WE THINK ABOUT)

# TRUTH

EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

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## DO CHRISTIANS REALLY UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

Many Christians will say they are confident in their ability to understand and explain the Bible. But if that is the case, why does it seem like so few do so correctly? In partnership with LifeWay Research, Explore the Bible wanted to discover the answer. The result is a survey conducted in September 2019 that revealed a number of troubling realities about the shifting nature of truth:

- The vast majority of American churchgoers believe that the Bible means different things to different people.
- 3 out of 10 accept some truths from the Bible but reject others that do not fit their beliefs.
- 24% say that some biblical truths become obsolete as culture changes.

Despite this concerning trend, there are also signs of hope that Christians actually want to understand the Bible:

- 93% say it is important to apply the meaning and principles of Scripture to today's context.
- 93% enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand its meaning.
- 96% say it is important to understand the context in which the Bible was written.

**(YOU CAN FIND THE WHOLE STUDY  
AT [LIFEWAYRESEARCH.COM](http://LIFEWAYRESEARCH.COM).)**

In this eBook, the Explore the Bible team offers a series of essays that explore the concerns raised by this survey and celebrate the signs of hope found within. And we're sharing it for one reason: We love the Bible. We love helping people of all backgrounds and ages learn how to study the Bible. That's why Explore the Bible exists: to help the whole church understand the whole truth of Scripture, book by book.

## **1: THE SHIFTING VALUE OF TRUTH**

### **The Question We Need to Ask Before “What Does the Bible Mean to Me?”**

Drew Dixon

One of my earliest memories of attending Bible study was sitting around a lunch table with a bunch of other high school students, reading some verses, and being asked, “What does this mean to you?” Around this same time, I had started reading the Bible on my own for the very first time. I had recently come to faith in Jesus. So, after years of ignoring it, the Bible had suddenly become really important to me and something I was legitimately interested in understanding and applying to my life. However, to say that I had no clue how to study the Bible would be an understatement. I don’t remember what verses we read around the lunch table, and I don’t remember anyone saying anything that wasn’t quite right. Looking back, however, I am not sure I would have been able to tell if someone had said something that wasn’t quite right.

I got the feeling that most of the people around the table thought highly of the Bible and seemed to be trying really hard to figure out how it applied to their existence. We were 15 to 17-year-olds looking forward to the summer, preparing for the SAT, and trying to find someone to go to prom with, and yet, it was clear that the people around the table were convinced that the Bible was relevant to such contexts. The Bible mattered to the people around that table. It mattered to me.

And yet, we were approaching it incorrectly.

## **RELEVANCE REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE**

If we hope to grasp the Bible’s relevance, we first need to understand its truth. Before asking, “What does this mean to me?”, we need to honestly ask what it means, period. That second, foundational question is sadly one that few people are asking today. In fact, 82% of American churchgoers believe that the Bible means different things to different

people. At first glance, this statistic might not be all that alarming—of course people have different views of the Bible. However, if we apply this logic to some of the most iconic verses in the Bible, we will clearly see why it is problematic.

For example, consider John 3:16: “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” What if, to me, this verse means that everyone who believes in some kind of cosmic spiritual force or the power of love will have eternal life? Is this view correct? Of course it isn’t. Words are defined by their meanings and contexts, not by what I nor anyone else want them to mean.

So while it is crucial that we help people understand how the Bible’s teaching is relevant to our everyday lives, we first need to develop some basic Bible reading and interpretation skills. The good news is that most of us already have these skills from our years of reading and studying in other contexts. Think about it: when we read a letter or article, our ultimate goal is to understand what the author intended to communicate. We do that first so that we can then have an accurate understanding of how their meaning should impact our thinking and actions. We also consider context—the context of the author, the context of the people the author wrote to, and the context date and situation in which the author wrote. Once we have taken time for such considerations, we will be better equipped to consider how what we’ve read applies to our own context.

For example, when Paul wrote, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, ESV), he was not writing to high school football players. That doesn’t mean that athletes shouldn’t write Philippians 4:13 on their cleats or their eye black. Paul wrote the Book of Philippians from prison in Rome, at a time when he was facing potential execution. He wrote the letter to a church that was facing similar pressures to those that landed him in prison facing execution. In the immediate verses leading up to Philippians 4:13, Paul thanks the Philippian church for supporting him and tells them that the Lord has empowered him to be content in all circumstances. So Philippians 4:13 is about how God’s faithfulness and strength empower us to be faithful to Him. When we take some time to consider some basic questions about context, we will actually find verses like Philippians 4:13 far more helpful and profoundly applicable to our daily lives.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THINKING AND KNOWING

Giving the average churchgoer the benefit of the doubt, I suspect many of the people represented in that 82% are a lot like those teenagers sitting around the lunch table—they mean well and even, in some ways, think highly of the Bible. There is, however, a difference between thinking highly of the Bible and accepting the Bible for what it claims to be: the Word of God.

This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe.

### 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13

The biblical authors are constantly making this claim, that their message was not human opinion but God's Word (2 Peter 1:20–21). From Genesis to Revelation, the writers of the Bible claim to be offering up not their own ideas, but God's. This was how Paul saw both the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:16–17) and his own letters (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Peter spoke of Paul's letters similarly (2 Peter 3:18). In other words, what makes the Bible relevant is God Himself, not what the Bible means to me. Approaching the Bible first and foremost as divinely inspired truth actually makes the Bible more relevant to our daily lives, not less.

What we find in the Bible is true on a deeper, more important level than any other messages we encounter. The Bible is life-giving in a way that no other book is because it is inspired by God. It is only when we understand this that we will find it to be truly useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

# **Tempted to Cherry Pick**

Tim Pollard

As the father of a new high school freshman, I find myself in difficult territory. My daughter is about to begin a journey through one of the more difficult deserts I walked through—high school geometry. In my professional life, I am an editor. Words make much more sense to me than the calculations, postulates, and theorems of geometry (though my freshman English teacher may take exception to that too). While for me math was scary and uncomfortable, one thing rang true in my day and still does today: math is absolute! The principles that govern mathematical equations work the same way every single time. While numbers and factors may differ, the process is identical, and once you learn the process, mathematics makes a little more sense.

Like math, God's truth is absolute and constant. God Himself is eternal, and, as part of His eternal nature, God never changes. Hebrews 13:8 tells us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never changes, and the truths God inspired men to write in the Bible, and the truths that Jesus taught while on earth, are as true today as the day they were written and taught.

## **CONSTANT AND ABSOLUTE**

In a recent survey, LifeWay Research determined that 3 out of 10 people accept some truths from the Bible, but other truths do not fit their beliefs. The people who participated in this survey were Protestant churchgoers from a variety of backgrounds and locations. As a society, it has become clear that trends in church attendance and participation have begun to wane. That trend may be leading to the idea that not all of the truths in the Bible need to be applied today. If God has not changed, neither have the commands and desires God has for His followers to adhere to. All of His truth is valid, even the parts we don't like.

This trend is not new as the Bible itself records instances where people have chosen to ignore the truths laid out. Open your Bible to any of the Old Testament prophecy books and you will read countless stories of people ignoring the truths God issued to the detriment of their society

or nation. As humans, we are famous for cherry picking our favorite parts while ignoring others. One of the more famous accounts of this is the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson created his own personal copy of Scripture that was a carefully crafted book, painstakingly cut with a razor and glued together. Jefferson chose the moral teachings of Jesus while he ignored the divinity and eternal nature of Jesus.

## **VALID AND VALUABLE**

While the trend may not be new, it is concerning that 30% of churchgoers feel like it is fine to choose truths from God's Word to follow while ignoring other truths. Societal norms now push us to post our favorite cherry-picked truths all over social media to prove a point, the whole time possibly violating other truths from God's Word. 1 Samuel 15:29 says it best, "The Eternal One of Israel does not lie or change his mind, for he is not man who changes his mind." Samuel helps us to see that God's truth, like mathematics, is absolute. When God says something, He does not change His mind. All of His truths are still valid and valuable. People can change their minds and be easily swayed one way or another.

On the flip side of the equation, the good news is that 70% of churchgoers still believe that the truths of the Bible are applicable to their lives and missions. Understanding that all of God's truth is valid and applicable, Christians can confidently approach each day with a sense of purpose for the kingdom of God. Read the Bible in its entirety and hold each truth of God's Word as valuable as the others.

I'm looking forward to jumping into geometry proofs with my high school freshman. I am not excited because it's math, but because together, we can discover those absolutes. Using that as a jumping off point, we can also open our Bibles together and discover the absolute truth of God's Word.

## Has Truth Become Obsolete?

Dwayne McCrary

We like to win. We see this truth play out when kids play a game. Eventually, someone wants to change the rules. The change may be simple, but we can be sure that the change benefits the one proposing the change. If the change is made, the game may become unfair. The rules of a game function as boundaries that frame the challenge of the game and establish fairness for all those who are playing. That includes those who played that game before us and who will play after us. Imagine using a chess set to play checkers and then declaring ourselves as great chess players. We are deceiving ourselves and doing a disservice to those who are truly great chess players. We also cheat ourselves of learning how to actually play chess and, in effect, we lose by winning.

### DOES CULTURE CANCEL TRUTH?

Before we start demanding that all children learn to play chess using the rules as written, we may want to see if we are playing by the rules in other areas of life. Throughout history, people have tried to change the standards to better fit their life situation. Maybe that standard stood in the way of some goal or something they believed would bring them happiness. One example is the marriage of Nero and Octavia. Nero had been adopted by Claudius, who was the father of Octavia. By law, Nero and Octavia were brother and sister even though they had different birth parents. When they wanted to get married, special legislation was passed that allowed Nero to marry Octavia.

Most of us can't have a law passed that allows for us to change a cultural norm or cancel another law. We can, however, argue that some standards are old fashioned and thus obsolete. In a recent study of over 1,000 American Protestant churchgoers, LifeWay Research found that 24% of those who responded felt that some biblical truths have become obsolete due to cultural changes. The survey did not ask which truths were now obsolete, but we can guess that most of those viewed as obsolete are those the person surveyed view as standing in the way of their happiness or rights.

## A TALE OF TWO KINGS

Disregarding biblical truth is nothing new. In Jeremiah 36, the prophet is told to write all the warnings of God's judgment coming on Judah, Israel, and the nations. Baruch then presented this scroll to King Jehoiakim of Judah, with the hope that he would lead the nation to repent. His advisors, Elnathon, Delaiah, and Gemariah, encouraged him to at least listen to the words being read to him. Instead, King Jehoiakim cut sections of the scroll and used it as fuel for a fire. As king, he was determining what was culturally obsolete when it comes to God's Word.

We can compare King Jehoiakim's response to the response of King Josiah. Josiah had ordered for the temple to be repaired, with the workers finding a scroll tucked away in a room in the temple. The scroll made its way to the king where it was read to him (see 2 Kings 22–23). When King Josiah heard the words read from the scroll, he immediately realized the wrongdoing of the people of Judah and initiated a period of religious reforms that brought Judah back to God. We should note that Josiah was Jehoiakim's father—two men, one generation apart.

After the scroll of Jeremiah was burned, God directed him to create a replacement scroll that included an additional warning about the fate of Jehoiakim and his family. The burning of the original scroll did not negate God's warning. No matter how hard we may try to eliminate part of God's Word, it remains to be God's Word.

Guilt will cause most of us to act in this way. Instead of admitting our rebellion and asking for forgiveness, we would rather change the rules. If we want to believe other parts of the Bible—Jesus loves me, heaven is a real place, children obey your parents—yet refuse to follow or repent, we really have no other option but to declare parts of it obsolete, using culture as a convenient excuse. If we were the author, we could decide which parts of the Bible should be followed and which parts are now obsolete. But we are not the author. It is not our Word but God's Word. The Holy Spirit inspired a select group of people to record God's Word so His creation could know Him.

## 2: SIGNS OF HOPE

### The Purpose of Applying the Bible

Drew Dixon

Why do we study and apply the Bible? I'm betting that a good number of people would say something like, "To know what the Bible says." That's a fine answer, but there's just one problem: if all you have is a lot of Bible knowledge, including the answers to most Bible and theology questions, then you might have the same level of faith as a demon.

You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder.

**JAMES 2:19**

Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, "What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

**MARK 1:23–24**

Demons have good theology. They know that there is only one God. They also have no problem with the complex theological reality that Jesus is fully God and fully man. They are even aware of Jesus' messianic role and power as the one appointed to overthrow all evil and fear on the coming day of judgment. This tells us something that most of us know deep down but are sometimes slow to admit: if we want to be effective in our study of the Bible, our end goal can never be just knowledge.

### A HIGHER GOAL THAN KNOWLEDGE

Now, don't hear me saying that theology—learning about God and His ways, plans, and purposes—is not important. It is massively important. Paul said if anyone teaches a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:8–9). If we get wrong who God is

and how people can be saved, we are in grave danger ourselves and we are in danger of misleading the people around us. But the Bible includes example after example of people who were right in their understanding of God but indifferent or cold toward Him in their hearts. They honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8). This was Jesus' primary issue with many of the Pharisees of His day—they washed the outside of the cup, but the inside was dirty (Matthew 23:25). From the outside looking in, they were doing great, but their actions were motivated by a greater love of their own reputations rather than of God and their neighbors. As a result, they created a religious system that overvalued rituals and rules and undervalued caring for the poor and serving neighbors (Luke 6:1–11). This might be why there is a tremendous amount of pressure on believers today to see much of the Bible as irrelevant or even offensive. We live in a world where loud, influential voices encourage us to see the Bible as outdated at best and offensive at worst.

But that kind of religion isn't what Jesus called us to. He believed that faith produces fruit (John 15:4–5). The kind of faith that Jesus calls us to is a life-transforming faith, one that sees the ancient truths found in the Bible as always relevant.

## **APPLYING THE WORD TO WORSHIP**

This is why so many churchgoers today still believe the Bible is relevant and that we need to apply the meaning of Scripture to today's context. But what does this do? Well, consider these examples from Jesus' own words:

“Simon, son of John, do you love me?” . . . “Feed my sheep.”

**JOHN 21:17**

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples.”

**JOHN 8:31**

“If you love me, you will keep my commands.”

**JOHN 14:15**

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

### **JOHN 13:35**

We want to apply the meaning of Scripture in order to keep God’s commands and live faithfully in this time. But the ultimate goal of this—and of Bible study—isn’t simply to know how to apply Scripture to our lives. It’s to worship God. And obedience is one of the primary ways we worship Him. In other words, how we respond to Jesus’ teaching matters. The Bible is ultimately life-giving and good, and Bible study is truly meaningful when we go deeper than knowledge into worship. We must consider how God’s Word applies to our daily lives and actually take steps to let its truth direct our thinking, attitude, and actions. We study God in the Scriptures not just to know more about God but to know Him personally. What a tremendous foundation for spiritual growth and studying the Word!

# The Enjoyment of Exploring

Tim Pollard

Recently, my family and I returned from a family vacation. We are one of those families that like to go, go, go while on vacation and most times come back more tired than when we left. This fast-paced vacationing has its place, but this last time away was spent in a cabin in the woods. While we do get together frequently and play games as a family, this secluded time away gave us an opportunity to really get together without other distractions and just play. We enjoyed the experience immensely.

I frequently tell people that one of the highlights of my position is the writing that I get to do for Bible studies. Each session of our content begins with a short devotion for teachers, and getting to study passages of Scripture in depth to highlight their meaning for leaders is a great benefit of my vocation. I love pulling together resources to dive into these Bible stories and truly discover what the passage's intent was for the original audience and how that can now apply to me today.

## EXPLORE TO GROW

It is encouraging to know that the majority of Christians say they enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand its meaning. I'm reminded of the words of 2 Timothy 3:16, which tell us that "Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." As we study Scripture, it becomes alive for us. I often share in conferences that the Bible is not a book we read once and put on the shelf; we read it over and over. The words contained in it speak to us in different ways because we are at a different place in life each time we read a passage.

Paul's message to Timothy came out of Paul's love for Timothy. Paul considered Timothy his son in the faith. Timothy, as a local church pastor, needed encouragement from Paul as he moved forward, so Paul wrote these words to highlight the importance of God's Word. Paul highlighted four areas where a study of Scripture could be beneficial:

**God's Word is profitable for teaching.** One purpose of teaching is to impart knowledge. The Word of God imparts the knowledge of God and His ways, thoughts, and desires into our minds as we read and study the Word.

**God's Word is profitable for rebuking.** One thing we discover by reading Scripture is when we are not doing something right. Scripture illuminates our faults and rebukes us so we are better able to follow in His footsteps.

**God's Word is profitable for correcting.** Correction occurs when we identify our faults and make intentional changes to correct those faults. Scripture again can highlight those areas of need in our lives where we need to make a change.

**God's Word is profitable for training in righteousness.** God's Word leads us to a place of knowing the right things to do and actually doing them, though true righteousness comes from God alone.

## EXPLORE TO KNOW

The early Church shared similar experiences, and the edification laid out by writers to the early Church is good news for churches today. One of the things the early Church was plagued with was an increasing influx of false teachers. The false teachers had infiltrated the congregations and were teaching things about Jesus and the resurrection that were not true. Peter, Paul, John, and Jude—among others—encouraged churches to not take the word of a preacher at face value, but to compare the teaching to the truth taught in Scripture. The words of these men ring true today, as well. As followers of Jesus Christ, we must not rely only on the words of a preacher, we must dive into Scripture ourselves and discover the truth. Only by studying the Word will the truth be revealed.

A consistent practice of studying God's Word will lead us, as it did the early Church, to combat false teachings that may exist even today. Our

study will highlight areas of our lives where we might need to make changes to get in line with God's Word. It is encouraging to know that church members desire to know the truths of Scripture so they will not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

# Context is King

Dwayne McCrary

Imagine standing in line waiting to get into a restaurant. A man exits the restaurant, and we hear a person in the line say, “Isn’t that the man that slapped that child?” We recognize the man they are talking about as someone who works in our company. We are a little surprised that he would slap anyone, much less a child. We let our brains go to work and begin to wonder which child he slapped, what that child did, and why anyone wasn’t trying to arrest him. All we have is that one statement with our brain trying to fill in the blanks so that we can make sense of that statement. The story we paint impacts how we will respond to that coworker the next time we are in a meeting with him.

That meeting finally happens, and we can hardly stand the sight of him. Not soon after the meeting begins, our boss invites the slapping coworker to tell about his experience at the restaurant. We are a little shocked, but then we listen. Our coworker tells us about eating in a restaurant with a child sitting nearby. He observed that the child attempted to swallow nearly half a hot dog and began choking. He then tells how he slapped the child on the back to dislodge the hot dog. Our boss then interrupts to emphasize that the technique used by our coworker had been learned in a recent training class provided by the company.

Once we get all the details, our story changes, and so do our feelings about that coworker. The statement we heard while waiting in line was the truth, but we needed more context so we could fill in the blanks correctly. The same is true when we are studying the Bible. The context impacts how we understand a Bible text, helping us fill in the blanks that our brain would fill in otherwise.

## OPENING THE DOOR TO INSIGHT

First of all, understanding the context opens the door to insight. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, we discover that Timothy was in Ephesus when he received the letter (see 1 Timothy 1:3). Ephesus was home to the Temple of Artemis, which had been destroyed twice, rebuilt twice,

and then rebranded as the Temple of Diana by the Romans. The temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. The structure included 127 columns that supported the roof, each column being 60 feet tall. As we would expect, the structure dominated the city landscape.

Paul wrote, “But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Paul used the Greek word *stylos* in this passage—just one of four occurrences in the New Testament. This Greek word means a column, prop, or support. The word translated foundation, ground, or support is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament, and it points to something that steadies or holds. Archaeologists have discovered some type of soft mortar and charcoal in the foundation for the temple in Ephesus. Their findings affirm the writing of Pliny, who identified the foundation being a mixture of sand and coal placed on animal skins.

The use of these two words points to Paul’s understanding of the architecture of the temple in Ephesus (he had been there as well). Every time Timothy saw those pillars and the supporting mortar that held them in place, he would have been reminded of Paul’s words to hold up the truth of the gospel. The pagans worshiped a lifeless form inside a set of columns, while Timothy led a group of believers who worshiped the living God and were commissioned to support the truth in a world bent on believing anything but God’s truth.

The context of 1 Timothy also gives us a deeper appreciation for the precision with which the Bible is written. If Paul had used the normal term for foundation associated with a slab or stone structure on which all else depends, then that would have not been true for the structure that dominated the Ephesus skyline. We are reminded of how God directs the writing of every word we find in His Bible.

## **PROTECTION FROM DANGER**

Secondly, understanding the context protects us from going down

a dangerous road. We may look at a verse and immediately begin to consider what it means to us. The problem is doing so without considering what it meant to them.

In Luke 9:21, Jesus directed His disciples to not tell anyone that he was God's Messiah (parallel passage in Matthew 16). He also told others along the way to refrain from sharing about what He had done (see Matthew 9:30, Mark 1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36). The very existence of these "don't tell" passages moves us to think that maybe there are times that we too should not tell about Jesus. We begin to wonder if maybe we are being disobedient when we tell others about what Jesus has done for us. Any guilt we may have in our lives for failing to share with a person begins to go away as we ponder the idea that maybe we were obedient by not sharing.

If we look at the context, we can get back on track to the truth. At the beginning of Luke 9, we find Jesus sending the disciples to proclaim the gospel and to heal. The stories they shared about their experiences opened the door for the conversation about how others viewed Jesus that led to Peter's great profession.

In Luke 10, we find Jesus appointing 72 people to go out in pairs to tell the cities ahead that Jesus was on His way. They were to tell everyone who would listen that the kingdom of God was near (10:9-11). They returned to Jesus excited that even demons submitted to them when they used Jesus' name (10:17). Jesus warned them, encouraging them to be more excited about their names being in heaven than having power over spirits (10:20).

Jesus telling the disciples to not tell others was the exception and not the rule. We find a clue as to why Jesus may have asked His disciples to share with discretion in Luke 10. The 36 teams focused more on the miracles than their own redemption. Jesus' purpose was not so much about healing the sick, although He heals the sick, but on providing for the redemption of creation. We should also note that each time he encouraged people to refrain from sharing were before His death, burial, and resurrection. We are not off the hook. We are responsible for sharing the gospel with any and all. Knowing the context keeps us from thinking otherwise.

## FILLING IN THE BLANKS

Understanding the context helps us fill in the blanks so we can finish the story. If we were left to finish the story on our own, there is no telling where we would end up. The context of a passage keeps us from ending in the wrong place as we study and apply God's Word in our lives.

So how do we fill in those blanks? Having a good study Bible helps. Most study Bibles include an introduction to each Bible book that tells about the writer God used, the original audience, the time period when the book was written, and themes to notice. Many study Bibles will also have cross references listed next to verses that can help us get a better understanding of a word or phrase. Some study Bibles like *The Holy Land Illustrated Study Bible* include articles and images that provide more detailed context information.

Some Bible study resources include background information that does some of this work for you. For example, the Adult Explore the Bible resources include a section called Understand the Context. This section is designed to help the reader understand the larger picture of how a specific passage fits.

Bible handbooks also give us detailed information about Bible books that will give us greater understanding of the context. We may also find help in a Bible commentary. A variety of commentaries can easily be accessed online. We will want to know the theological perspective of the writer of the commentary, making sure they affirm the Bible and faith in Jesus alone as the only means of salvation. Be sure to take a look at more than one commentary (no one person is right about everything).

One practice that will help is reading a single Bible book from start to finish. Make notes along the way so you can come back to that section after you have read the book. The goal is to read that specific Bible book as a whole to get the general direction and feel of the book. One thing you might find helpful is reading some of the Old Testament Prophets and New Testament Epistles aloud or listening to it being read (for example, the *CSB® Bible App* includes an audio reading of the Bible). That was how these messages were delivered in the first place, so reading them aloud can give us a sense of how the first hearers

### **3: ABOUT THE STUDY**

This eBook is based on the 2020 LifeWay Research study, "Protestant Churchgoer Views on Biblical Interpretation." We invite you to read the study and consider how the findings impact your ministry at [lifewayresearch.com](http://lifewayresearch.com).