

***Intro To The Bible* Lesson 2: The Bible Was Written for Us, but Not to Us a brief introduction on how to read the Bible**

PART 1

Illustration: “Puff The Magic Dragon” by Peter, Paul, and Mary (1963)

*Puff the magic dragon, lived by the sea
And frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honah Lee*

In the early sixties, marijuana was emerging as a prominent symbol of youth rebellion.

Many people interpreted the song based on the way they saw the world:

- “Autumn mist” is a symbolic reference to clouds of smoke?
- “Honah Lee” is a reference to the Hawaiian village Honelei, which was known for its potent marijuana plants?

But what did the authors originally mean?

“When “Puff” was written, I was too innocent to know about drugs.”
– Peter Yarrow

“It’s surely not about drugs. I can tell you that at Cornell in 1959, no one smoked grass. I find the fact that people interpret it as a drug song annoying. It would be insidious to propagandize about drugs in a song for little kids.”
- Leonard Lipton, who wrote the original poem

Point: It can be easy to take *the way we see and understand the world* and press it into something we read or hear, interpreting it through our lens.

→ We naturally tend to read our own understanding into someone else’s words
→ This can lead to taking things *out of context*, which can lead to oversimplification, distortion, and even weaponization.

Questions

1. Can you think of a time when you realized you misheard or misread something because of your assumptions?
2. Why do you think two people can hear the same message and come away with different conclusions?
3. What are some “lenses” that shape how people see the world?

PART 2

We believe in the authority, inspiration, and, infallibility of Scripture

- (1) _____ – The root meaning is from the Latin word *augeo*, which means to increase, to augment. In oversimplistic terms, whatever helps you grow and enhance has authority in your life.
- (2) _____ – Scripture has authority because it is inspired by God. The biblical authors were inspired in a distinct way. Today, the Spirit still inspires; God is still revealing himself through the Scriptures.
- (3) _____ - It does not fail to reveal God to us, in the way he wants it done.

(4) _____ is God-breathed

Read: 2 Timothy 3:15-17

- Today, we include the New Testament (thus all 66 books of the Bible)—the entire library of the Bible can equip us for practical living that honors God.

The Bible needs to be handled (5) _____ and *it can be hard to understand*

- 2 Timothy 2:15: implies some people handle Scripture incorrectly.
- 2 Peter 3:16 states some Scriptures “contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”
- The Bible itself says that some of the Bible will be hard to understand

The Bible wasn't originally written (6) _____

- It's does not have contemporary culture and its values and assumptions in mind.
- We need to enter the Bible's world to hear the words as the original audience would have heard them and as the author would have meant them to be understood.

Yet, the Bible is written (7) _____

- The Bible taken as a whole reveals the story of God, who God is, and what God has done.
- It tells us about our salvation, our purpose, our origins, giving guidance for life, a vision for what is ahead, and most of all, it tells us who Jesus is.

Answer key: 1) authority, 2) inspiration, 3) infallibility, 4) all Scripture, 5) correctly, 6) to us, 7) for us

PART 3

Read

Jeremiah 29:11

A dangerous first question to ask:

“What does this mean to me and how does it apply to my life?”

- This assumes the Bible was written specifically and directly to us.
- It is easy to read our presuppositions (something that is assumed to be true beforehand, often without being stated or argued for) into the text.

The story behind this verse: the people of Israel were in captivity in Babylon. Their home capital city of Jerusalem was in shambles. The people were living in disobedience to God and this led to God bringing a form of discipline: national exile! But God lets them know that he is not forgetting about them while they live in ‘prison’ hundreds of miles away from home.

Read more

Jeremiah 29:1-14

In context, this is a letter from Jeremiah from ruined Jerusalem to elders, priests, prophets, and all people in exile. God says through Jeremiah: it will be 70 years before the people are free to come back home. In reality, the original audience of this letter would die before the 70 years would be complete.

When you take this verse in its original context and apply it to your life situation, you probably don't want to wait 70 years for God to keep his promise.

Questions

- 1) Before applying this to ourselves, what must we understand about its original setting?
- 2) What happens when we skip over historical context and jump straight to personal meaning?
- 3) Who was this originally written to?
- 4) What was happening historically when this was written?
- 5) What problem or situation is the author addressing?
- 6) What would this message have sounded like to the first audience?
- 7) What assumptions might we bring to this text that the original audience would not have shared?
- 8) How does knowing this was written to people in exile change how you hear the promise?
- 9) Why do you think God would give a promise that would not be fulfilled within the lifetime of the first hearers?
- 10) What does this tell us about the difference between immediate relief and long-term faithfulness?

Homework:

Read Numbers 1:1-4.

Take your best shot at filling out the details:

1) **Speaker(s):**

2) **Audience:**

3) **Situation:**

4) **Purpose:**

5) **Original understanding:**

6) **Other observations:**