

BLOGGING

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After years of teaching, I am used to being questioned. In fact, I enjoy it. But teachers know who is saying what and more often than not we also know where our students' questions are "coming from." But those who drop comments in the comment box on a blog can do so anonymously, under the cloak of anonymity, they can blast away. Anyone who speaks up anonymously or fictitiously is context-less. Until we know the context or until we know who is saying what and why, it is difficult to know how to respond.

Reading the Bible is the same: context is everything. Until we learn to read each text in its context, we run the risk of misunderstanding the Bible.

AN EXAMPLE – Read Leviticus 25:35-38

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If any of your own people become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that your poor neighbors may continue to live among you. You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

"You probably read this prohibition of interest the way I do: **that was then, and this is now.** *Reading the Bible like this is reading the Bible as Story.*

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It unfolds and propels us to live out the Bible in our day in our way. But how do we know when the principle of "**that was then, and this is now**" applies? It's easy when **everyone agrees**, and we all seem to have concluded without much conscious effort—though we'd all be surprised how debated interest was in Europe in centuries past that charging and paying interest is how the system works.

NO INTEREST - JESUS' COMMAND – LUKE 6:35

The stigma against moneylending continued well into the 1500s. To understand it, think about your reaction to the idea of a bank making a loan to a business at a 5 per cent interest rate. No problem, right? Now compare that to how you'd feel if your mother lent you money on the same terms. In Biblical times, the typical loan was more like the second case – it wasn't an arms-length transaction, but a charitable loan from a wealthy man to a neighbor who'd experienced misfortune or had nowhere else to turn.

Ministers Shift How They Read The Bible

Interest charging money lenders commit a sin, **Martin Luther** wrote (1483-1546), only when their actions violate the do-unto-others principle – that is, only if 'they do not want to be treated this way in return by others'. This reciprocity meant merchants and wealthy families were allowed to charge each other interest. Luther asked Christians to offer the needy charity rather than loans – but he still accepted interest rates under 5 per cent.

SEE: <https://aeon.co/essays/how-did-usury-stop-being-a-sin-and-become-respectable-finance>

1. "On my blog we have developed a simple protocol: no anonymous comments." **Why?**

2. Why does Scot say, "context is everything? Do you have an example?"

3. Do you pay interest on your loans?

4. Do you participate in (or with) a company that charges interest.

Read: Leviticus 25:35-38

5. The last sentence reveals how firmly God wanted the Israelites to be interest free. **Why?**

6. Why are you not obedient or focus on this?

THAT WAS THEN, & THIS IS NOW!

6. Discuss this "seven-word-secret" and what does being disobedient to this command say about how we've learned to read the bible?

**Luke 6:35 - Jesus' Command?**

"But love your enemies, do good to them and lent to them without expecting to get anything back.

Christians knew that if they were going to be obedient to Scriptures, they would not charge interest on loans.

7. **How could they get around this?**

Example: They could over price merchandise. Other Ideas?

8. **Why did Martin Luther's make a shift?**

9. **Did Scriptures change back then or did God speak in Martin Luther's days in Luther's ways?**

10. **What role did indulgences have in there being a shift about money?**

11. **Why the Change?**

12. **Why are we not obedient to this teaching today?**

The Battle Over How To Read The Bible

But what happens when some disagree with the status quo?

It's not so easy then. When some disagree, we suddenly notice the blue parakeet in our presence and begin to rethink how we read the Bible. I believe those seven words are the secret to reading the Bible: "that was then and this is now." They **reveal that we have learned to read the Bible as Story**, even though most of us never give this a minute's thought. We need to. That is why this first section of the book, devoted to "the Story," needs to be given the attention we give it.

Dewey Decimal System

How would you classify and shelve the Bible in a library? Using the Dewey Decimal System, where would you put it?

But there's one element about the Bible that makes the DDS inadequate: I doubt any library wants to assign a number to "God's Story"!

Explore Acts 7: Stoning of Steven

God asks us to read the Bible as the unfolding of the story of his ways to his people. Stephen was killed for telling that story.

William Tyndale Translation - Executed – Who & Why?

The Roman Catholic establishment of England was opposed to translating the Bible for fear that what was happening in Germany, namely, the explosive Reformation led by Martin Luther, might come to England. What was there to fear?

God Uses Languages In Context

When I realized that God chose to communicate with us in language, for me this was profoundly profound. This is why it changed how I read the Bible. God chose to communicate in language, since language is always shaped by context, and since God chose to speak to us over time through many writers, God also chose to speak to us in a variety of ways and expressions. Furthermore, I believe that because the gospel story is so deep and wide, *God needed a variety of expressions to give us a fuller picture of the Story*. No single story, not even Jesus' story, can tell the whole Story. We need them all.

Wiki Story

I'd say the Bible contains an ongoing series of *midrashes*, or interpretive retellings, of the one-Story God wants us to know and hear. Each biblical author tells his version of the Story.

Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus Temptations - Retelling of Old

Matthew casts the story of Jesus' temptations as an updated version, a wiki-story, of an older story-either the Eden story or the wilderness story.

REVIEW: Here's where we are:

- The Bible is a Story.
- The Story is made up of a series of wiki-stories.
- The wiki-stories are held together by the Story.
- The only way to make sense of the blue parakeets in the Bible is to set each in the context of the Bible's Story

13. What disagreements have you experienced in the past and how did that affect the church family?

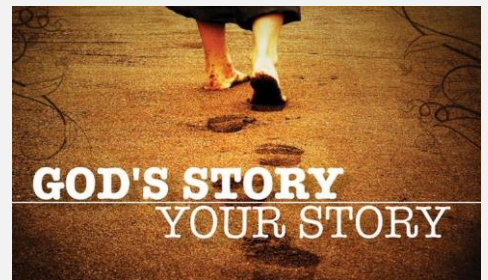
God...spoke in Paul's days in Paul's ways. And he speaks in our days in our ways-and it is Our Responsibility to Live Out what the Bible says in Our Days. We do this by Going Back to the Bible, so we can Come Forward.

14. Why bring up the Dewey Decimal System? What was the bottom line of that discussion?

15. Story of Stephen in Acts 7: Why does Scot use this as an example of the right way to read the Bible?

16. What did you learn from the story of William Tyndale?

17. What was Scot's confession? Why did he explain it to us? What "profoundly profound" realization made him change?



18. What is a wiki-story?

19. How is Matthew 4:1-11 used as an example?

20. How do you feel about this book so far?

21. Do you buy what he is saying or does some of it make you feel uncomfortable?

