

The Good Book: Historical Context
Christy Penley
October 22, 2023

Reflection & Discussion Questions

The Bible was written by specific authors to specific audiences at specific times

The world of those people at those times is different than our world.

*Why might it be important to learn about the world then and how it might be different or similar to our current times?

*What is challenging about understanding historical context when reading the Bible?

There are at least 7 steps in historical analysis:

Author's Situation – Reader's Situation – Time Period – Physical Setting – Political Conditions – Social Setting – Local History

*Think or talk about these steps and what understanding more about them could help us understand and interpret the Bible.

*Do you have any go-to books, podcasts, resources, etc. that help you understand historical context?

*Are there other areas of your life that you spend time and energy to understand the times and world of something – a book/TV series, a board/video game, sports, etc?

Historical context helps us to see better

Read and discuss Romans 1:1- 17(NIV)

I Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures³ regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David,⁴ and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.⁵ Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.⁶ And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.⁷ To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. ⁹ God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰ in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

¹¹ I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— ¹² that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

¹⁴ I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. ¹⁵ That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

*Choose one or two of the historical analysis steps to discuss this passage in Romans.

Historical context helps us not only see better, but to live differently

Head knowledge and facts are not enough.

*Can you think of a time that understanding something about the historical context of the Bible helped you understand and apply it better?

*What is the harm in reading the Bible without any understanding of the historical context?

*What are some good questions we can ask to make sure we are considering the times and world of the Bible?