

To the Teacher

The information below is to help you in teaching the lesson. DO NOT read this page to the students. Instead, teach the information in your own words. Be sure to finish the student's lesson as well. The Scripture references in parentheses are for additional study, to round out the information given in the lesson. Become familiar with these passages as well, to provide additional Scriptures to your students.

Lesson 31 – Reading the Context (Teacher's Lesson)

Opening: Answer the opening question.

Study Notes:

Matthew 15:21-28

Verse 21 – What was the woman's problem? Her daughter was demon-possessed.

Verses 24-26 – How did Jesus respond to the woman's request? First, He said that He was only sent to the sheep of Israel, then He said that it was not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.

Verses 27-28 – How did Jesus respond in verses 27-28? He granted her request on the basis of her faith.

Matthew 15:1-20

Verses 1-2 – What was the problem the Pharisees had with Jesus? His disciples did not follow the tradition of the Pharisees in washing their hands before they ate.

Verse 7 – What did Jesus call the Pharisees? Hypocrites.

Verse 11 – What did Jesus say about being "clean" and "unclean"? We are not defiled by food, but by our actions and deeds.

There could be differences of opinion as to why Jesus responded as He did. But it is possible He was teaching a lesson to his disciples about not prejudging people by taking the "popular" position and showing how someone considered unclean could, in truth, show great faith.

Romans 1:18-3:31

You may want to emphasize that although the paragraph headings included in some translations are not part of Scripture, nor are they inspired, they can sometimes help us in our study showing the breakdown of the main ideas of the passage.

1:18 – What is Peter talking about? The wrath of God against the sin of those who intentionally rebel against Him.

2:1 – What are the key words that indicate the contrast in the main idea? You, therefore...

3:20 – How does Paul summarize 1:18-3:20? The purpose of the law is not to make us righteous but to make us aware of our own sin.

At this point, you will also want to emphasize that these observations have been derived from a reading the whole passage in its context that is part of the letter written by Paul to

the church in Rome. It must also be understood within the greater context of the Bible as a full revelation of God's redemptive purpose to His people. Keeping the broad scope in mind will help students avoid being confused by the details of words and concepts they do not understand and focus on what they can extract from the text.

3:21-26 – What is the point of this paragraph? True righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

How does it relate to what has already been said? People trusted in fulfilling the law to save them. They compared themselves to non-Jewish “sinners” and believed that they were better.

3:27-31 – What does boasting have to do with what was previously said (specifically in the previous chapter 2:17)? Jews who boasted of being better than non-Jews without the law were wrong. Boasting is vain, because all are saved through faith in Christ.

What point was Paul trying to make to the Christians in Rome? Salvation comes through faith in Christ and all believers – Jews or non-Jews – are equal in His eyes.

Application: Encourage students to make time regularly (perhaps once a week) for more in-depth Bible study, making use of the principles we have learned.

Lesson 31- Reading the Context

The Forest or the Trees

Do you focus more on the details or the “whole picture”?

As we studied in the last lesson, knowing the context is important for understanding a Biblical passage. To do this we need to learn to read the context. For an example of the importance of reading the context, read Matthew 15:21-26.

Verse 21 – What was the woman’s problem?

Verses 24-26 – How did Jesus respond to the woman’s request?

If we stop reading there, it seems that Jesus is rejecting someone – which is not like Him. But now read verses 27 and 28. How does Jesus respond now?

Now go back and read from the beginning of chapter 15. Read verses 1-20 and answer the following questions:

Verses 1-2 – What problem did the Pharisees have with Jesus?

Verse 7 – What did Jesus call the Pharisees?

Verse 11 – What did Jesus say about being “clean” and “unclean”?

A strict Jew would have seen a Canaanite person as “unclean” and a sinner. Some would have called them “trash” which was a term for unbelievers. After reading the entire chapter, how is it helpful for you to understand what Jesus was doing when He responded to the woman as He did?

What is the point?

An important skill in reading the context is to learn to read in paragraphs and ask yourself in each paragraph, “What is the point?” What does the paragraph mean? And How does it fit all the established argument? To show this, let’s review one of our “homework” passages from a previous lesson, Romans 3:21-30.

Look at the first two words from chapter 3, verse 21 – “But now...” This type of phrase is a good clue that what is about to be said is referred to as a contrast to what was previously said. Therefore, to really understand the main idea we need to go back and see what has been said. In fact, Paul begins the idea in chapter 1:18. Read this verse and 19. What is Paul talking about?

Later, the rest of the chapter continues about how men who did not know God had done wrong by sinning against Him. Now read chapter 2:1 and notice the key words that indicate a contrast in the main idea. What are those words?

Obviously, Paul is now moving from speaking about God’s anger against unbelievers to talking about a different group (who, therefore, must be believers) who pass judgment on to others. As we can see in 2:17 that the “you” to whom Paul is speaking are Jewish believers who boast of having the law (i.e. the Law of Moses). Finally, in 3:20, Paul completes his previous idea. How do you summarize 1:18-3:20?

Knowing this, now read 3:21-26. What is the point of this paragraph? How does it relate to what was said before?

The following paragraph is 3:27-31. Again, what is the point? What does boasting have to do with what was said earlier (specifically in 2:17)? What point was Paul trying to make to the Christians in Rome?

We hope that this lesson has helped you to see that reading the context will help you understand what Scripture says and to better apply Scripture to your life.

Scripture to memorize:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. Romans 3:20