

Spheres of Context

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The Error of Scripture Out of Context

I have never been to a baby shower, but I have heard rumors of what goes on. Sure, it sounds safe and clean. After all, it's called a *shower*. It may begin with tasty little hors d'oeuvres, punch, cookies, and presents; but sooner or later it's bound to happen, inevitable as winter after fall, as pain after jogging, or tests after semesters: The hostess pulls out the word games. "In three minutes," she explains, "see how many words you can get out of the word *maternity*" or "Unscramble these letters and find words that refer to babies."

However, we do not play word games to better understand the Bible. Cults do this and wind up with a crop of twisted truths. Their favorite game is to play with the context of words and verses in Scripture.

Every word is part of a verse and every verse is part of a book. A verse is not independent from the verses around it. The authors of Scripture wrote sentence after sentence, never stopping to divide their work into chapters and verses. The verses are not a list of thousands of unrelated little ideas or profound magical truisms.

Verses are often parts of a paragraph attempting to communicate a main idea. Sentences and clauses are grouped to explain, expand, or develop the main idea of the paragraph. Some sentence construction further explains the main idea by illustrating it or quoting other scriptural evidence. However, each sentence and verse is part of an uninterrupted context.

When you attempt to understand a word, it is best defined by the words in its context. There are several spheres of context, but the inner spheres can most accurately give the meaning of the word or phrase in question. Besides that, you may use the word or phrase in larger and more expanding contexts. These spheres unlock the shades of meaning of each word.

(Twisting the Truth: Recognizing How Cult Groups Subtly Distort Basic Christian Doctrines by Bruce Tucker, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1987, 147-148)