

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

Out of Context

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Matthew 4:1-11

SYNOPSIS

When the Word is misused, truth gets lost in translation.

HIGHLIGHTS



👉 OUT OF CONTEXT

The other day my wife said she didn't need me. Can you believe that? Sounds like we might need some counseling, right? Well... that's only part of what she said. What she actually said was she didn't need me to bring her lunch, because the clinic was having food brought in.

See, I used her words out of context, which may have led you to think there was a problem in our marriage. You heard the right words, but without knowing the full context, you applied them in the wrong way. And that's exactly what happens when people take Scripture out of context. We live in a soundbite generation with people quoting half a verse and building a whole theology out of it.

You've probably heard these before:

- "Money is the root of all evil." (*The love of money* is the root of all kinds of evil. 1 Tim. 6:10.)
- "God won't give you more than you can handle." (Actually, the Bible says He won't let you be *tempted* beyond what you can bear. 1 Cor. 10:13.)
- "Judge not." (Usually quoted by someone who just did something worth judging! Actually, it's simply a caution to judge with grace, because you also will be judged.)

So, today's message could be called "Twisted Scripture" because the enemy has been twisting God's Word since Genesis 3... "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" And if we're not careful, we'll start believing things that *sound* biblical but *aren't* biblical.

👉 Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "**It is written**: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: '"He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus answered him, "**It is also written**: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! **For it is written**: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

👉 THE ENEMY DOESN'T DENY GOD'S WORD, HE DISTORTS IT



Did you notice? Satan didn't come at Jesus with lies. He came quoting Scripture! He says, "It is written..." quoting Psalm 91:11–12. But he twists it; he leaves out the part about walking in obedience.

Satan loves to take what God said, tweak it just a little, and turn it into something dangerous. That's how he got Eve in Genesis 3: "Did God *really* say...?" He didn't deny God's Word, he questioned it. And, he wants you to doubt God's Word and distort it as well. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, "Satan *himself masquerades as an angel of light.*" He's not trying to look like a villain; he's trying to sound like a preacher.

Here's the danger: when you take a verse out of context, you can make the Bible say almost anything you want. You can make it sound like God wants everyone to be rich in material things. You can make it sound like God doesn't care how you live. You can make it sound like truth is optional.

☞ Every lie the devil tells still has a little truth so it sounds believable. That's why we should *strive to understand the Word, not just quote it.* When tempted, Jesus didn't say, "I think..." That's often what we do; we share our opinions. Instead, we should look to the Word and understand what it says. Jesus said, "*It is written.*" And, He knew more than the verse, He knew the voice behind it.

Knowing Scripture protects us from being twisted by the enemy's lies. Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." And, John 8:32 says, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." So, know the Word *and* understand the Word because the enemy will try to distort it.

☞ TRUTH HAS A TONE, AND IT SOUNDS LIKE JESUS

You can quote the right *words* but miss the right *heart*. Satan used the Psalm that David wrote to express trust in God, but he used it to test God. Psalm 91 was written to inspire *faith*, not *foolishness*. That's why Jesus responds, "It is *also* written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" He's quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, where Moses told Israel not to test God the way they did at Massah by complaining in the wilderness even after all God had done for them.

☞ The tone of truth always sounds like Jesus. *When the Word is used to manipulate or control it's being used in the wrong spirit.*

Have you ever gotten a text from someone that just said, "We need to talk"? You immediately think, "*Oh no... what did I do?*" But when you finally talk to them, it turns out they just wanted to share good news. The text wasn't bad; you just needed *context* and *tone* to interpret it correctly.



Scripture works the same way. A verse out of context is like a text without tone; it can sound harsh, judgmental, or misleading. But, when you know Jesus, you start hearing His voice even in the written Word. And His voice always leads to life, love, and light, not confusion or fear.

John 10:27 says, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” So, if the verse someone quotes doesn’t sound like the Shepherd, it’s probably twisted or taken out of context.

☞ CONTEXT BRINGS CLARITY

Let’s look at what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15... “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” That phrase “correctly handles” means “to cut straight.” When we read Scripture, we have to keep it straight, not twisted, but in context. Some translations say, “rightly dividing.”

David Guzik... Timothy was a pastor whose teaching was to be a “right dividing” of the Word of God, correctly teaching his congregation. This also means there is such a thing as wrongly dividing; not everyone cuts it straight. There is a right way and a wrong way to understand the Bible. Many people have this idea: “You interpret the Bible your way, I interpret it my way, and another person interprets it their way. We can never really know what it means, so don’t judge me with your Bible verse.” This is an important point: We can’t just pick the interpretation that seems most comfortable to us and claim it as true — it must be rightly dividing the word of truth.

☞ Here’s a simple rule: **Never build a belief on a verse you haven’t read in context.** Context means:

- Who wrote it?
- Who were they writing to?
- What’s happening around it?
- How does it fit into the story of Jesus?

☞ **Without context, Scripture can be weaponized. With context, Scripture becomes transformational.** Reading one verse without the full chapter is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with only one piece. It might look like something, but you have no idea what the whole picture is supposed to be. When you study the Bible in context, you see how every piece connects to Jesus, who is the focus of the puzzle.

Luke 24:27 says, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Everything in Scripture points to Jesus. That’s the overall context.



When we twist the Bible away from Jesus... toward our own agendas, opinions, or comfort, we lose the heart of the message. That's why Paul also warned in 2 Timothy 4:3: "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

Sound familiar? We live in a world where people cherry-pick verses to justify anything. But as followers of Jesus, we're called to correctly handle, to *rightly divide* the Word, not rewrite it.

👉 HOW TO HANDLE TWISTED SCRIPTURE

👉 When Satan twisted Scripture, Jesus didn't argue or panic, He just **quoted truth back in context**.
👉 He **didn't fight opinion with opinion**, He fought distortion with the rightly divided Word of God.

Ephesians 6:17 calls Scripture "the sword of the Spirit." But here's the thing... a sword is only effective if you know how to use it, and it can be deadly if mishandled. Jesus knew how to use the Word. He **wasn't waving random verses around; He was applying the right Word for the right moment**.

When Satan said, "Turn stones into bread," Jesus said, "*It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone.*" (Deuteronomy 8:3) When Satan said, "Throw yourself down," Jesus said, "*It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*" When Satan offered the kingdoms of the world, Jesus said, "*Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.*"

Every response came from Deuteronomy, which was written for people learning to depend on Him in the wilderness. Jesus was showing us that when you're in a wilderness moment, don't twist the Word to escape it, trust the Word to endure it.

👉 DON'T JUST QUOTE IT, LIVE IT

Church, the devil can quote the Bible. So, quoting verses isn't what defeats him... *living them* does. If the enemy twisted Scripture with Jesus, he'll try it with you too. So here's your challenge this week:

👉 **Read before you repost**. Don't just share a verse because it sounds nice; read the whole chapter and know what God meant. This also applies to other people. Don't just take a little snippet from someone's Facebook post and make assumptions about that person. That happens a lot with political matters; you just hear a soundbite and then jump to a conclusion that may be entirely inaccurate. So, dig a little deeper.



☞ **Let Scripture shape you, not serve you.** Don't use the Bible to prove your point, use it to change your heart. This is almost cliché these days. We read scripture and think, "so-and-so really needs to learn this and do better." What really should happen is to think, "what does God want me to learn and do in response to this scripture?"

☞ **Stay rooted in context.** The deeper your roots in the Word, the harder it is for deception to pull you out.

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..."

If you know the *context*, you can walk in *confidence*. If you know the *Maker*, you can trust the ☞ *message*. So, don't just quote a *verse*, carry the *voice* behind it. Because **the Word of God, in context, brings life**. And when you stand on the truth, even twisted Scripture can't shake you.

☞ Make this your declaration: **"I will not twist the Word to fit my world. I will let the Word transform my world."**