

**Welcome to the Bible:  
Chapters and Verses Bring  
Convenience and Challenges ~  
Part 2 ~ Context Matters**

# Welcome to The Bible:



## Chapters & Verses: ~ Part 2 ~ Context Matters

**REMEMBER:** Man-inspired chapters & verses can lead to misunderstandings.  
Read Scripture in context, not in isolation.

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## God Inspired the Bible. Man Added Chapters and Verses, And a Few Challenges: Loss of Context.

I'm thankful man added chapters and verses to the Bible. I'm also thankful I learned about the challenges that come with them.

Last time we looked at the first of three challenges that come with breaking up the divine text into chapters and verses. (There may be more challenges, but these are the three that stood out to me.)

Today we'll look at the second of those challenges.

- [1. The Bible's chapters and verses are handy man-inspired tools, not God-inspired division.](#)

*2. Man-inspired chapters and verses can lead to misunderstanding the God-inspired text through loss of context.*

*3. Chapters and verses can encourage snacking on Scripture rather than dining.*

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## Loss of Context

Chapters and verses cause us to pause.

Sometimes those man-made pauses indicate a change in thought, time, or events. But not always.

Remember, originally, the first word in each chapter or verse was just the *next* word in the book or letter. They weren't written with the mindset that they'd be broken up into chapters or verses.

When studying a passage, we need to look before and after the passage to avoid misunderstandings.

**BIBLE STUDY TIP:** If a sentence begins with a "look-back word" like "And" or "Therefore," be sure to look back at what came before it.

**BIBLE STUDY TIP:** When you see the word "therefore," ask yourself what the "therefore" is there for?"

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## Example #1: Colossians 2:21

## Forbidden or Free

“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” ~ Colossians 2:21  
Colossians 2:21 seems to teach us what we shouldn't do.

Until we read the verse right before it.

“Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules.” ~ Colossians 2:20

Rather than Paul encouraging physical self-denial, he's actually preaching freedom from man-made rules—freedom in Christ.

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## Example #2: Luke 21

### The Poor Widow – Commendation or Condemnation?

And He [Jesus] looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on” (Luke 21:1-4, NASB).

Most teachings I've heard on Luke 21:1-4 never mention the context. They don't even seem to consider chapter 20 or the verses after Luke 21:4.

The focus most often falls on the poor widow's generous giving, teaching that Jesus is commending the widow and instructing us to give as generously.

But, when we read this passage in context, we can see an

alternative meaning.

Luke 20:45-47: And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

Verse 45 begins with the "look-back" word "And," so we need to keep looking back to get the full meaning.

From the beginning of chapter 20, certain religious leaders attempted to trick Jesus into condemning Himself. They came to Him under the pretense of wanting to understand truth, but Jesus exposed the true motive of their hearts.

Jesus warned His disciples of the leaders' evil intent and ways, mentioning they "devour widows' houses."

It's right after these warnings that Jesus pointed out the poor widow as she placed her last coins into the temple box. She gave all she had left to survive on.

Jesus commented only on what she gave. Nothing more about her. Nothing about her attitude. Only that she gave all she had left to survive on.

Then He immediately talked about the Temple and warned about being led astray by false teachers and leaders.

And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My

name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. ~ Luke 21:5-8

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## Two Interpretations

Is Luke 21:1-4 a teaching on giving generously or about abuse of the poor by religious leaders?

Is Jesus commending the poor widow or is He condemning the disreputable leaders?

I'll leave it to the Biblical scholars to debate the correct interpretation of this passage. My point is that when we look at passages in isolation rather than context, it can lead us to see the message of the passage differently.

For more insight check out these links:

[\*Does God Wants Us To Give Everything by Grace To You\*](#)

[\*Abusing the Poor by Grace to You\*](#)

[\*Jesus and the Widow's Offering by Bible.org\*](#)

[\*Giving, It's a Good Thing by Calvary Baptist Church\*](#)

[\*The Widow and Her Two Coins: Praise or Lament? by Boston Bible Geeks\*](#)

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## Context Matters

The division of chapters and verses makes studying and memorizing the Bible much easier, but remember to read it in context.

***REMEMBER: Man-inspired chapters and verses can lead to misunderstandings. Read Scripture in context, not in isolation.***

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(For more information check out Don Stewart's article [\*\*Why Is the Bible Divided into Chapters and Verses?\*\*](http://www.blueletterbible.com) on [www.blueletterbible.com](http://www.blueletterbible.com).)

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