

LESSON 4

What do you mean that people don't all think the same way?

Context isn't just about **setting** (our everyday lives and the things we take for granted as being "normal") or only about **words** (the expressions we use and what we mean when we say them). **Context is also about the thoughts we think** – and the thoughts we think are what this entire book is going to be about.

Did you know that people from different cultures think very different thoughts? I grew up believing that everyone thought about things pretty much the same way I did – or at least that they should have thought exactly the way that I did. But I have found out that it isn't true at all. People who live in different parts of the world often do not see "eye to eye" – that is, they do not agree with each other about what is important, good, or even true. Their parents raised them to believe different things than ours did, and to think that completely different things are important and normal.

For example, did you know that in India they have something called a caste system?

Caste system: a ranking of people in a society, from most important to least important.

In America and most of the western world, we believe that people are all created equal – that's what the Bible teaches us. But in India, they believe that people are only as important as their rank. The most important people are the Brahmas – they are born Brahmas and they will die Brahmas, and that means that they were born important and wealthy and they will always be important and wealthy.

At the bottom are the Untouchables, and in India they were born unimportant and poor and will always be unimportant and poor. When we look at that, we say that it is wrong because of our value system.

Value system: our "way of thinking" that tells us what is right and what is wrong

But our value system is not the same as the value system in India. In India, you are a Brahma because you were virtuous in a former life and therefore deserve to be rewarded by being important and wealthy. If you are an Untouchable it is because you were wicked in your former life and must be punished. Their value system tells them that their way of life is correct, just like our value system tells us that our way of life is correct.

Everyone in the world has a value system that tells them that their way of life is best, and normal, and that other value systems are wrong.

The people in Bible times also had value systems, and their value systems looked very little like ours. Tomorrow is a review day, and next week we will start looking at the most important cultural value in Bible times – a family's honor. Once I teach it to you, it will change the way you see almost everything and you will enjoy reading the Bible so much more.

HOMEWORK:

Can you think of ways that the value system of your country has changed in the last 50 years? In the last 100 years? In the last 200 years? As a family, talk at dinner tonight about how our ideas of right and wrong have changed, both for good and for bad.

Vocabulary:

Value system: Our way of thinking that tells us what is right and wrong.

Caste system: a ranking of people in a society, from most important to least important.

LESSON 5

Review day

Congratulations! You made it through the first week of learning Bible context. Did you know that most adults never even study this? Are you enjoying looking at the world in new ways?

Today I want you to have some fun, so I am going to ask your parents to go get a movie for you to watch *after* you are finished with your regular school day. It doesn't matter which movie they choose, but as you watch the movie I want you to think about context.

Did the people in the movie live the same kind of life that you live, or are their lives very different?

If they saw your life, would they understand it or not? Did they even have computers and televisions? Would they know what a mouse or a remote is?

Did they dress the same way you do? Why or why not?

Did they believe the same things that you believe? Did they think that the same things are right and wrong as you do?

Did they talk the same way that you talk? Were their expressions and idioms the same or different?

Would they celebrate the same holidays and eat the same foods, or completely different ones?

I want you to watch the movie and become "context detectives" and then discuss it as a family. If you are older, you might write a paper about your observations. Try to use some of our vocabulary words from this week.

Vocabulary:

Context: the setting for an event, idea or statement that gives it meaning.

Idiom: an expression that says one thing but means something else entirely.

Value System: Our way of thinking that tells us what is right and wrong.