

## **Faith Matters # 15 – How not to Read the Bible – July 9, 2017**

Then there's the story of the man who hoped the Bible would give him guidance. So he found a Bible and opened it at random, stabbed his finger blindly somewhere on the page and felt that this would be God's word for the day for him. He read, "And Judas went and hanged himself."

"Well, better try again." The next time the chance verse, from Luke read, "Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'." No way! His final attempt to find God's guidance was the random verse [in John] that came up, "Do quickly what you are going to do"

Now that's a humorous parable about how not to read the Bible: by taking verses out of context. You can prove just about anything by stitching together one verse here to another there, or by not knowing who is speaking to whom and when or why.

For example, for centuries women were not allowed to be preachers because the Apostle Paul wrote to the infant church in Corinth: "Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak..." [I Cor. 14:34; I Tim. 2:12]. The cultural context of that time placed women in a subordinate role everywhere except for food and procreation. Besides, the Greek verb "speak" can mean "gossip".

Even now, churches won't read verse 9 of Psalm 137. Its historic context is difficult to understand. So in church, you'll never hear the Psalmist say, "Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!" I've heard people say, "If that's in the Bible, I don't want anything to do with it."

Let's face it; the Bible is in many places a difficult book to read. And that's why one of the main duties of the church is to help people through sermons and Bible study groups to know how to read it. Reading the Bible alone without guidance can lead to serious error. We do have study groups here at Erskine which are attended by men and women, young and old. They're studying the God's Word, so, as Scripture advises, come and do likewise.

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