Why Should I Study The Bible When It Triggers Me? With Jason Harris

Transcript by Diana Winkler, © DSW Ministries 2022

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[00:00:00] **Diana Winkler:** That's me, your faithful friend, podcaster, Diana. Welcome back to our Bible study series. And today is gonna be awesome. Just like all of my other guests in the series, we have a return guest to the podcast, Jason Harris. And he was on episode 57 and 58. I interviewed him and his mom Joy about their abuse.

[00:00:40] Now Jason is one of seven children and he and his family suffered greatly, child abuse, physical abuse, and his mom suffered sexual abuse, emotional abuse. [00:01:00] Trauma with a capital T. And we're not gonna go into their story very much this time, but I do encourage you to go back and listen to Jason and Joy

[00:01:15] tell their story. It is really powerful. They are friends of mine, very influential in my spiritual walk. And I'm glad to have Jason back on the podcast to see the updates from his life this past year and his ministry as a pastor in Cairns Australia. And so that's why I ask you to go and listen to their story,

[00:01:52] so you know where Jason is coming from, but he has on his [00:02:00] website, Jason harris.com. AU he has lots of articles about abuse. He has sermons and he's written a few books, some theology books, and lots of great resources. And he's very active on Twitter, and so I encourage you to follow him. He has definitely a perspective on bible study and abuse because he has lived through it. Of course he's a pastor and he has to study all of scripture. Right?

[00:02:45] It's really difficult when the Bible can trigger you sometimes. So we're gonna be talking about that.

[00:02:53] And Joy wasn't able to make it, but you're gonna really [00:03:00] enjoy our conversation because he brings a lot of wealth of information and tools for you as a survivor, to live a Christian life, to embrace God, to explore his love and gain your trust back.

[00:03:23] And I want to remind you of the transcripts that I'm providing now for the podcasts, including this one. So please share these episodes for this series. They're really important. This stuff is gold. These are some of my most trusted Bible teachers. They love Jesus. They want to make a difference. They're humble.

[00:03:57] Teachable. [00:04:00] They wanna impart their knowledge to you and help you on your walk in your journey. So share these episodes with a friend or a loved one that can benefit from this. This is why I'm doing this series. It's so important. And as we heard last week, Steven Tracy, wasn't he amazing? Such a resource. So I'm not gonna delay any further my chat with Pastor Jason Harris.

[00:04:40] I'm so glad to have back on the show, Pastor Jason Harris from Australia. Thanks for coming on tonight.

[00:04:49] **Jason Harris:** Hey, good to be with you.

[00:04:51] **Diana Winkler:** It's daylight where you're at, isn't it?

[00:04:53] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. I had to close the curtains, the sun out. Okay.

[00:04:59] **Diana Winkler:** [00:05:00] Yes. I'm grateful that you and I could find a time to meet on zoom across the world and talk about Bible study.

[00:05:09] You as an abuse survivor, and you're a pastor, you definitely have a unique perspective and we want to learn from you and what you've experienced in your journey.

[00:05:24] How to get over those roadblocks and speed hums in the spiritual journey. And so remind the folks, your qualifications as a Bible teacher ,your background.

[00:05:40] **Jason Harris:** All right. Yep. Yeah, so, we're here in Cairns, Australia. We started Crosspoint church about seven odd years ago.

[00:05:47] A lot of my preaching background is as a church planter. And but before that

[00:05:54] Music was a thing I talked about a lot and did some events, conferences [00:06:00] kind of thing. And I had some pretty silly ideas. Grew up in a very conservative context and really started out with a lot of nonsense in my theology.

[00:06:11] And so I think really a lot of my Bible study came from the controversy of trying to find out what's right. And led me through a series of conclusions that lost me a lot of friends. So yeah, it, to me it was a question of, is what I was taught growing up true?

[00:06:38] I wanna base my belief on the Bible. And so, it costs a lot to do that, but it forces you to be honest with yourself. And so yeah, I'm really passionate about helping people who have been hurt or who have been caught up in things that are not healthy, helping them to understand how to study the Bible and and find out for themselves [00:07:00] what the Bible says and to root the convictions in scripture, not tradition or what they've been taught.

[00:07:06] **Diana Winkler:** I was just doing your transcript from the first time you were on the show and you said something like, there are Bible verses that still give me a trigger response and that's bad for being a pastor. So why should we study the Bible when the Bible was going to trigger me?

[00:07:31] **Jason Harris:** Yeah I had a situation like that this week. When someone quoted a Bible verse. Yeah, it was very bad. Why should we study scripture? So scripture is life. It is hope. It is literally God's self revelation. And if we believe that and we believe what it says about itself, it's not just an intellectual debate.

[00:07:54] It is literally the means by which God changes us. Transforms us, does [00:08:00] miracles in the world today. So that said, there is a cause because scripture is not here to make us feel good. It's here to reveal truth and truth is painful. So I described this to abuse victims. There, there are two kinds of pain.

[00:08:16] There's the kind of painting when you are weightlifting or working out or exercising and it hurts, but it's building you up. You know that it's gonna hurt, but this is good for you. But there's another kind of pain when you're say lifting weights or pushing that it's bad.

[00:08:35] It's a different kind of pain where something's tearing. Something's breaking, and that kind of pain you should stop. Yeah. So, there, there is pain, but we need the good kind of pain and the bad kind of pain we stop. And Bible study in a way is to differentiate between the two and to learn how to reject destructive uses of scripture.

[00:08:57] Scripture is not bad. It is not [00:09:00] evil. God is not evil. God is good. And so the more we can understand what scripture is actually saying, the less power it will have to be harmful to us. That doesn't mean that trauma some verses can literally be trauma related. But we don't have to focus on any given text.

[00:09:16] There's a whole lot there for us.

[00:09:20] **Diana Winkler:** yeah. Maybe just easy for me to say just listen to Jason's sermons and he's doing all the great things and you're good.

[00:09:34] Why should we not always trust the pastor, the Bible teacher up there? Carte Blanche?

[00:09:42] **Jason Harris:** Yeah, so there's really couple of things going on there. We trust God and we trust people who speak carefully and accurately on his behalf. Not [00:10:00] people who say that they speak on his behalf. And so, when we understand the Bible for ourselves and wrestle with it ourselves, we find out whether they're lying to us.

[00:10:12] And if someone is lying to you, consistently, you should conclude that they are not speaking for God. They are speaking for some other purpose or for some other person often they don't know it, but they are a mouthpiece for a tradition, a culture. Yep. And that's fine. That's, that's their choice, but it does not bear God's authority.

[00:10:37] When somebody stands in the pulpit and explains what God says they are speaking for God and therefore they need to point you to the place in the text that says what they're saying, God says. You find a pastor or teacher who keeps saying you should do this, the word should, or alt those words imply God's authority.

[00:10:57] When they keep saying that, but they can't show you in the text. [00:11:00] And when they do show you in the text, it looks a bit fishy. It really doesn't seem to say that. And you're thinking, oh, I must be in the Hebrew somewhere. If that happens systematically, you're dealing with a person who really isn't explaining God's words. So the more you understand the Bible yourself, the more you can discern and protect yourself and also protect others.

[00:11:17] We particularly survivors of abuse, particularly in the church. We have an important role to play in pointing out when scriptures being misunderstood or misused. Because like I said, a lot of times pastor or teacher may have no malice. They're just saying what they were told, saying what they think and they need somebody to say no.

[00:11:39] Step back. That's if that's true, then here's, this is true. And that's true. And here's how that gets misused. So you need to go back and look more carefully so that's a powerful thing that we can do in assemblies and churches in among abuse survivors as well.

[00:11:54] **Diana Winkler:** You and I both came from IFB and I wasn't raised [00:12:00] that way.

[00:12:00] I was raised Catholic. I didn't enter into the IFB world till I was 18, but I didn't question very much after I got baptized. And especially didn't question much after I was in Bible college. I just believed everything they told me and it wasn't until I got out and started reading the Bible for myself, was like, wait a minute. That's not what the Bible says.

[00:12:27] And I started hearing other people that had different viewpoints on things that I thought were black and white or, it's my way, the highway. And so that's been enlightening for me to come to that realization.

[00:12:44] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. Yeah. It's it is our faith. It is not someone else's faith. It is our responsibility, what we believe. And if your church isn't pushing you toward that and equipping you for that, you have to ask, why not?

[00:12:57] It's so yeah it's really [00:13:00] important for us to think for ourselves and to do that, we need to be taught, to think well, taught, to read, taught to, to study the Bible. These are things that healthy churches are doing, even in the way they preach. They're actually studying the Bible with you rather than just telling you things.

[00:13:20] They want you to believe. They explain why they show you the text.

[00:13:24] **Diana Winkler:** Yeah. Our church is actually doing that. We are reading through the Bible together as a church. And so all of our our Bible studies and small groups, we're all reading the same thing and asking questions and discovering things.

[00:13:38] And then the church services are all preached on, the reading for that week. And so I have learned so much just going through the entire Bible together as a church has been eye opening. Like, wait a minute. I never noticed that. Did you know that in Daniel, that God sent an angel [00:14:00] to tell Daniel that he was greatly loved?

[00:14:02] Never saw that before.

[00:14:06] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. And this is what something with

[00:14:09] scripture is that there is so much there. That you will bring out what you are looking for. And there's so much there that we can impose things on it. And because it's so much, we defer to expertise, which in some ways we need to, but quite possibly our local pastor, isn't the biggest expert on any given thing.

[00:14:34] Has he actually read the experts or is he just pushing what he wants to say? So yeah, I think you'll never know something like the, something, from personal study. When you wrestle with it, you ask, how do we know? Why? Couldn't it mean this? You come away with something that is, is yours and you never forget it and you [00:15:00] build on it.

[00:15:01] It becomes something. Every sermon you hear after that, you compare it to this thing that, you know, deep in your soul, straight from God, straight from a careful study of scripture. And it changes the way you listen to other people as well.

[00:15:21] **Diana Winkler:** At least I thought I was King James Only for many years. Are you still King James Only? Or have you changed your stance on that?

[00:15:30] **Jason Harris:** No, I am not King James only. It was one of the issues that I lost a job over it. I lost family members over it. It was probably the most expensive issue to me.

[00:15:39] But I wanted to know what was true and I followed it. Even though it didn't have the outcome that I would've preferred, perhaps. But yeah, that is one of the areas I'm passionate about, not per se, but I have seen the King James controversy do enormous damage to the church.

[00:15:59] To the [00:16:00] consciences of good men, people who were told you are King James, and if you're not, you will lose your friends. You will lose your family, you will lose your income. And so they just stick with it. They just do what they're told. And it's a fatal moment, because from that moment you're violated, you don't have integrity.

[00:16:25] You, you don't even know what you believe because you can't afford to differ. So. I think it's been really destructive. My first book is the doctor scripture. Yeah. As it relates to transmission and preservation of the text and it was basically a study I did for myself.

[00:16:42] And then about 10 years after I did it, I actually ended up publishing it, but it wasn't done to publish. It was done for me to know. If I'm going to pay this price, I wanna make sure I get it right. I wrestled for in great depth. So if that [00:17:00] is something somebody's wrestled with, that's potentially helpful study to look at.

[00:17:06] **Diana Winkler:** Yeah. I've definitely changed my stance because I've only heard that King James Only, proof texts and all that stuff. I had never talked with anybody or heard the other side of the argument until I got out of my abusive situation and it just, yeah, it took me a long time to, abandon that whole Ruckmanism stuff.

[00:17:33] yeah. And I even watched Christian Twitter today and there was a preacher on there that I was actually on his show and he was like, staunch, " The King James Bible is inherent and no flaws. And if you don't believe that you're not a Christian." And I was like, oh, that's what I used to believe. And I used to think I could die on that hill, but no, [00:18:00] I've actually done some research like you have.

[00:18:02] And I'm no longer King James Only. It's a great translation, but it's a translation.

[00:18:09] Yeah. Yeah. So, so people listening they're like, what Bible do I study? There's so many choices. How do I pick one?

[00:18:19] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. So the thing with versions each version has a particular goal and the more we understand about the versions and their goals, the better we can use them.

[00:18:30] If you are, if you're reading through the Bible just to get through it, to get familiar with the whole thing, the big picture, probably makes sense to you as a more dynamic translation. Particularly if you've always read one version. So I grew up always reading the King James, and that was the only translation I'd ever read.

[00:18:48] And so what happened after so many times through, is I stopped hearing it. I just simply stopped hearing the words because I knew them. I'd memorized them by wrote for much of it. And I just stopped hearing it. [00:19:00] It was so easy to read a whole chapter and hear nothing. And so , I've gone back now and read through in another version and it just forces you to hear it again for the first time, because it's put in a different way and it just catches your attention, different things, catch your attention, like caught your attention before.

[00:19:18] So for reading through, I would say pick something more dynamic like NIV and NLT, New Living translation. There's a number of I wouldn't say paraphrase, but more dynamic translations. However, if you're gonna do Bible study for yourself, you wanna understand what exactly this means. Pick a more formal translation.

[00:19:36] So there's the King James tradition. There's a line of translations that follow the same philosophy of the King james. You've got King James, you've got New King James, then you've got ASV NSV and RSB and in more modern days, English Standard version is an excellent translation in the tradition of the King

[00:19:52] James. You're gonna get leaning towards precise precision for literal translation, [00:20:00] but still with that kind of literary grandeur that the King James gives you. It's the beauty and the art that comes through ESV is an excellent translation to, to use for study. Christian Standard Bible is a newer one that tends to be probably a bit of a balance, leans a little bit more toward dynamic, but is still quite literal.

[00:20:21] So that would be quite helpful. And then the NSBE, New American Standard Bible and more recently Legacy Standard Bible. These are extremely well, that's probably a strong, too strong word, but they're very literal and designed to be. So if you are struggling with the interpretation of something, go to the one of those translations and you'll get a better feel for exactly what's going on.

[00:20:44] Mm. Which may or may not help depending on the situation. We'll talk about that in a minute though.

[00:20:47] The stories I could tell about the version.

[00:20:49] The thing that is so destructive, I think, about that scenario is they're telling you not to trust your Bible. That the Bible is not really trustworthy unless you get this one. [00:21:00] And nothing could be further from the truth. I like reading the old books, reading Plato right now. Some of these manuscripts, there are 5, 6, 7 copies in existence, and then there'll be discussions, very commonly,

[00:21:17] he refers to this book, but that book's been lost. Oh, this book. Yeah. He's talking about a poem from Soandso, but that's lost. Most of the old books didn't survive and the ones that did are often missing big chunks, like just whole sections missing. Yeah. When you look at the Christian scriptures, we have thousands of manuscripts.

[00:21:40] We're finding new manuscripts constant. So this year's Oxy publications just came out. New script portions have been found on Papyrus in Egypt. That have never been known about before and they match the scripture. No book in history comes [00:22:00] within a hundred times the clarity of preservation of scripture, and it matches like different copies match up with almost complete accuracy.

[00:22:14] The differences are extremely minor typological things. A phrase missing or line missing because the copy is got distracted. Scripture is so incredibly clearly preserved for us. And we should be overwhelmed. We should be inspired. It is nothing short of miraculous, what we have and yet Christians find a way to turn that into spreading doubt, about whether God's word is trustworthy and it's absurd. It's absurd. We can trust the Bible. It is incredibly well preserved for us.

[00:22:49] **Diana Winkler:** I'll tell you what, when we went to Jerusalem in 2019, we had the opportunity to meet a Hebrew scribe. He's he was the uncle of [00:23:00] my my webmaster actually, and he's a renowned scribe, the real deal.

[00:23:06] And we were invited to his home and he actually showed us how he writes with a turkey quill that he made with the special ink on baby calf skin. And he was doing Joshua when we were there and line by line, or you go the other direction, you go this way. Oh, line by line. And he showed us how they correct mistakes.

[00:23:33] And he does all the manuscripts for all of the synagogues all over the world. And, he took that job very seriously. Now he's not a Christian, he's a Jew. Yeah. But it really inspired me. Like, here's somebody that is very serious about preserving God's word, the Torah, you know that, of course he doesn't do the new Testament, but it was really a great trip.

[00:23:57] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. That's incredible. [00:24:00] We can trust the Bible!

[00:24:01] **Diana Winkler:** What do you think about do you have to know Greek and Hebrew to understand the Bible? Of course you always got those guys, and they're quoting Greek and Hebrew and makes us not feel very smart, but do we really have to know the original languages to do Bible study?

[00:24:21] **Jason Harris:** So

[00:24:22] the answer the is definitely no, but sort of, yes. And by that, what I mean is you can study the Bible for a lifetime

[00:24:34] constantly gain and grow and learn and never know Hebrew. So no, you don't. There's incredible resources, staggering resources at our fingertips. That said there is enormous value in learning Greek and Hebrew, because it helps you understand how and why things are happening. Why there are [00:25:00] different understandings of a given text.

[00:25:02] Not so much. It's almost never a case of which is the correct meaning of the word. It's almost always more complex than that. And the more you understand about the languages, the more you can go into the logic of why something's translated this way or that way and what the real issue is underneath it.

[00:25:23] But , first of all, there are tools that can be used to grasp much of that without knowing Hebrew and Greek. And again, that's a very limited thing. And it's dangerous. A lot of pastors don't really know Hebrew Greek, they study it a little bit and then they use tools. But they don't know enough to use those tools safely.

[00:25:45] So we always, I think the bottom line with scriptures, we have to come to it with this humility. Admitting we don't know more than we know. And then ask someone who does know. But we don't have to ask an amateur. We [00:26:00] have tens of thousands of books, easily accessible. The Bible software that's available is incredibly rich, powerful software.

[00:26:11] There are the best scholars in the world can be fairly easily accessed. If you have a question, say you can't get the books, ask somebody who can get the books, to let you spend a few minutes looking at their books and wrestling through it. So that will happen where you can't go much further without the original languages, but at the end of the day, it is almost never life or death.

[00:26:38] It's about going deeper. And so you'll appreciate the expertise of those whom God has gifted in that area. But there are literally dozens of areas of giftedness required for understanding scripture, geography and history and culture and linguistics and semantics, and [00:27:00] so many other things.

[00:27:00] So yeah, we learn from experts and you will never learn it all in a thousand lifetimes, but you can certainly keep growing for a thousand lifetimes without knowing it all. Yeah. So that's a long answer.

[00:27:15] **Diana Winkler:** That was great. And it's funny when you talk about the books, when me and Kevin went to school before the internet, in fact, I think my junior year was when they invented the internet and it was the one world order and all that stuff, learning windows system, instead of DOS.

[00:27:37] And I remember having to buy, the full coffee table size books for the commentaries. You had to buy the huge book of the Strong's Concordance and all the commentaries of Matthew Henry commentaries. And you guys have it so easy now with the internet and you got Net Bible.

[00:27:58] It's like, man, I was [00:28:00] gyped going through school. Yeah. I still have all those books in my library. I couldn't bear to throw 'em away. They're still good.

[00:28:09] **Jason Harris:** yeah. Yeah. It's true. Somebody starting Bible study now has easily, 10,000 times the opportunity and resources that you and I would've had back then.

[00:28:22] And you go back a few years before me when you started your Bible college. But yeah, I was lucky enough to just sort of get onto the software side of things early in my Bible study career. We put it that way and get on the digital book thing because yeah, I've got 6,000 books on one program and it's just not manageable, but I I can take it, to the shops or the coffee shop, look up any one of those books and get

[00:28:50] complete access and yeah. And then of course there's 10,000 books on my wishlist, so...

[00:28:58] **Diana Winkler:** We know what to get you for [00:29:00] Christmas.

[00:29:00] **Jason Harris:** That's right. Oh dude.

[00:29:05] **Diana Winkler:** So now if we are sitting down for a Bible study what are the ground rules for Bible study? What are, some basic things we have to have in place when we're studying a book or passage of scripture in order to get it right.

[00:29:22] So don't go down the wrong path.

[00:29:25] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. Okay. The biggest thing. Okay. So if we're sitting down to do a Bible study, number one, get a good solid translation. And by that I'm just talking more literal. So ESV something that's designed for what you're doing. NIV is not a good translation to, to study from..

[00:29:46] And that's not an attack on the NIV. It's just I ran across something today where they actually said something very destructive in Revelation 22, based on an interpretation that they're interpreting the text, and then they put it in their own words. [00:30:00] And problem is it's actually theologically wrong.

[00:30:03] So, if you read the NIV, you would be completely lost on what the actual text says. You would just have the opinion of those guys. So, so you go to a good translation. And then the very first thing to do that we so easily miss is read the text. Read the Bible.

[00:30:20] **Diana Winkler:** That's pretty basic .

[00:30:21] **Jason Harris:** But this is something it's so easy not to do.

[00:30:25] We've heard it so many times. That we simply rush over and then ask, all right now what? And we move on. We have to slow down and just notice what's there. Not what we were told it means. Not what we were told is there, but notice exactly what is there. So we could talk, refer to this as observation, just really listen actively, carefully, slowly, deeply listen through what the text is saying. Cuz I am so often completely shocked [00:31:00] after that process to find out that the text says nothing

[00:31:03] like what I assumed it said or heard it said. And when we do that, we allow ourselves to just actually listen to a concept. So that's the step one. And then you come to interpretation. What does it mean? And when it comes to interpretation, Three big rules context. Fourth one is context context. Something that we have not done well as Christians, particularly in our preaching is context would just rip it outta context.

[00:31:36] Lace it into our context and then talk about it. And the problem with that is it wasn't said in our context. It wasn't said by people in our context, or people who even understood our context didn't exist. So context, what exactly did you mean by that?

[00:31:54] Let's start at the verse. If the text says, for instance, Do not [00:32:00] forsake the assembling of yourselves together. What's the context? Okay we've got the actual textual context. So what did they say before he said that and after he said? Cause that will tell us what he means by that. People use that verse to say you should never skip church, but it does not

[00:32:18] and cannot mean that. Cannot. What does it say before? What does it say after? That's the immediate context, but then you have the broader context. What's the chapter about? What's the main issues being discussed in this chapter? Let's broaden it. What's the book about? We can talk about section, but let's just go book.

[00:32:35] We're talking about a book of the Bible. So is this a letter? Is this a prophecy? Is this history? What is the book and what is the goal of the book? The person sat down to write this book, what was he trying to accomplish? That's gonna tell me something about how I can interpret this text and the structure of this text.

[00:32:52] If it's being written to New Testament Christians. Right. Recently came across that text and [00:33:00] noticed, it's actually, talking about Jews. Yeah. Jews already did assemble together. Where? Synagogue, right? And then they got saved. And so now the author says, Hey, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but so much the more. So suddenly we have people who are already assembling, but as Jewish people in a Jewish synagogue, and you get this command of, Hey don't stop doing that.

[00:33:28] Now that you've become Christians have accepted the Jewish Messiah and understood what the Jewish faith truly is. Don't stop doing what you're doing, keep doing that. But here in this new context, so now you have. It doesn't completely erase the other aspects of it. If we never go to church, that's also probably disobeying this. It is saying the notion of being connected to other believers in a regular assembly, but that's not really the angle he's coming from. It Is actually [00:34:00] saying as a general rule, don't abandon this regular assembly for teaching and edification. Do that in a Christian context.

[00:34:09] And now you have the Christian assembly, the church. So looking at this, the book you start to put together, oh what's actually happening in this text? Because it's not what we were told was happening in this text. And then we can go broader. We can talk about the Testament it's in, the genre.

[00:34:26] It's in the book, it's the library, the overall collection of books which, for instance, tells us things like this is God's Word, this is God speaking to us. So all of those contexts, that's one thing, but there's vastly more. Look at geography. When, where was it written? Where is the author? Where are the recipients? Culture, what was happening in the context when he was talking to? And that we just talked about them being Jewish.

[00:34:50] That's an ethnic context. That's the context of the ethnicity of the author and the ethnicity of the recipients. So, so we've got this ethnic [00:35:00] context. We've got historical context. Let's just take the pandemic. We've got a pandemic. This is a different historical context than first century Israel or Jewish people.

[00:35:09] So, putting it in context helps us to understand what the text is saying. Right. So that when it comes down to apply it to us, We don't ignore all of that and just sort of do what we want with it. Everything we do with it here has to be in line with what it was originally being done with it. So yeah, context is just, it's everything, historical, linguistic, semantic. There are literally dozens of areas in which we can consider the context.

[00:35:38] And the more we do that, the better we will understand what's happening in this text what is actually being said and what does it actually mean? So, yeah, that would be my answer to that.

[00:35:50] **Diana Winkler:** Yes, ladies and gentlemen, every one of my guests has said the same thing context, and that very fashion.

[00:35:58] So that's telling you [00:36:00] it's important folks! So take notes! It's funny, you mentioned that verse, not a forsaking the assembly, and you mentioned the pandemic. A lot of people used that verse to be militant about, meeting in church and disobeying the lockdown orders and stuff.

[00:36:20] I've been watching church from home because of Brian's immune system. I'm trying not to bring any germs home that could send 'em to the hospital. And I know of churches that, got arrested or got in big trouble because they took that verse literally. God's gonna punish us if we don't meet together every single Sunday, it's like, I don't think that was what God intended.

[00:36:44] **Jason Harris:** And that's another thing I meant to say that actually. So here's interpretive context. We call that the analogy of faith. We don't interpret one text and ignore everything else in scripture. And also theological context. So you can't treat God [00:37:00] as if he's a different God, as the God in the rest of scripture. And the moment you do, you're taking it out of theological context.

[00:37:06] So we have to, even with that particular passage, here's a command. Yes. But we, we cannot ignore the context of the other commands. And the structural framework of scripture, which is literally summarized by Jesus as, love God and love your neighbor. And so we, we have to take this in its context where it was meant to be within that structure.

[00:37:30] Then we don't come up with ridiculous things that

[00:37:34] it's very easy for us to come up with absurd interpretations when we take it out of its context. Things that sound really, well are really dangerous. And probably abuse victims can appreciate this, but many abuse victims in the Christian context, experience someone taking something completely outta context. Submission, for instance.

[00:37:54] Yeah, just to rip it outta context. And said, this is all there is and emphasize that and obsess [00:38:00] about that. And that's what they're doing. They're taking it completely outta context. You have to put it together. And when you do that, you understand what's really being communicated. So

[00:38:11] **Diana Winkler:** yeah, really good points there.

[00:38:13] Now, we read the Bible. If you're reading it through the whole thing, you're gonna come across some passages that just make your stomach churn. We use that word trigger. We use, the, how could God do this and, I don't wanna read the Bible anymore. What do we do when we encounter those verses that we don't wanna deal with?

[00:38:45] Yeah. So most of them are in the old Testament seems .

[00:38:52] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. Yeah. So, I alluded to this a little earlier. The concept of studying through. The way out is [00:39:00] through. So many times the way to deal with it is to study it more and understand it accurately. So for instance, the old Testament law, when we understand the division between ceremonial law and civic law and moral law, it makes it possible to read portions of the Old Testament very differently and hear them vastly differently than we have heard them before.

[00:39:30] So you may, you're a harsh patriarchal teacher talk about the old Testament and make it terrifying and destructive. But when you start to, to read the same texts realizing there are three things going on. Some things are ceremonies. There are things that God said to do for his reasons.

[00:39:56] Usually ultimately they, they were [00:40:00] pointers to Christ. So this is to do with bringing sacrifices the tabernacle, its existence, what it looks like, how it's done. The holidays pretty much anything ceremony, the dress things, cleanness and uncleanness. These were all ceremony. They were all designed to teach us things about the coming Christ.

[00:40:18] And it's not that they are unimportant. They are very important, but they are merely the shadow of the substance. And the substance is Christ. Jesus says, I've come to fulfill the law. And he literally did. He is literally the priest. He's literally the prophet. He's literally the king that all the others pointed to.

[00:40:37] He is what the tabernacle pointed to and the lambs and the bullocks and the blood and the offerings. All of it was pointing to him. So we read that and it's not dangerous anymore. We know what it means. And we also know that we don't have to embrace the shadow because it's the shadow. We embrace the substance now.

[00:40:55] Then you have the civil war that is [00:41:00] coming out with just a, a very straightforward understanding that here's a nation, a new nation. That's just being forged and they need a law. This is before Roman law existed. And so society, needs a way to govern. And the current societies of the day, weren't doing it very well.

[00:41:17] And they certainly weren't doing it in ways that were compatible with monotheism. One, God Egypt you had the Pharaoh is a God and all these other gods and everything's shaped in strange ways. And so God designs a civil government for this particular people in this particular time.

[00:41:35] And he makes rules. And those rules are designed to help a society that is bettering, that is ancient. Get through manage itself. Today we take these things for granted. We take the judiciary for granted, but it did not exist until God made it. And we say that's the only, that's the right way.

[00:41:53] God made a government. That's the way our government should be. Not necessarily. If God made a government elsewhere, he would've done it differently. [00:42:00] So suddenly a whole bunch of those rules from laws sound different because they're no longer God saying, I hate anyone who eats this or wears that, or does that. Suddenly you understand,

[00:42:12] okay, now actually he's creating something, he's creating a government. And it's not the only way to do it. It's the way he chose to do it for them. And it's not binding on us. Even members of the modern state of Israel, aren't bound by the laws of an ancient state that no longer exists. Then there are the moral laws and these laws reflect moral realities.

[00:42:33] But again, the actual statements of them are not the point. This the statement, You should not make a graven image in worship another god. It's not really about making metal and wooden objects. It's about what's going on in our hearts. So what we have to do is get beneath the codification of those moral laws and understand the moral truths that are there about our God.

[00:42:59] And [00:43:00] those truths will match perfectly with everything we find in the new Testament. They will look like Jesus. And so we take a lot of the fear out by adding understanding. And here's a huge thing is some things are not very clear. Which it is, some things will disagree with another person.

[00:43:21] Is the Sabbath ceremonial? Or is it more? And very good people differ on that. Some say, it's both some say it's one or the other. It's okay to not know. And that principle, I think, is the biggest principle when it comes to difficult passages or things we don't quite understand is when we don't know, we should say, I don't know.

[00:43:44] Yeah. Like I would ask yourself right now just to stop and ask. Have I ever heard my pastor say, I don't know?

[00:43:53] Cause if not, that's a red flag. We have to know [00:44:00] what we don't know. Or else we're not gonna learn.

[00:44:03] **Diana Winkler:** Yeah, that's a good segway into the next question.

[00:44:07] Red flags of false teachers or, heretical doctrines. How do we avoid those things?

[00:44:15] Yeah. That's one of the ways is that they never say, I don't know.

[00:44:23] **Jason Harris:** Yes. The humility, lack of humility. Lack of willingness to be challenged or question, to critique. It is not our job as Christians to coddle the ego of our Christian leaders. If you're a Christian leader is easily offended, particularly by just genuine questions,

[00:44:48] huge red flag. We've created a culture in the church where somebody who is humble and doesn't have a huge ego is not [00:45:00] looked at as good pastor material. We want somebody with an ego, ideally fairly up on the narcissist scale. Yeah, those are the kinds of people that we push to go to Bible college and push into preaching and push into ministry.

[00:45:17] And it's a serious problem in the Christian Church. We want someone who communicates confidence and power and certainty. And there is some merit in some of those qualities in leaders, but it cannot be rooted in narcissism. It needs to be rooted in God. And so when you see somebody who's ego, when they make it about themselves, instead of about what it's really about, that's when you know, big red flag in terms of Bible study, particularly yeah.

[00:45:54] Humility. Somebody who always knows the right answer is lying.

[00:45:59] **Diana Winkler:** [00:46:00] This is the only interpretation and that's my interpretation and that's the only one that's valid.

[00:46:05] **Jason Harris:** Yeah. Yeah. I Look, I don't think there's a single sermon I preach when I don't say, some people think it's this.

[00:46:12] Some people think it's that. And I'm I lean towards this. I train people to preach. And what I say is that. The clearer, the text is, the clearer you have to be. The firmer you have to be when it's clear and there's only one plausible interpretation. Then you can go with that. But when it's not clear, say, Look, it's possible

[00:46:37] it means this, but I suspect it means this. When you do that, what you're doing is you're being humble. You're saying, look, there's two things. They're not 50/50. I lean this direction, but it's not the only possible direction. There, there are plausible alternatives and you treat you train people, not just to see you as the person who knows everything, but rather as the person who's wrestling through data, enormous amounts. I [00:47:00] spend hours reading for a sermon because I wanna listen to the guys who studied it extensively.

[00:47:10] Who have the expertise in the field and that way I can come and not tell you something is certain when it's not. I can at least signal to you, I suspect it's this, or I think it's this, and here's why. I'm communicating the level of my confidence and the level of the certainty that's there, even that I'll get wrong sometimes. But at least when I've done it in that way, you understand that it's my judgment, not absolutely crystal clear in, Scripture. Yeah, I think humility and humility.

[00:47:41] It really comes down to humility.

[00:47:44] **Diana Winkler:** That's kinda hard when you're like a new Christian or don't know the Bible very well. I think it's hard to differentiate, Well, okay. You can have different views on certain subjects. [00:48:00] I've been using, eschatology as an example. I'm a pre-trib and I believe in the rapture, but I know lots of people that I trust and who are very godly, they don't believe in the rapture.

[00:48:14] I know people that believe in annihilationism or they don't believe in the Trinity, how do you know which one is okay? You can differentiate, this is a valid Christian view. And over here is okay, you're gonna start your own cult, drink Koolaid or something.

[00:48:38] **Jason Harris:** Yeah.

[00:48:40] **Diana Winkler:** Too big of a question or what? No,

[00:48:43] **Jason Harris:** I think a couple key thoughts on that. One is Clarity and essentiality. So clarity relates to, if scripture is crystal clear, then I need to be I need

[00:48:55] to affirm.

[00:48:56] **Diana Winkler:** So what would you say is crystal clear? Give an example?

[00:48:59] **Jason Harris:** Let's [00:49:00] take Jesus Christ died, was buried and rose again on the third day.

[00:49:05] Okay. I agree with that.

[00:49:08] Stated clearly and stated so repeatedly, so many times by so many people, so often, that to deny it, is to deny something that is undeniable. It is a level of clarity that cannot be contested. There is no way to put up a case against that being the biblical view. You could put a case up against it having happened, but putting a case up against that, being what the Bible says,

[00:49:36] cannot be done without simply saying the Bible's untrue. It's just not true. That's and that's what you see in liberalism. You see people who do deny a literal resurrection are simply saying it's just not true. It says that, but it does not mean that. Basically rejected. You just have to reject it. Okay.

[00:49:57] So clarity, the more clear, [00:50:00] the more obligated I am to affirm it. The less clear, the less obligated I am to affirm it. So for instance, let's take eschatology since you brought it up. Jesus is coming again. Yeah. Crystal clear. Any believer who says no, he's not coming again is false. It is so clearly said so many times that we have to affirm it. Now, whether there is a rapture and a tribulation and a millennium, and exactly what order they're in, and who will be involved in what. That's not clear. There's all sorts of stuff, all sorts of stuff there. How exactly it fits together, which parts mean what, is not as clear.

[00:50:42] And so we're allowed to differ. We're allowed to understand it as best we can. And that's okay. So clarity is the issue, the more clear, the more obligated. And then the other thing is essentiality. So what is most central to [00:51:00] the point of scripture is most binding on us. And that, which is least essential is,

[00:51:09] least, I'm not gonna say binding in this case. I'm gonna say is least demanding of our agreement. Okay. So , the resurrection of Jesus Christ is right at the center of the entire New Testament. It all hangs on that. If Jesus was not raised, then Jesus, everything in the gospel was a guy who lived and died.

[00:51:38] Okay. And everything in the epistles, all the preaching of the cross, the meaning of the cross, collapses completely. In fact, Scripture clearly tells us if there is no resurrection, where your all man most miserable. So without resurrection, all collapses. Revelation means nothing because Jesus is a dead guy. He's not alive.

[00:51:59] [00:52:00] He's dead. So yeah, all of it collapses because that's so central to the point of the New Testament. But there are things that are not central. Let's take modesty, preservation of the Textus Receptus in particular. Exactly what approach take the scripture translation. These things, nothing collapses.

[00:52:17] If we disagree. Nothing central to the message of the Bible. They don't destroy the character of God. They don't undermine the meaning of the gospel. They don't keep us from getting back to God through Christ. And so we are entitled, and just to be clear, it's not that we don't have strong views on those things.

[00:52:38] It's that those things are our personal convictions. We believe them strongly, but we don't try to impose them on everyone as a test of fellowship. Because we're humble enough to recognize they're not at the center.

[00:52:52] **Diana Winkler:** That's really good points. You said that very eloquently. That's a tough question. I have family members that [00:53:00] didn't argue, but they're very passionate about their views. And they're not the same as mine. They're tertiary arguments. Yeah. Doctrine of angelology. And aliens or the giants, whether, aliens came down and mated with humans and yeah.

[00:53:20] And the different lines of Cain. And I've said the same thing. I'm gonna major on the majors. Like we both agree that Jesus died on the cross for our sin, so we could be with him in eternity. And if I'm wrong about the rapture, then I'll admit that in the end times. Yeah, we .Will go through the tribulation together. I'll take whatever's coming. But

[00:53:45] it isn't something to, break fellowship with, unless one of those major things that you mentioned we disagree on. Yeah.

[00:53:56] **Jason Harris:** That brings up probably one of the most important [00:54:00] questions of Bible study. And that is what is the purpose of the Bible?

[00:54:08] In unhealthy Christianity, which includes abusive churches, scripture tends to be viewed as the answers book. So, and I've heard preacher after preachers say the Bible has the answer to our questions today. You see it on many church websites on the front page. The Bible has the answer to our questions today. And that is not true.

[00:54:36] **Diana Winkler:** Wow. That's a powerful statement right there.

[00:54:38] **Jason Harris:** The Bible teaches us what questions we should be asking. If I go through Ephesians one and say, now, here are my questions about life. These are the questions people are asking. What is the Bible's answer? I will wrestle from it, things that aren't there because Paul is not trying to answer my [00:55:00] questions

[00:55:00] there. He is telling me what questions I should have been asking and answering them. And so when I go through, Romans again and again, he assumes a question. And my job as a Bible studier is to find out what question is Paul answering here? Because when I know that question, then I know what question I should have been asking.

[00:55:22] And I know they answer that question. And you say that's, that's not as relevant the questions I have. Make this your question and it will be relevant. They are. We ask bad questions. If you ask the wrong questions, you get the wrong answers. You go places you're not supposed to go.

[00:55:39] And you certainly twist scripture to say what it's not. It's not there to tell us what we should wear, how long your skirt has to be, and whether women can wear pants. That is not what scriptures for. One question. And this is where I wanna just give a quick overview of my understanding of scripture, is the revelation of God,[00:56:00]

[00:56:01] from God of himself to us. So, and I often get in trouble for saying this, but I'll keep saying it. Scripture is God centered, not Christ centered, not gospel centered. Our church is God centered, not Jesus centered and not gospel centered, which I never say without getting raised eyebrows. But let me explain what I mean.

[00:56:23] **Diana Winkler:** But yeah, I know you were gonna explain yourself.

[00:56:26] **Jason Harris:** So before the fall there was no need for savior. There was no need for rescue. There was no need for restoration fellowship with God, because we were exactly as it was supposed to be. God made us for himself and we enjoyed him, in the way we were supposed to. God was happy for all eternity passed and he wanted to add to that joy by bringing us into the picture.

[00:56:47] So everything was the way it was supposed to be. And then mankind sinned. And everything since then is about getting us back to where we should have been. Exactly. So the reason we were [00:57:00] created, which is to enjoy God perfectly forever. And so the gospel Jesus Christ is about getting us back to God. So it is not ultimate.

[00:57:15] It is penultimate. It is secondary. The main point is getting to God. So when I go to church on Sunday, I wanna hear the gospel and I wanna worship because that's the most fundamental thing in my whole existance is to enjoy God. I need the gospel because I will constantly think because of sin that I can get back to God by being impressive and being amazing.

[00:57:37] And the gospel says no. You get back to God because God himself drew you back to himself through Christ crucified. So relax your mind again. We're friends again, but not because of you, not because of what you did back before. Not because of what you're doing now. Not because of what you're doing with future, but because I have rescued you back to myself in Jesus Christ. The gospel says [00:58:00] rest and relax and enjoy.

[00:58:02] Only because of me. This is all me. All God. All grace. So, so yeah, when we read scripture, it is about seeing God and enjoying him and understanding how he has restored us back to the ability to know him and enjoy him partially now and perfectly later. When we see it that way, then we won't be reading it as the answer to our petty questions and our strange questions. Like what does the war in Ukraine mean about the end times?

[00:58:30] Maybe it has some incidental things to say about that, but not the point. The point is how God is going to restore us to himself through Jesus Christ crucified. When we keep that the center we'll find that's what the text is talking about. Again and again, that is what the text is talking about.

[00:58:46] Every page of scripture is ultimately talking about that and nothing substantially else. Everything else is peripheral. So that, which is a huge statement, but I've found it true over the decades.

[00:58:59] **Diana Winkler:** I [00:59:00] can agree with that. And if y'all don't agree with that, you can email Jason

[00:59:09] **Jason Harris:** fair enough.

[00:59:11] **Diana Winkler:** I know you mentioned a couple Bible tools. What are your favorite ones that you go to that that they could go and get online?

[00:59:22] **Jason Harris:** yeah, I use Logos Bible software. There's a free version of that you can download every month. You can get three or four free books. Wow. And you can also buy books in all sorts of packages and pretty much anything you want.

[00:59:38] You can get there. It has enormous tools for Bible study and it goes as deep as you could possibly want to go. But you don't need to go that deep. It will do the simple things in the free version. Including a little bit of letting you look around in the original languages just enough to get in trouble.

[00:59:58] So be careful with it. But that's [01:00:00] my go-to, that's the context in which I do my study. Particular books, honestly, I would say the commentary is very underrated. Reading through a commentary is incredibly powerful and valuable. Particularly if you find one that's relatively short, there are many kinds of commentaries and you don't want to read a technical commentary.

[01:00:26] Devotionally. But if you find a devotional commentary or even perhaps an expository commentary. Something that's reasonable, so maybe 200 pages for a medium length book. That can be just enormous benefit in seeing how it fits together. Particularly with the expertise of somebody who has read the technical commentaries.

[01:00:48] And it doesn't mean you agree with everything, you said. You look at it just like you read listen to a preacher. But what you get is this really holistic picture of everything that's happening and how it fits together. [01:01:00] So I think that's a really powerful tool. Having technical commentaries, if you can find them and afford them is a really great way to dig deep.

[01:01:07] And that's where I say earlier, I said, you have something that's really stubborn, you can't work it out. Ask to borrow somebody's technical commentaries. And just read just the section on that verse or that section of verses read five or six of them. And you'll walk away with more ideas than you can shake a stick in. More to wrestle with things you hadn't thought of, facts you didn't know.

[01:01:32] So yeah, I think commentaries are just an incredibly powerful resource, but there are so many other things, so many other things.

[01:01:40] **Diana Winkler:** Very good. I don't even have those. We covered a lot of ground today and again, all the answers that people gave were all different in their own way, but they all said the same thing in a roundabout way.

[01:01:59] And [01:02:00] so. You you gave some very eloquent answers. And is there anything that, that we didn't talk about? Some last words to the audience today?

[01:02:10] **Jason Harris:** Yeah, sure. Bible study, everything that we've talked about so far, we've focused on intellect, but at the end of the day, it is a spiritual discipline.

[01:02:22] And if the Spirit of God does not open our eyes, we will not see. And you talked earlier about a person who literally for a living copies the scripture. And I know many theologians who literally do this for a living who have never seen God. They just don't see him. They read the Bible and they don't see

[01:02:48] most of what it's about. They don't see it as the revelation of God himself. They don't see Jesus Christ as the means to God. They just see stories and intellectual material. And so I'd say [01:03:00] fundamentally, if you're going to study the Bible, you have to ask the Holy Spirit to show you things. That is his primary role in, in being with us is to comfort us, to teach us, to challenge us, to convict us. Not independent of scripture, but through scripture that is referred to by Paul as the sword of the spirit, that's his tool.

[01:03:24] And I have a little prayer that I put together for this. It's a good way to start Bible study. It goes like this, God, this is your revelation of yourself to me. Help me to listen. Help me to see. Simple prayer every day. Come to the scripture and ask for God's help.

[01:03:50] **Diana Winkler:** Even child can ask that prayer for sure.

[01:03:56] So you have a lot of free resources on your [01:04:00] website. Tell the folks how to get those and connect with you. Yeah.

[01:04:06] **Jason Harris:** Jasonharris.com.au wherever you're in Australia. So yeah, stop on by section of theology, section of domestic violence. I'm literally every week I'm putting work into improving it.

[01:04:18] So, there'll be more there. There's also a couple books I've got. One that might be interesting is Theological Meditations On The Gospel. It's very short, just a tiny little book. But hopefully helpful. It's designed to help Christians who grew up in church and have all sorts of Bible knowledge.

[01:04:37] Yeah. But don't quite understand how the doctrines connect around the gospel, to try to make sense of that and just put some of the pieces together. So that's something I'm very passionate about is helping Christians understand the gospel. And so yeah, that's a resource for that, but yeah, also the lot of blog posts, so

[01:04:59] **Diana Winkler:** [01:05:00] yeah, all that stuff will be in the show notes for you listeners. And I've been asking my guests to pray for our listeners because this is a big deal for them to

[01:05:16] take on this journey of Bible study. And the enemy of God does not want it to happen. So if you could close us in prayer. I appreciate it.

[01:05:28] **Jason Harris:** Yes, let's pray.

[01:05:30] Father We Thank you that you revealed yourself to us in your Word. You've not left us to wonder or guess what's going on, who we are, who you are.

[01:05:47] We Pray Father, that as we study the Bible, that we would see you more and more. That we would come to understand who you are in a way that would cause us to be more and more attracted to you. [01:06:00] More and more impressed with who you are. More and more glad that you are, who you are. Pray that you would draw us into your gladness and yourself,

[01:06:16] We pray father for so many people who have actually been traumatized and harmed by scripture. We pray that you would bring healing. We pray that you would bring retribution.

[01:06:39] That you would smite the shepherds who lie and say, God has said when God has not said.

[01:06:54] We pray that the shepherds, the creatures, the pastors would be [01:07:00] scared of misrepresenting you of twisting you. That they would recognize that you are angry at those who use the beauty of who you are and your gospel and the truth revealed to harm people and to get what they want.

[01:07:26] Give us the same fear as we study the Bible that we would recognize that this is not a tool for our self gratification to make us feel good, but that it is the revelation of a God who is not safe, but who is good.

[01:07:46] We Pray this in Jesus' name.

[01:07:49] Amen.

[01:07:51] **Diana Winkler:** Amen. Thanks for coming on the show.

[01:07:53] **Jason Harris:** Pleasure to be with you.