

## **Respond paper “What the Bible is Not,” How to Read the Bible in Changing Times**

### *The Bible is not a Magic book*

Christians like to seek solutions to their specific context in the Bible because we are taught that in all things trust God’s guidance. Many Christians treat the Bible like a magic book or encyclopedia, where they could find answers to all their problems. In some way, at least they are reverence to the word of God, and they also believe that what has been told in the Bible is relevant to today’s context. But their major problem is that they take the teachings out of their historic context, to apply to their lives today and that’s irrelevant.

Some Christians when they need to make major decisions, especially if they don’t have an answer, like to randomly open the Bible, and look for answers on that page they turn to.

They forget the fundamental rule of Bible study: read the Bible in context.

### *The Bible is not a list of commands to obey*

There are many commands in the Bible, and most of them are from the Old Testament. We are taught to obey God’s commands, but there are so many rules and commands in the Bible, what commands should we follow, this should be the first question to raise. Reading the Bible, there is one word that needs to be repeated all the time, context. There are culture-specific commands which are those commands that belong to some specific historical context, perplexing commands which have not relevant to us today, and there are universal commands which are those general commands which are relevant to any context, in history or today.

Sometimes we tend to hold on to some of the commands, for example, like don’t eat any meat with blood, or don’t eat animal blood because there is life in the blood which was taught in the Old Testament which has its cultural context.

*The Bible is not a list of promises to claim*

The Bible is a book filled with promises, but as we read the Bible, it is very important for us to discern to whom a promise is made and under what circumstances that promise exists. We like to take the promises in the Bible to apply to our own lives, which is irrelevant sometimes. We should do as the author says, “applying God’s word is not about trying to determine whether to apply a particular promise to a particular situation in life. It is about growing in our knowledge of nature and the purpose of God from the whole of scripture----whether laws, letters, stories, psalms, promises, or prophecies--- and thereby learning what it means to walk with God and to make good and godly decisions.”

*The Bible is not a textbook of systematic theology*

We like to treat the Bible as a handbook or textbook of systematic theology, we could get a complete picture of doctrines or theology from this book. But the theology in the Bible is progressive, contextual, and situational. We could only learn it through different contexts, in different forms, and before we apply theology to our life today, we have to understand its cultural and historical context.

Conclusion:

How should we read the Bible and make decisions? We have to understand the heart of God and the mind of Christ. We learn the truth by reading the Bible about God, human nature, and about God’s purpose for the world.