

## How to Answer

# Question 12: How does the Passage's Literal & Historical Context Help You Understand it as the Author & Original Audience Would?

*Qs 12-14 direct our research to gain a correct understanding of the passage, beginning with its context.*

1. Read enough of the book from which your study text is taken to determine **the author, his audience, and the reason he wrote the book**, if available. With many books, this appears in the first chapter, and often in the first few paragraphs, so start there.
2. If you cannot find these facts directly in the text, your Bible translation probably provides them in **an introduction to the book or possibly in footnoted text**.
3. If the Spirit leads you, take time to **learn more about the author and/or his audience** from historical or other trusted resources, and think about what you might have in common with these individuals. Record what you discover (and its source) in your study notes.
4. Also **consider how the passage you're studying fits into the book from which it's taken**. Did the author begin his work with this passage or save it to the end? These are both prime memory locations: we usually remember best what we heard first and last. If it appears somewhere in the middle, what does the author write about before it and after it? Note anything the Spirit calls to your attention as you review this context.
5. Now, read through your notes and Scripture-study sheets for **specific locations** (Question 4) or **timeframes** (Question 5) that set the scene for what you've observed. Use a Bible dictionary or trusted online resources to research the times or places, and note what you uncover.

### Hints & Hacks

- It's easy to feel overwhelmed as you answer these questions. Pray over what you're discovering, **asking the Holy Spirit to help you stay focused on His direction** for your study. Pay attention to elements you recognize or that resonate with you, rather than trying to record everything you find.
- Consider the writing type the author used when you're answering this question. For example, when studying **instructional** text, **letters**, and **law**, look specifically for **contextual hints to whether the principles discussed still apply**, or are only mentioned to show how things have changed.

- Remember Bible reference materials may not be divinely inspired and/or may contain opinion or unverified information. Stick with resources available on reliable websites like **Blue Letter Bible** ([www.blb.org](http://www.blb.org)), [www.Biblestudytools.com](http://www.Biblestudytools.com), or [www.Biblehub.com](http://www.Biblehub.com), and remember **anything outside Scripture itself should not be assigned the same level of authority.**