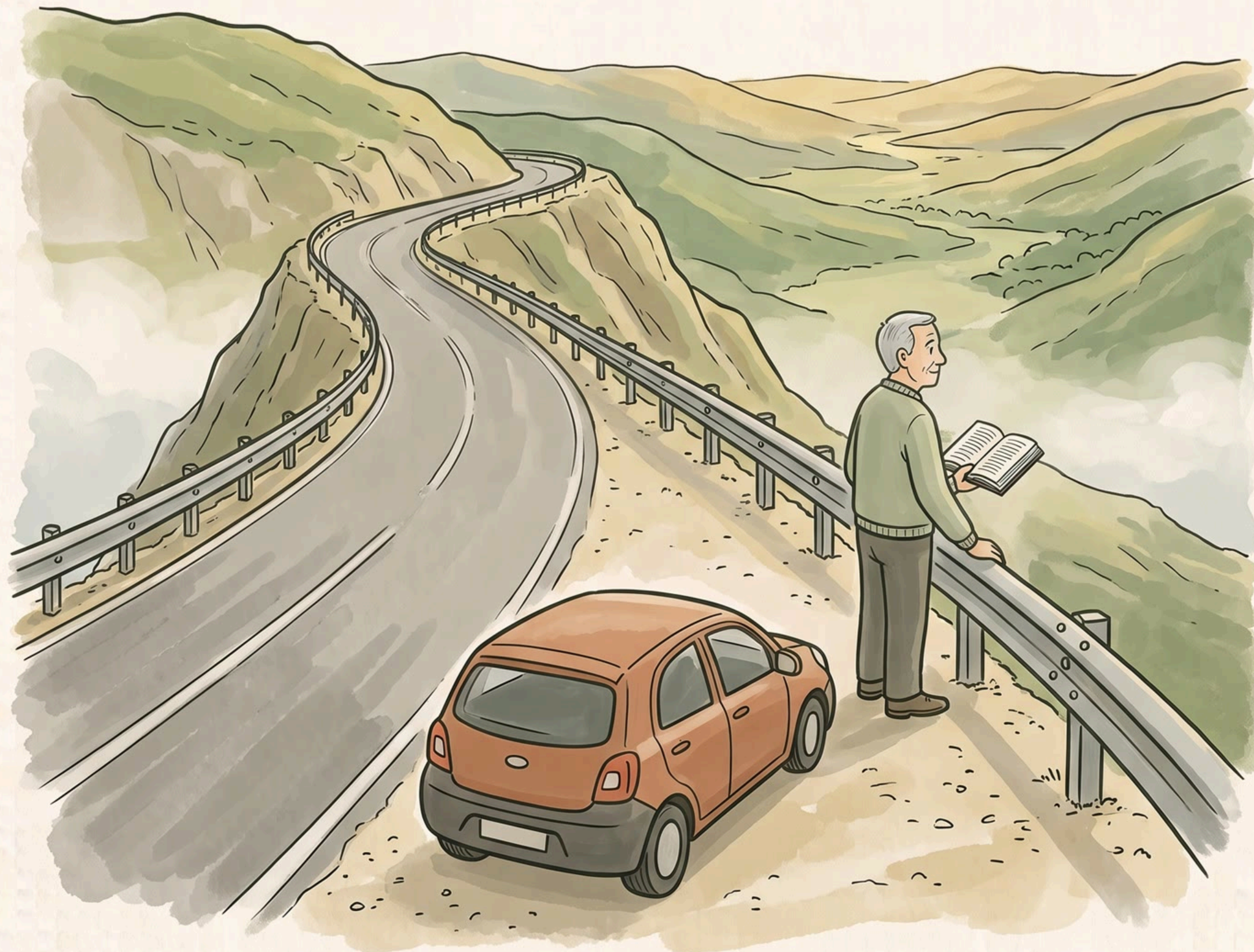


ABIDE 101 • LESSON 3

The Guardrails of Biblical Interpretation

Meditate and Obey. Study and Apply. Hear and Do.



SECTION 1 · DEUTERONOMY 4:1–2

From Gaps to Guardrails

“You must not add to or subtract from what I command you, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you.”

Deuteronomy 4:2 · BSB

DEUTERONOMY 4:1–2 1 / 2

¹Hear now, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances I am teaching you to follow, so that you may live and may enter and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

DEUTERONOMY 4:1–2 2 / 2

²You must not add to or subtract from what I command you, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I am giving you.

Two cliffs, one road

Adding

We read into a verse what its author never put there, until it says whatever we wanted it to say.

Subtracting

We skip what we don't understand or don't like, or explain away what the text clearly says.

Hermeneutics: “the science and art of Bible interpretation” (Fuhr and Köstenberger). In Abide we call its principles **guardrails**.

So What?

Guardrails don't take away your freedom on the road; they keep you on it. God's Word was given for life, and the guardrails help us receive it as it was given, with nothing added and nothing taken away.



SECTION 2 · LETTERS FROM SOMEONE YOU LOVE

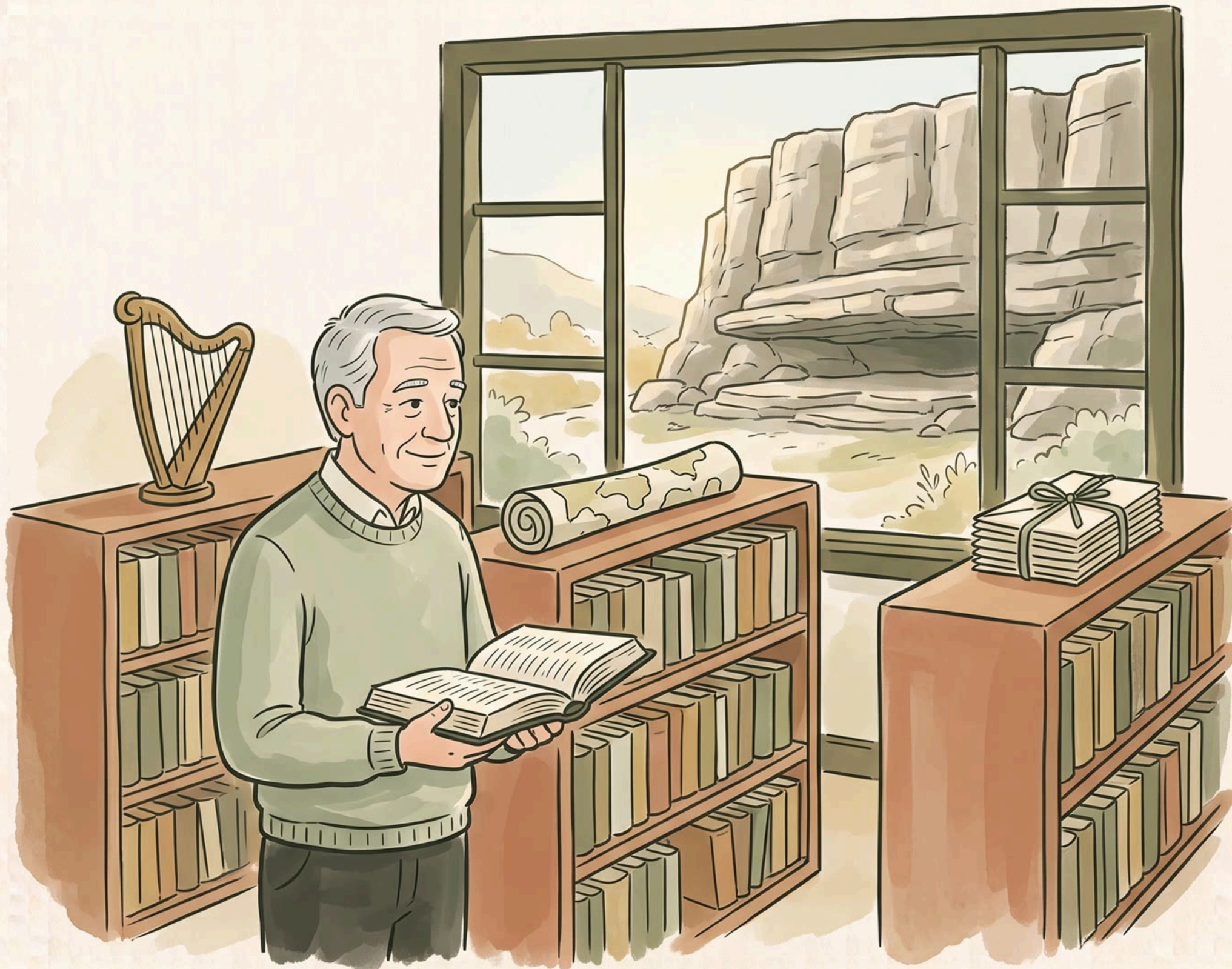
You Already Read This Way

“...most of the following principles are universal and pertain to all forms of written communication.”

Fuhr and Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study*

So What?

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to read the Bible well. You already know how to read letters from someone you love. The guardrails help you do it with care, because these letters are ancient, and their Author is God.



SECTION 3 · PSALM 19:14

The Literal Guardrail: Read It the Way It Was Written

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Psalm 19:14 · BSB

Ask: What genre is this, and what does it actually say in that genre?

PSALM 19:14

¹⁴May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Read it as the kind of writing it is

The wooden reading

Every word pressed flat, whatever the genre.
God becomes a stone, and a proverb
becomes a contract.

The hidden-meaning reading

Ordinary words treated as a code. “Jesus
went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:13, BSB)
becomes a lesson about spiritual heights.

“To interpret the Bible literally is to interpret it as literature.” (R. C. Sproul)

So What?

Reading the Bible literally means reading it as the kind of literature it is. The Literal guardrail doesn't flatten the Bible. It lets each part speak in its own voice: history as history, poetry as poetry, wisdom as wisdom.



SECTION 4 · PSALM 23

The Contextual Guardrail: Read It Where It Lives

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Psalms 23:1 · BSB

Ask: What surrounds it, what did the first readers know, and where does it sit in the whole story?

PSALM 23 1 / 3

¹A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name.

PSALM 23 2 / 3

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

PSALM 23 3 / 3

⁶Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Three layers of context

Historical-cultural

What did the first readers know? David had been a shepherd boy, “tending the sheep” (1 Samuel 16:11, BSB).

Literary

What surrounds it? At the darkest point David turns to God: “for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4, BSB).

Theological-canonical

Where does it sit in the whole story? Ezekiel 34’s promised Shepherd, and Jesus: “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, BSB).

Read them together: Ezekiel 34:11–24 and John 10:1–21 alongside Psalm 23.

The shepherd trail through the whole Bible

Where	Read
Genesis and the Psalms	Genesis 48:15; 49:24; Psalm 23; 28:9; 78:70–72; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3
The Prophets	Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:1–6; 31:10; Ezekiel 34; 37:24; Micah 5:2–4; 7:14; Zechariah 11:4–17; 13:7
The Gospels	Matthew 2:6; 9:36; 26:31 (Mark 14:27); Luke 15:3–7; John 10:1–30; 21:15–17
The Letters and Revelation	Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Revelation 7:17

So What?

A verse read alone can be made to say almost anything. Read where it lives, it says what God meant, and often more than we first saw. Context doesn't make Bible study more complicated; it makes it come alive.



SECTION 5 · MATTHEW 6:22–23

The Linguistic Guardrail: Hear It in Its First Language

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.”

Matthew 6:22 · BSB

Ask: Is there a word where the Hebrew or Greek adds nuance?

MATTHEW 6:22–23

²²The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Context first, then the language

Before

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Matthew 6:19, BSB).

The idiom

In Proverbs 22:9, the Hebrew for *a generous man* is word for word “good of eye.”

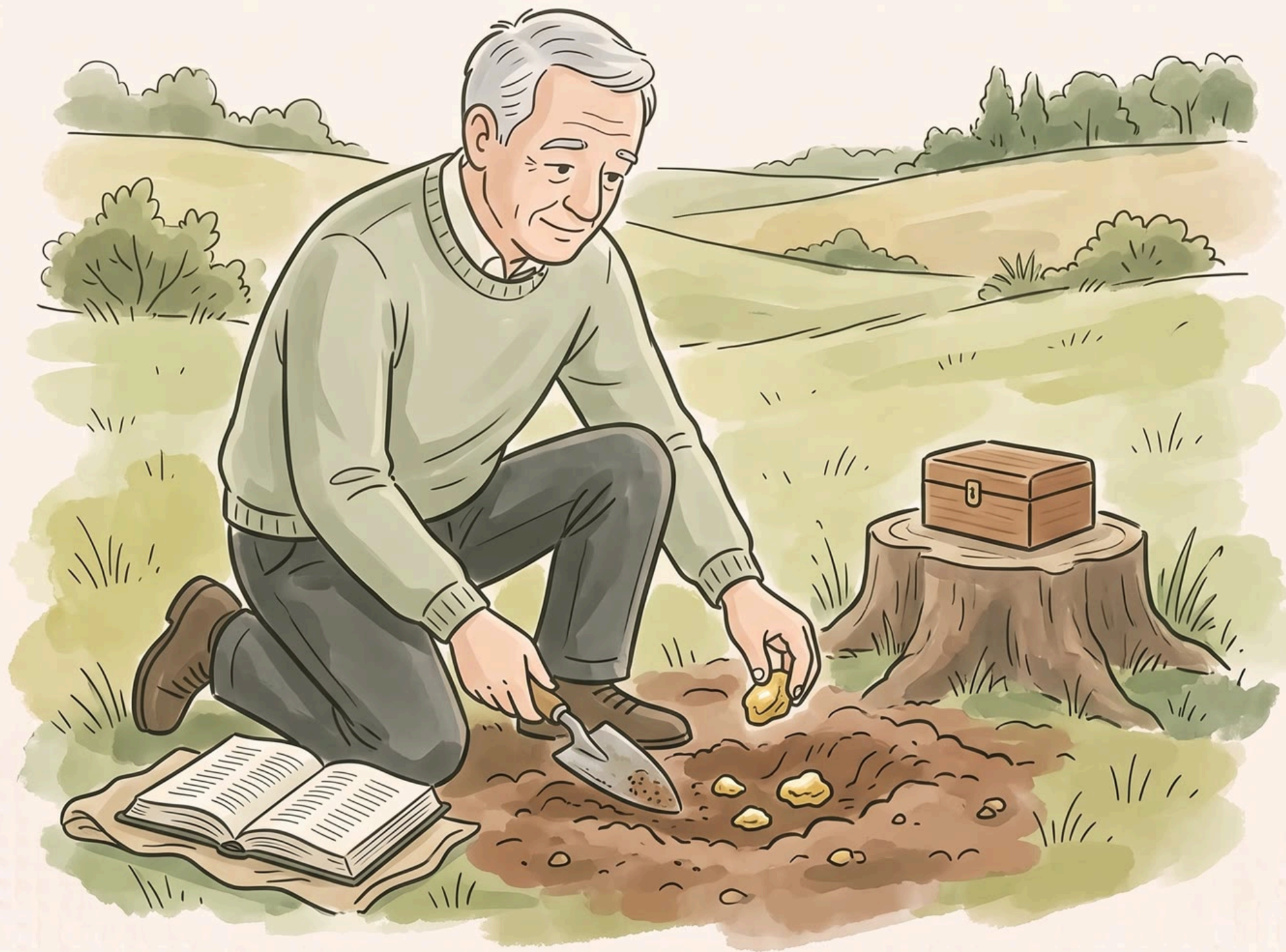
After

“You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24, BSB).

The cliffs: treating the English as the original (subtracting), and the word-study show-off (adding).
“Context always takes precedence over lexical definitions.”

So What?

You don't need to read Hebrew or Greek to respect them. When a phrase sounds odd, slow down, read what surrounds it, and look underneath the English. Sometimes the original words turn a puzzling line about eyesight into a clear call to generosity.



SECTION 6 · 1 TIMOTHY 6:6–10

The Exegetical Guardrail: Draw It Out, Don't Read It In

“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”

1 Timothy 6:10 · BSB

Ask: What is the Author saying in this passage to the original audience?

1 TIMOTHY 6:6–10 1 / 2

⁶Of course, godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, so we cannot carry anything out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

1 TIMOTHY 6:6–10 2 / 2

⁹Those who want to be rich, however, fall into temptation and become ensnared by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. By craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

Hold one loosely, the other firmly

Preunderstanding

Everything we already think before we study: sayings we've heard, what our culture assumes, what we hope a verse says. Hold it loosely; let the text correct it.

Presuppositions

Convictions about the Bible as a whole: it is God's Word, true in everything it says; it never leads us astray; it has the final word over what we believe and how we live. Hold them firmly.

Read what it says before deciding what it means. The trap is for “those who want to be rich” (1 Timothy 6:9, BSB).

So What?

Every reader brings something to the Bible. The Exegetical guardrail doesn't ask you to empty your head. It asks you to let the text have the last word: read what it says before deciding what it means, and be ready for it to change you.



SECTION 7 · LUKE 10:36–37

The One-Meaning Guardrail: One Meaning, Many Applications

“The one who showed him mercy,” replied the expert in the law. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Luke 10:37 · BSB

Ask: What is the one thing this meant when it was first given, before later revelation illuminated it further?

LUKE 10:36–37

³⁶Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷“The one who showed him mercy,” replied the expert in the law. Then Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Two cliffs and two exceptions

Adding

Origen's allegory: the man was Adam, the inn the church, the two coins the Father and the Son. Calvin: "devised this interpretation without regard to the true meaning of the Lord's words."

Subtracting

"Greet one another with a holy kiss" (1 Corinthians 16:20, BSB): skipped because our setting differs. Its meaning still stands: warm, pure family affection.

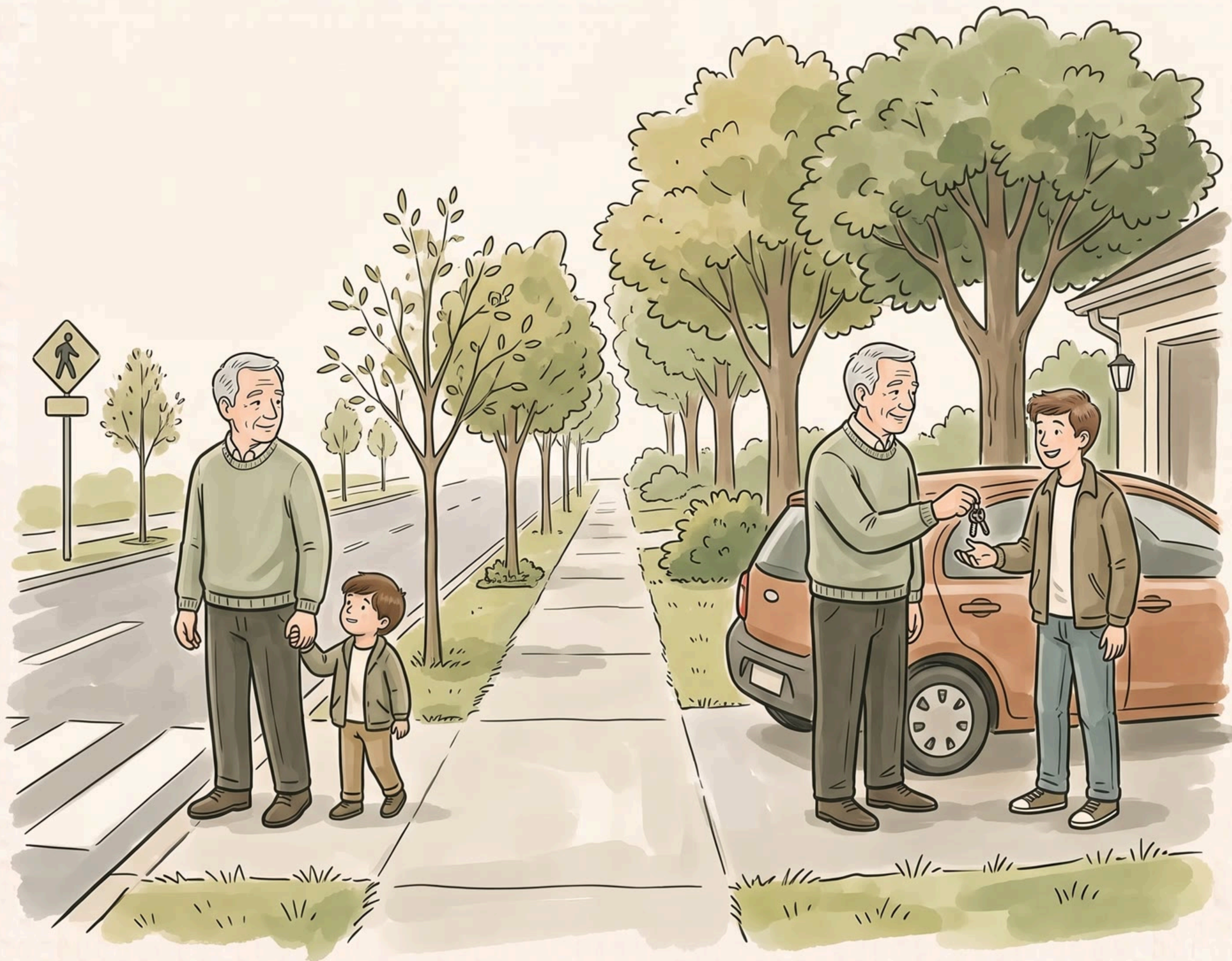
Two exceptions

Some prophecy carries a "fuller sense." A metaphor can carry several related ideas: God is a *rock*, but not "dense, heavy, or abrasive."

So What?

One meaning keeps the Bible from saying whatever we want.

Many applications keep it speaking into every part of life. The well is deep, but it's one well, and its water is for drinking.



SECTION 8 · MARK 7:18–19

The Progressive Guardrail: Know Where You Are in the Story

*“Do not call anything impure that God has
made clean.”*

Acts 10:15 · BSB

Ask: Where does this sit in the unfolding story?
What had God revealed by then, and what did He
reveal later?

MARK 7:18–19

¹⁸“Are you still so dull?” He asked. “Do you not understand? Nothing that enters a man from the outside can defile him, ¹⁹because it does not enter his heart, but it goes into the stomach and then is eliminated.” (Thus all foods are clean.)

One thread through the whole story

Creation

Every seed-bearing plant for food (Genesis 1:29).

After the flood

“Everything that lives and moves will be food for you” (Genesis 9:3, BSB).

At Sinai

Clean and unclean for Israel: “be holy, because I am holy” (Leviticus 11:45, BSB).

Jesus

“Thus all foods are clean” (Mark 7:19, BSB).

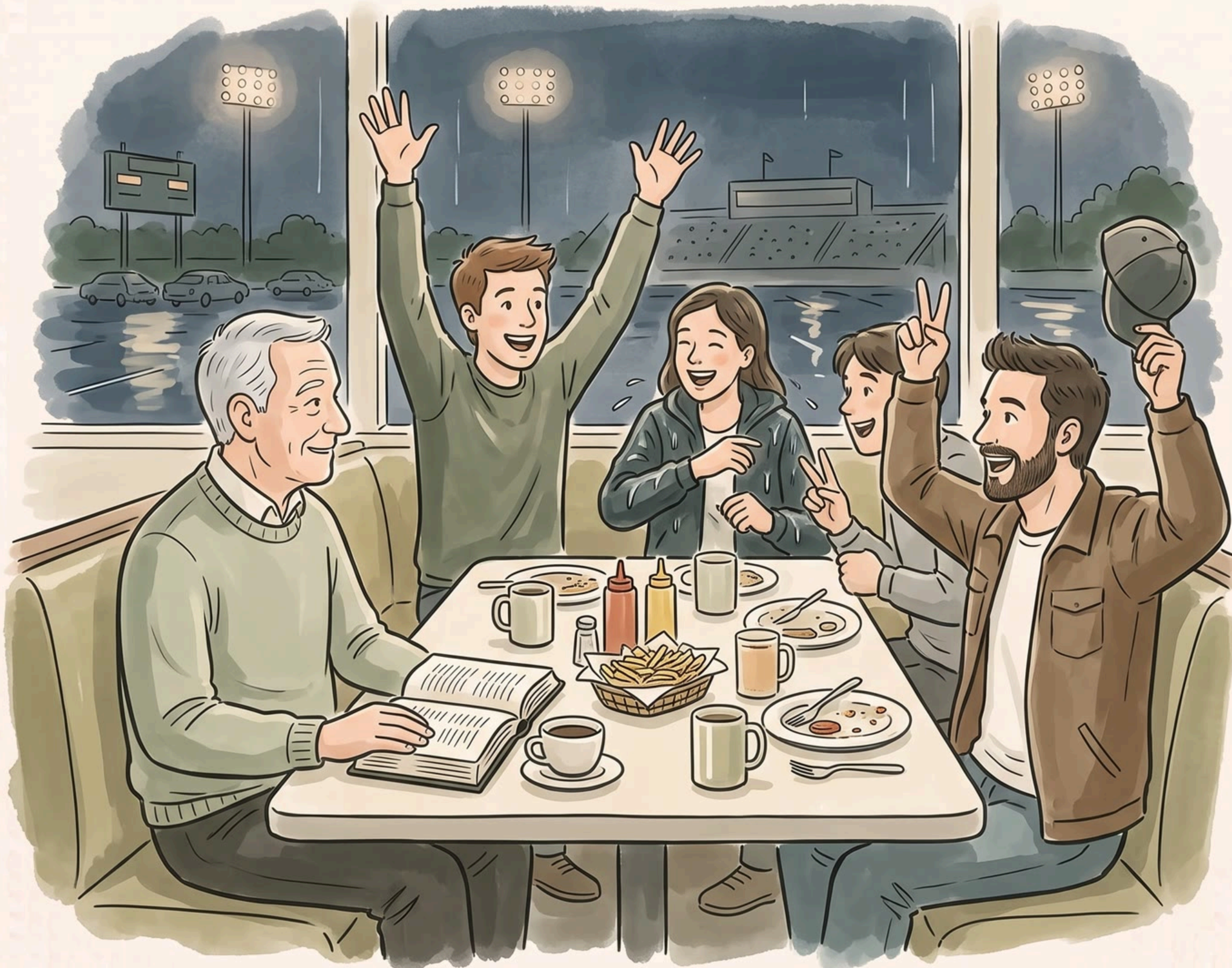
The church

Peter: “I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28, BSB).

The menu changed. The call to holiness carried forward: “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16, BSB).

So What?

God didn't hand us His Word all at once. He unfolded it like a story, every page true and every page pointing forward to Christ. Know where a passage sits, and you'll neither tear out the early pages nor stop reading halfway.



SECTION 9 · ROMANS 3:28 · JAMES 2:24

The Harmony Guardrail: Let Scripture Explain Scripture

“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

Romans 3:28 · BSB

“As you can see, a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone.”

James 2:24 · BSB

Ask: Do clear passages elsewhere agree with my reading?

ROMANS 3:28

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

JAMES 2:24

²⁴As you can see, a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone.

Guarding the same road from opposite sides

Paul

Against works as the way to earn God's favor: justified "by faith apart from works of the law" (Romans 3:28, BSB). He points to the moment Abraham believed.

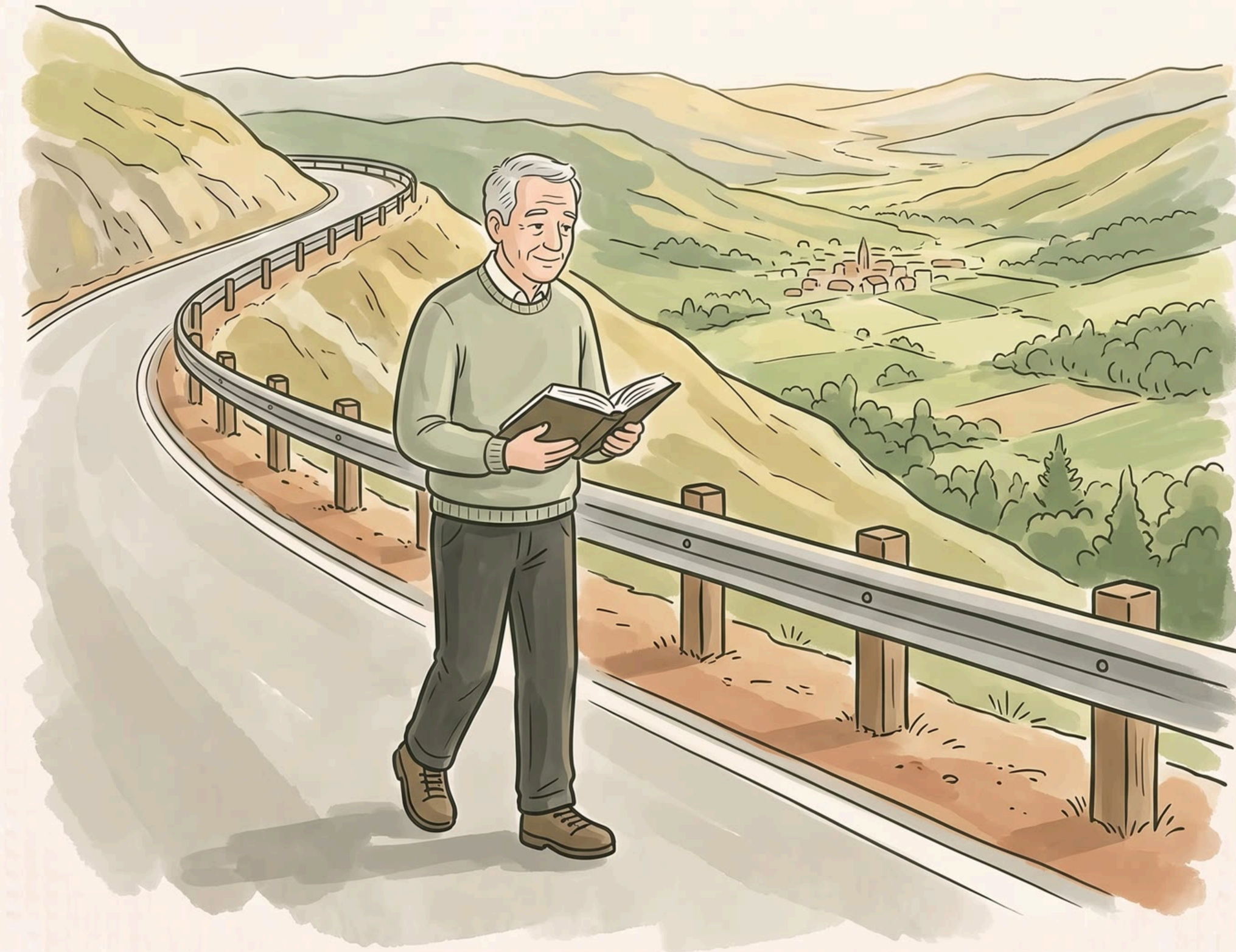
James

Against a faith that never changes anything: "faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead" (James 2:17, BSB). He points to Abraham offering Isaac.

"For it is by grace you have been saved through faith... not by works... For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:8–10, BSB).

So What?

The Bible is one Word spoken in many voices over many centuries, and it holds together. When a passage puzzles you, you don't have to guess or choose sides. Let the clear passages help you understand the hard ones, and trust the Author not to contradict Himself.



SECTION 10 · DEUTERONOMY 5:32–33

Seven Rails, One Road

“So be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you are not to turn aside to the right or to the left.”

Deuteronomy 5:32 · BSB

DEUTERONOMY 5:32–33

³²So be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you are not to turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³You must walk in all the ways that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Seven guardrails, seven questions

Guardrail	The question to ask	Deeper
Literal	What genre is this, and what does it actually say in that genre?	Lesson 5
Contextual	What surrounds it, what did the first readers know, and where does it sit in the whole story?	Lesson 6
Linguistic	Is there a word where the Hebrew or Greek adds nuance?	Lesson 7
Exegetical	What is the Author saying in this passage to the original audience?	Lesson 8
One-Meaning	What is the one thing this meant when it was first given, before later revelation illuminated it further?	Lesson 9
Progressive	Where does this sit in the unfolding story? What had God revealed by then, and what did He reveal later?	Lesson 10
Harmony	Do clear passages elsewhere agree with my reading?	Lesson 11

So What?

Seven rails, one road, one Author. The guardrails don't slow you down. They keep you on the road, so you can hear what God said and do it.

SEVEN RAILS, ONE ROAD, ONE AUTHOR

“You must walk in all the ways that the LORD
your God has commanded you, so that you may
live...”

Deuteronomy 5:33 · BSB

How is God inviting you to live out this abiding principle this week?

Meditate and Obey. Study and Apply. Hear and Do.