Anchored Update [75]

What Did You Hear?

What might I be bringing to the words I hear, in conversation and in Scripture?

Anchored Verse

I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]

— Philippians 4:13 (AMP) (Read 4:10-14) —

Feeling misunderstood has changed how I read the Bible. This week we look at what we bring to the words we hear, and at how reading Philippians 4:13 in its full context changes the question we ask of it.

by Sean Brannan

Friday, 20 November, 2026

Welcome friend,

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read this issue. With family in town and a full week ahead, this one is about slowing down long enough to hear what's actually being said.

A Quick Update: My family is visiting from Alabama this week, and it's been good to have everyone together. My dad starts radiation on Monday. Three days a week, we'll make a three-hour round trip for a fifteen-minute treatment. We're praying it helps, and I'd be grateful if you'd pray with us.

I'm pausing new articles for now while I finish building the new website. I'm hoping to have it up and running by the New Year.

What Did You Hear?

I've left conversations feeling completely misunderstood. Someone heard the words I said, but the meaning they took from them was so far from what I intended that I wondered whether we had been part of the same conversation.

Sometimes I've been able to see how it happened. A word touched an old hurt. A sentence sounded like something they'd heard from someone else. What came before my words, and what I said after, seemed to disappear. Their experience shaped what they heard. Counselors sometimes call these lenses ***schemas***: patterns built from past experience that help us make sense of things quickly, but that can also fill in a meaning the other person never intended. I've done the same to others, reacting to the meaning I assigned to their words before asking what they meant.

Those experiences have been changing how I think about context when I read the Bible.

We often talk about context as the verses before and after a passage, the person who wrote it, the people who first received it, and the kind of writing it is. All of that shapes what a passage means. A letter written to a church asks to be read differently from a poem or a proverb. But I also have to pay attention to what I bring to the page. I might be looking for reassurance, expecting criticism, or hearing a verse through the way someone once used it with me. The same lenses that shape a conversation shape how I read.

Philippians 4:13 is a familiar example. Paul says he can do all things through Him who strengthens and empowers him. When I hear that sentence on its own, I can easily take it as a promise that God will help me accomplish whatever I set my mind to. Read in the flow of the letter, though, the verse sits inside a larger thought:

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- In verse 10, Paul thanks the Philippians for a gift they sent while he was in prison.
- In verses 11 and 12, he says he has learned to be content whether he has plenty or is in need.
- In verse 13, he names the source of that contentment: Christ gives him strength to endure both.

Paul has known what it is to have enough and what it is to go without. The strength he describes meets him inside those circumstances, whichever one he happens to be in.

Reading the whole thought changes the question I bring to it. Instead of asking whether this verse guarantees the outcome I want, I can ask how Christ sustains me when the outcome is still uncertain. This week, with my dad starting treatment, that's the question I'm sitting with. It may be harder to hear when I'm desperate for something to work out. It also gives me something I can hold onto if it doesn't.

I don't always catch the assumptions I bring to a conversation or to Scripture. Sometimes my interpretation feels so obvious that I forget it's an interpretation. That's where I need to slow down and ask a few honest questions. What was actually said? What was happening around it? What might I be bringing to these words that changes how I hear them?

Those questions won't resolve every difficult conversation or every difficult passage. They can help me listen more carefully. And when I've felt misunderstood myself, I know what it means when someone stops to ask what I meant.

Key Takeaways

- Context includes both what surrounds a passage and what I bring to it, because both shape what I hear.
- Philippians 4:13 is Paul's testimony of strength to be content in plenty and in need, so it speaks to uncertain seasons more than to guaranteed outcomes.
- Asking what was actually meant helps me listen well, whether I'm reading Scripture or talking with someone I love.

This Week's Articles

There's no new article this week. In the meantime, Issue #74 (*When I Need to Control the Outcome*) pairs well with this one, since both sit with outcomes we can't guarantee.

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Anchored Prayer

Abba,

Thank You for meeting me in Your Word. Help me slow down when I'm sure I already know what I've heard. Show me what I bring to the page, and teach me to listen with care to Scripture and to the people in my life.

Hallelujah. Amen.

My Prayer

> ***The strength he describes meets him inside those circumstances, whichever one he happens to be in.***

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Anchored Breathwork

Listening Breath (4–2–6) for Slowing Down to Hear

Purpose: To quiet the urge to react long enough to hear what is actually being said, by God in His Word and by the people in front of you.

Posture: Sit comfortably with your feet grounded. Let your shoulders drop and rest your hands open in your lap, or on an open Bible.

1. **Inhale** through your nose for **4 seconds**.
   Quiet cue: *"Speak, Lord..."*

2. **Hold** gently for **2 seconds**.

3. **Exhale** slowly through your mouth for **6 seconds**.
   Quiet cue: *"...I'm listening for You."*

Repeat for 5–7 cycles.

Pro Tip: Try this before you read a familiar passage or before a conversation you expect to be hard. If the counts feel long, shorten them to 3-1-5. The longer exhale is what helps your body settle.

> ***Sometimes my interpretation feels so obvious that I forget it's an interpretation.***

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Anchored Reflection

This week, choose a verse that you know well and read the passage around it. Then think of a recent conversation where you felt misunderstood.

What was the writer addressing, and what have I assumed this verse means?

Is there something in the wider passage I haven't made room to hear?

In that conversation, what might the other person have brought to my words, and what might I have brought to theirs?

If this issue stirred something, the opening section of **From Survival to Surrender,** *"How to Use This Book,"* talks about reading slowly and honestly, and about not using insight as a weapon. You can find it on Amazon or at R3B Press.

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Your Ideas are Important

Every newsletter, article, and Anchored Reflection begins with a real question or burden.

If something is pressing on your heart, send it my way. Each week I choose a focus for the newsletter, an article, or a reflection. What you share could be the catalyst for someone else's breakthrough. I would also love your feedback on recent articles.

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