

Application & Transformation

Read: Colossians 3:16, Psalm 119:11

Every story, law, prophecy, and teaching contains principles that we can apply to our lives today.

Try finding the principle of truth behind certain passages. Read the following passages and write a one-sentence statement that summarizes the *moral truth* behind each passage.

Example: Nehemiah 13:23-27

“Don’t mix what is unholy with what is holy.”

Try these passages:

Exodus 21:29, Ecclesiastes 11:1-2

Before attempting to apply a biblical passage to your life, look for examples of its application in the Bible. Note the similarities and differences in how biblical characters lived by these words.

In the above passage in Nehemiah, the Jews were told not to marry foreign women. But Christians can be from many races. Even believing Jews were allowed to marry believing non-Jews (Numbers 12).

If a passage or principle is applied in different ways throughout the Bible, what does that tell you about how you might apply it to your own life?

Examination + Interpretation + Application = Transformation
(Philippians 4:9)

No Bible study is truly complete without personal transformation. You will not be able to transform yourself every time you read the Bible, but you will be able, over time, by trying to consistently apply God’s word in your life, to see a cumulative, transformational effect.

What passages from the Bible have had a dramatic or transformational effect in your life so far? Give examples of before and after.

How to Study the Bible

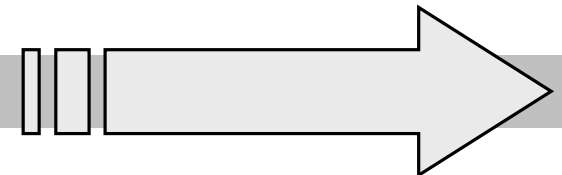
Studying the Bible provides the best way for a Christian to understand and apply God’s principles in life. There are many people who believe that God speaks to them, or leads them. There are many people whom, out of a desire to do the right thing and honor God, try to apply certain passages in the Bible to their lives – only to discover later that the passage in question had no relevance to them.

How do you know what parts of the Bible are applicable to your life today – and how to apply them?

This study will provide a short guideline to reading, studying, and applying the Bible to your life. It is not a comprehensive study examining all parts of the Bible and its divisions, but it will give you a starting point on your journey of exploration with God’s Word.

The most important part of any study of the Bible is the application of the truth learned. The Apostle Paul said, “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies” (I Corinthians 8:1). Learning for the sake of gaining knowledge is good, but applying what we learn to transform our lives for Jesus Christ is even better.

As you begin this study, make the commitment to apply what you learn from God’s word so that it will transform your life, helping you to grow to become more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).



Examination

Read: Deuteronomy 32:46-47, II Timothy 2:15

The first step to knowing and applying God's word is to read it regularly.

While it is important to attend church or Bible studies to hear others teach God's word, it is equally important to have your own time to read God's word. Receiving a first-hand knowledge of what the Bible actually says is an important step to avoiding errors that others might pass on to you.

How often do you read God's word? How much time each week or each day will you commit to reading the Bible?

The Bible was written through the agency of man, for man, using the literary forms and languages of man. Therefore, the principles for examining God's word are no different than any other book.

The Bible is not one book; it is 66 separate books published in a single volume. These books use the primary literary forms to communicate God's message. Here are some examples.

- Narrative (Gospels, Nehemiah)
- Essay (Epistles, Song of Solomon)
- Law (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy)
- Poetry (Psalms, Lamentations)
- Prose (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.)

Is a poetic passage always to be interpreted "literally?" Are all the laws of the Old Testament applicable to us today? Why do you think it is important to understand the literary form used in order to properly understand a passage?

God's word should not be read "passively," but "actively." As you read a story or passage, always ask the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

Asking questions of the text uncovers great biblical truths. By asking questions, we dig deeper into the motivations of the characters, and the writers, and reveal deeper truth. Try it for yourself!

Read Mark 2:1-12 and ask the questions of each section of the passage.

Interpretation

Read: John 5:39, II Timothy 2:15

When we interpret what a passage means, we must do so in its three levels of context: Historical, Cultural, and Personal.

The Bible was not written to by people living in our day, or in our culture. When we read the Bible, we must try to understand the culture they were writing in, and how it impacted their understanding of what God was saying at the time. We must also ask the questions:

- What did the writer intend to say or accomplish?
- What is unique about the audience he was writing to, and how would they have understood his intention?

The Bible is not a "mystical" book, therefore, avoid the temptation to "over spiritualize" its text. Also be careful not to "legalize" the text. Approach the text for what it says at a practical level.

(Over-spiritualizing: Luke 1:42)

As an example in the passage above, does Luke mean to say that Mary has a special status that must be honored like a spiritual queen, or special place in heaven, or that God simply used her in a unique and special way to accomplish His will? Is this passage really about Mary being blessed, or about God doing something unique? Read the surrounding verses for a hint.

(Legalizing: Matthew 5:29)

Is this passage a "rule" or "law" that we must follow? Did Jesus mean for us to literally pluck out our eyes? What do you think He meant?

If your interpretation of a passage does not agree with other Bible passages on the same topic, then you have most likely made an error. Re-examine the passage, and the process you took to your conclusion. It may be that somewhere along the way you made an assumption about what God wanted to communicate, but it doesn't really appear in the text. Never be afraid to admit a mistake interpreting what something means. Admitting a mistake increases our reliance on God, and commitment to know the fullness of His word.