

Basic Bible Study Skills

Application

The three stages of inductive Bible study:

- Observation: What does it say?
- Interpretation: What does it mean?
- **Application: What does it mean to me?**

Application

The aim of application is to see how the author's God-inspired message is related to our 21st century lives, and to submit our thoughts, will, actions, and attitudes to its teaching (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Without application, Bible study is only an intellectual game.

Dangers to avoid

We tend to be too academic. We equate understanding a passage with obeying the passage.

We tend to get lazy and give up before applying the passage. Accurately observing and interpreting a passage takes time and effort, but don't neglect application.

Types of application

Devotional application – Bible study should produce a response in our attitudes and emotions toward God.

- What did I learn about God?
- How can I more fully respond to Him in love, worship, and obedience?

Conduct application – Our response to God should produce changes in behavior to conform our lives to his Word.

- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there an error to avoid?
- Is there a promise to realize?
- Is there a warning to heed?
- Is there a command to obey?
- How can I apply these (example, promise, etc.) to my behavior immediately? What might I need in the future?

Principles of application

Evaluate the relevance of the passage to our times.

Progressive revelation – Much of the Old Testament, such as the instructions for sacrifices in Leviticus, are not directly applicable to our time. We don't make animal sacrifices because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. The New Testament has modified the application of the Old Testament. However, the principles involved, i.e., that God is holy and does not take sin lightly, are still valid and can teach us much in our relationship with Him.

Cultural truth – Truth is sometimes restricted in specific application to the original audience. The controversy over eating meat in Romans 14 is not a critical issue for us, but the principles governing Christian conduct and consideration for weaker brothers are still important today.

Timeless truth – Some truth applies to all persons of all times, such as John 3 about being born again.

Apply the passage to your life

Seek to understand the passage in its original setting

Derive the principle(s) underlying the passage

Discover the exact contemporary situation to which the principle may be applied

Analyze specific modern situations to determine if they fall within the bounds of the truth in the passage

Compare the modern situation to the practice or idea that the author originally wrote about.

Translate the principle in the passage to the contemporary situation.