

The vital importance of applying Scripture to Life

BACKGROUND THOUGHTS

The primary goal of any Bible study: putting Scripture to use in life. This method is OK for use in a "quiet time". It involves careful, prayerful reflection on a passage, inviting the Holy Spirit show how to apply it. Results are practical and measurable **in your life**.

Jas 1:22 - Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

The goal is:

- living our lives his way in this world
- Christlikeness
- being taught, rebuked, corrected, trained (see also 2Tim 3:16)

A failure to apply the Scripture you read ...

- means you don't truly know God's word - Mt 22:29
- is dangerous - 1Cor 8:1
- means you are taking God's commands only as advice

Jesus replied [nb to the Saducees, who memorised the Old Testament], "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." Mt 22:29

...knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 1 Cor 8:1

Knowing Scripture is not enough and can be dangerous. Satan knows Scripture (see, for example, Mk 4:6) ... but is ruined by pride

- Read Mt 7:24-27, remembering this isn't primarily architectural advice! And Jas 4:17

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. Jas 4:17

Planned application takes:

- Serious thinking, especially to distil the important principle from the context
- Warfare; Satan cares less about how much you know, more what you will do with it. He will contest your efforts
- Willingness to change; and therefore self-discipline.

METHOD

1) **Pray** for insight. Ask the Holy Spirit how to apply the passage in your life.

2) Meditate (read slowly, chew thoroughly; the following steps are like digestion)

- visualise** scene; how would you feel? React? Put yourself in writer's shoes.
- emphasise** each word in verse, or key words in a passage.
- paraphrase** the passage into your own English
- personalise** the passage - put yourself into it
- Look for **SPACE PETS** ... is there a:

Sin to confess?

Promise to claim?

Attitude to change?

Command to obey?

Example to follow?

Pray to pray?

Error to avoid?

Truth to believe?

Something to sing God's praise for?

- pray** the passage back to God.

3) **Write** an application - how will this change you? Make it:

a/ personal; b/ practical and specific; c/ possible; d/ provable (be accountable)

How will you use what you've learned to minister, teach or serve?

Question: Does the application help me become like Jesus?

4) **Memorise** a key verse; when you recite it, remember your application promise.

Possible SAMPLES to start with

Ps 15, Ps 34, Rom 12, 1Jn 4, Mark 1:1-20

AN EXAMPLE

Psalm 15

1) Pray!!

2) a/ OK, so this is by David ... he's asking God a question, and getting the answer. I remember that David had promised God he'd build Temple, 'cos up to now they only had the tent of worship. He's remembering Moses's instructions about who could go in that tent, and (before that) who could go up on Mount Sinai. I guess this is written while he's planning to build the Temple and working out the rules. Who can actually go into the Temple, confident they'll please God? Who's fit to be in the place where God meets man? So this is "What sort of people does God like to live with". By writing a song, David would make sure the priests and the people wouldn't forget.

b/ Key words are: (v1) dwell, live; (v2) walk, blameless, righteous, speaks truth; (v3) no slander, no wrong, no slur; (v4) despises (the vile), honours (those who fear the Lord), keeps oath, doesn't change mind; (v5) lends, bribe.

c/ God, who can stay in your presence? What sort of person is worthy to live with you? Only someone who lives without regret, who acts right, who is truly honest; who doesn't speak badly about others, who doesn't act badly to those around him or talk critically about them; who steers clear of bad characters but respects people who love God, who sticks with his promises no matter what it costs, who is reliable; who lends money and doesn't want a profit, and who can't be coerced to harm innocent people. Someone who acts like this is secure.

d/ Lord, can I dwell in your sanctuary? Can I live on your holy hill? Is my walk blameless, do I do what is righteous, speaking the truth from my heart ... would you like me in your living room?

e/ **S:** As I read this, I can think of plenty of times I have "cast slurs on my fellow man"

P: I will never be shaken by anything if I truly try to live in a way that pleases God. It's got to be real, though

A: So it means I can't speak in a harsh, critical way and expect to live securely in God's presence. Change that!

C: Lots of commands! Use of tongue wisely; only make promises I intend to keep; give freely

E: Jesus lives with God eternally, so must be perfect example. And David "friend of God", so study him more

P: Pray for forgiveness for times I've failed; and grace to be like Jesus in speech, faithfulness and generosity

E: You could get religious and pretend all this to look good to others; the point is to be able to live with God

T: It is possible for a person to live in God's presence and be pleasant company, and never be shaken from that

S: Because of Jesus, God treats me *as though I fulfilled this Psalm*. A clean slate if I keep confessing & avoiding sin.

f/ Lord, I want to dwell in your tent; I desire to live with you forever. Forgive me for my failures in so many of these areas, and help me to walk in a blameless way from now on ...

3) I want to have five significant conversations in the next week in which all the things I say about other people are positive; and I will tell {NAME} that this is my plan and have them check with me to make sure I do it.

This is personal – I have to practise the "no slander ... no slur ... honour those who fear the Lord" principle. It's practical – I'll know if I've had those conversations or not! It's possible - I can do it if I'm careful and deliberate. It's provable - {NAME} will help me check.

Ministry - if I manage to do this, I could use it as an example in teaching. But also ... let's see if the very act of being deliberately positive in conversations changes the way the people to whom I speak talk about others.

Jesus was always kind yet spoke the truth about everyone; getting this right will make me more like him.

4) It's pretty much just one sentence, isn't it. So I'll learn the whole thing.

NOW, YOUR TURN

This week, we're going to do a Devotional Bible Study on 1 Thess 5:12-28. We've given you a print-out, so you can highlight words and scribble notes. Write out your responses, in line with the example above. (Feel free to write more – this has been condensed so it fits on one page.) Bring your results along next week. We won't make you share personal things, but it will be encouraging to hear how it went! Try to use your "application" and let your group know if it was successful!

I Thessalonians, Chapter 5, verses 12-28

The passage

Write some notes!

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.

Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.