

Inductive Bible Study: Application

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- Click for Introduction to Inductive Bible Study using PowerPoint (2002)- **Hint:** View in "Slide Show" mode [see icons at bottom of the Power Point frame - click the one that says "Slide Show" - you can hit your "Escape" key at any time to revert back to the normal screen] - each mouse click will progressively give more information on each slide and make your viewing more "interactive"

THE THREE COMPONENTS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

- INTRODUCTION TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY
- OBSERVATION: What does it say?
- INTERPRETATION: What does it mean?
- APPLICATION: How do I respond?
- BIBLE VERSIONS How Literal is your translation?

APPLICATION

The tireless runner is a picture of what **Application** should look like in each of our lives...so...brethren, beloved of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for so great a salvation, filled with His Spirit and controlled by the love of Christ ...

"let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith" (He 12:1-note, He 12:2-note) pressing "on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14-note) disciplining ourselves "for the purpose of godliness for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1Ti 4:7, 8-notes)

The dictionary defines **application** as the act of putting to use or putting into operation especially for some practical purpose. It is the act of bringing something to bear; using it for a particular purpose. It is the work of applying something (I like that -- it make take a little "holy sweat" to apply what we have learned, but it is worth the effort exerted!)

In Bible study, **application** is putting truth you've discovered (through observation and interpretation) to use in your life with the ultimate goal of transformation or life change. Bible study is meant not merely to inform but to transform and renew our mind. (Ro 12:2-note)

Application answers the question,

How does the truth of this passage **apply to my life?**

Note that the question is **not** "Is this truth relevant to my life?" The truth of God's Word is always relevant to our life. The more honest question is "Am I ready and willing believe this truth and to apply it in my life?"

Application is the most neglected yet the most needed stage in the process. Too much Bible study begins and ends in the wrong place...with interpretation. Interpretation should build on **observation** and then lead into **interpretation**. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As someone has bluntly phrased it "Interpretation without application is abortion."

The goal of Bible study is not simply to determine **what it says** and **what it means**, but in the final analysis to apply it to one's life. If we fail to apply the Scriptures, we cut short the entire process and have not finished what God wants us to do.

Inductive Bible study is...

Not just for information

But for transformation

Jesus warned that Bible study as the end in itself, can be deceptively dangerous declaring to the Jewish leaders...

You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.

We must never forget that the ultimate goal of Bible study, whether inductive or otherwise, is to know God and His Son so that we might have life in Him. Jesus emphasized this important truth again in John 17 declaring.

And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

As **Dr Roy Zuck** points out...

Heart appropriation, not merely **head apprehension**, is the true goal of Bible study. Only in this way can believers grow spiritually. Spiritual maturity, in which we become more like Christ, comes not just from knowing more about the Bible. It comes from knowing more about the Bible and applying it to our spiritual needs. (**Basic Bible Interpretation**)

The Apostle Paul's great passion was transformed, Christ like lives as he explained to the saints at Colossae writing...

we proclaim Him (Christ in believers the hope of glory), admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Col 1:28, 29-See notes Col 1:28; 1:29)

The basis for application is **2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable (useful, advantageous, helpful,) for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (see notes 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- **Teaching** shows us what is right. Like a compass, the Bible always points you in the right direction. (cf Dt 28:13, 14, Joshua 1:7, 8, 9)
- **Reproof** shows us where we are wrong. When we look into the mirror of God's Word, we see ourselves more clearly. (James 1:23, 24, 25+)
- **Correction** shows us how to get right.
- **Training in righteousness** develops discipline to live right.

Righteousness in simple terms is whatever God says is right on any subject. The goal is that we live holy, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose and action and that in so doing we are made adequate

and equipped for every good ("God") work, which represents only those works He initiates and empowers. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Application brings us into this sphere of abundant life in the Spirit.

Application takes place as you are confronted with the truth and you respond to that truth in obedience (in faith).

Once you know **what** the passage means (**interpretation**), you are responsible to put it into practice in your own life. Accurate interpretation and correct application rest on the accuracy of your observations. Therefore, it is vital that you develop observation skills which might, at first, seem difficult, laborious, and time-consuming. (Persevere!)

Application begins with **belief**
which then results in **being** and **doing**.

It is impossible to study the Scriptures diligently without running head-on into the need for **application**,

"for the word of God is living and active (energetic, effective) and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge (sifting and analyzing) the thoughts and intentions of the heart and there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open (the bending back of the neck thoroughly exposing it to the eye of the skillful surgeon or the criminal on trial with a sharp dagger bound to his neck with the point just below the chin, so that he could not bow his head but had to face the court) and laid bare to the eyes of Him with Whom we must give account." (He 4:12, 13-see **notes** He 4:12; 13)

God's Word is the flawless discerner, perfectly analyzing our every motive, intention, and belief. Practically speaking, when we study "the word of God" we sense ourselves pierced. The effect of this piercing is to reveal whether there is spirit or not. The word of God reveals to us our true selves.

Are we spiritual or are we natural? Are we truly born of God and spiritually alive or are we deceiving ourselves and spiritually dead, no matter how orthodox our profession of faith might appear? Are the "thoughts and intentions of our heart" spiritual thoughts and intentions or only natural thoughts and intentions?

So before moving on to the crucial step of **application**, pause for a time of reflection. Are you ready and willing for God's Word to cut deeply into your own life (**reproof**), to lay bare the hidden places of your heart, and to do its work of convicting, convincing, and converting your mind in any and every area?

Apply yourself to the Scriptures
and the Scriptures to yourself.

The proper spirit for profitable Bible study is a tender, teachable heart willing to obey the truth and the fruit of this humble approach is an eternally changed life lived to glory of God.

Dr. Howard Hendricks remarks that "Application is the most neglected yet the most needed stage in the process. Too much Bible study begins and ends in the wrong place: It begins with interpretation, and it also ends there...Observation plus interpretation without application equals abortion. In other words, every time you observe and interpret but fail to apply, you perform an abortion on the Scriptures in terms of their purpose."

The goal of Inductive Bible study is...
Not to make us smarter sinners
But to make us more like our Savior

Let me ask you a serious question -- How often do you study the Word with no intention whatsoever of obeying it?

The Pharisees set the standard for this superficial, hypocritical, self deluding approach. Don't be like the man who boasted "I go through the entire Bible once every year". **Application** instead confronts us face to face with the question "How many times has the Bible gone through you?" It's better to live one verse of the Bible than to recite an entire chapter. You haven't completed your Bible study until you've allowed the Bible to "**study**" you and you respond accordingly to its **teaching** (which tells us what is true and right and so structures our thinking), **reproof** (tells us when we are out of bounds), **correction** (reveals sin and provides the dynamic whereby you can conform to God's will) and **training in righteous living** (God's means of showing you how to live), all in order that we as men and women of God might be complete or whole and what we were created to be so that we might be thoroughly equipped for good work (2Ti 3:16, 17-note).

As the devotional writer **Matthew Henry** prayerfully put it "O that we may love our Bibles more, and keep closer to them than ever!

and then shall we find the benefit and advantage designed thereby, and shall at last attain the happiness therein promised and assured to us."

We all need to ask ourselves are we studying the Word that we might be more like Jesus or more like the Pharisees? Mark it down -- You can measure the eternal effectiveness of your inductive Bible study by the temporal effect it has on your behavior and attitudes. Don't be deceived -- Every time we hear the Word of God, we are either a little closer to heaven or a little further away. We are either a little more sweetened or a little more hardened. But we are never just the same. Once we know what a passage means we are responsible to live it out.

John Calvin commenting on proper application wrote that "We must observe that the knowledge of God which we are invited to cultivate is not that which, resting satisfied with empty speculation, only flutters in the brain; but a knowledge which will prove substantial and fruitful whenever it is duly perceived and rooted in the heart."

James emphasizes the importance of follow through in inductive study exhorting us to...

"prove (ourselves) doers of the word, and not merely hearers (the Greek word was used of one who audited a class rather than taking it for credit -- are you just auditing the Bible or are you fully enrolled?) who delude themselves. (Self deception is the worst form of deception and occurs when we come to believe there is virtue in hearing the truth of God but failing to apply it.) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ((this mirror = God's Word = unique for it shows our inner nature as a regular mirror shows our exterior. Both reflect what is really there. When God's Word points out something in us that needs correction, we need to respond. How foolish to look in the mirror of God's word, see spiritual "dirt" and yet fail to respond). But one who looks intently (a picture of the man who [meditates](#) -- puritan Richard Baxter said "There must be inward practice by [meditation](#) and outward practice in true obedience.") at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." (The blessing of God is integrally related to your response to the revelation of God.)

Christian author **Jerry Bridges** writes that "As we search the Scriptures, we must allow them to search us, to sit in judgment upon our character and conduct."

Oswald Chambers in his typical "no nonsense" style reminds us that "One step forward in obedience is worth years of study about it"

We have to be careful not to deceive ourselves. We don't really know the Bible unless we obey the Bible

God had a scathing rebuke for His people Israel through His prophet Ezekiel "They (the people of Israel) come to you (the prophet Ezekiel) as people come and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires expressed by their mouth and their heart goes after their gain." (Ezekiel 33:31)

Hearing and not heeding the word is as foolish as cooking an expensive filet mignon and then not sitting down to eat it! But this is exactly what happens when we fail to apply what we have observed and interpreted. Don't be deceived thinking that going to Precept inductive Bible study will make you more spiritual. To know and not to do is not to know at all. Such a person is like the church who had a new pastor who preached the same sermon every Sunday. When people started complaining, he told the congregation, "I'll preach a new sermon when you act on this one."

As **William Temple** said "Every revelation of God is a demand and the way to knowledge of God is by obedience."

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote that "It is a good thing to be a student of the Word, but only in order to be a practiser and experiencer of the Word."

There should never be a time when we go to the Scriptures without allowing them to change our lives for the better. The difference between studying and applying the Scriptures is somewhat like the difference between drifting in a boat and rowing toward a destination. To profess great love for God's word or even to pose as a Bible student is a form of self-deception unless our increasing knowledge of the word is producing increasing likeness to the Lord Jesus. To go on gaining an intellectual knowledge of the Bible without obeying it can be a trap instead of a blessing. If we continually learn what we ought to do, but do not do it, we become frustrated and callous. Also we become more responsible to God. The ideal combination is to read the word and then heed it expeditiously and implicitly.

King Edward VI of England would stand while the Word of God was read in worship service. He would take notes and later study them with great care. During the week he earnestly tried to apply them to his life. That's the kind of serious-minded response to truth

application calls for. A single revealed fact cherished in the heart and acted upon is more vital to our growth than a head filled with lofty ideas about God.

Samuel addressing King Saul after his serious "miscalculation" (sin) said "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Sa 15:22) (cf Ps 51:16,17, [Spurgeon note v16](#), [note v 17](#))

We learn God's Word not to **know** but to **grow** by **doing** for "Obedience is the mother of true knowledge of God." (John Calvin)

God's Word can only produce growth in soil "fertilized" by obedience. Our Lord taught that those who are

blessed (makarios [word study]) are those who **hear** the word of God and **observe** (phulasso [word study]) it.
(Lk 11:28+, cp Jn 13:17)

D. L. Moody quipped that "Our great problem is the problem of trafficking in unlived truth. We try to communicate what we've never experienced in our own lives."

"REAL" WORD STUDIES!

Someone has rightly observed that it is possible to be full of Scripture and full of carnality. Woe! That's a frightening statement! You haven't really **learned** the Word until you **live** the Word. Too often we come to God's Word to study it, to teach it, etc—to do everything in the world with it except be changed by it! To be sure our first goal should be to *get into the Bible* and then to allow *the Bible to get into us*. In **Observation** and **Interpretation** we study God's Word, but in **Application**, God's Word "*studies*" us!

Every time we encounter spiritual truth, we need to seek to apply that truth to our lives. The danger of **Observation** and **Interpretation** without application is that we become **hypocrites** like the Pharisees, filled to the brim with intellectual knowledge, but failing miserably to allow the truth to transform our hearts! Head knowledge without heart change is not enough and in some ways is even worse than no knowledge. **Greater knowledge** should always bring about greater obedience, enabled by grace not law, empowered by the indwelling Spirit as we learn to discard self effort and depend on the Spirit. **See related resource:** Relationship of faith and obedience

As **Vance Havner** wisely said "It is not the Word hidden in the **head** but in the **heart** that keeps us from sin."

James warned that "to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." (Jas 4:17, cp Lk 12:47, 48+, Jn 9:41)

Comment: Sins of omission (failing to do what God wants us to do) are sins just as surely as sins of commission (doing what God has told us not to do).

The person who knows the truth but doesn't act on it is not simply making a mistake or showing poor judgment but he is in sin. In God's mind, knowledge without obedience is sin. The religionists of Jesus' day had all of the data. They had mastered the Old Testament, but they were never mastered by the truth itself. Did they know where the Messiah was to be born? Absolutely. They were the local authorities. But when the report came of His birth, did they go to check it out? No, even though the town of Bethlehem was only five miles down the road from Jerusalem. Their righteousness was external, based on facts and devoid of personal response. Truth revealed brings responsibility to respond.

J A Bengel wisely admonished "Apply yourself to the whole text, and apply the whole text to yourself."

Remember that the more time spent in observation, the less time you will spend in interpretation, the more accurate the interpretation and the more appropriate the application. While there is only one valid interpretation of a passage, there can be many applications. So before we can apply the truth as God intended, we need to be certain that our interpretation is accurate, which in turn hinges on careful observation. Erroneous interpretation can lead to aberrant application. If our interpretation is accurate, we at least have the potential to apply the truth appropriately. In sum, acting on what God has said assumes that you understand what He has said as illustrated below.

**One ROAD:
INCORRECT
APPLICATION**

**The Other ROAD:
CORRECT
APPLICATION**

THE ERROR IN THE "FORK" IN THE ROAD

is the result of..
Careless Observation
Inaccurate Interpretation

Robert Frost in his poem "**Road Not Taken**" writes in his last stanza

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
two roads diverged in a wood, and I --
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

In an even more famous discourse on roads taken and not taken, Jesus admonishes those who have an ear to hear to...

Enter by the narrow **gate**; for the gate is wide, and **the way is broad** that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and **the way is narrow** that leads to life, and few are those who find it. (Mt 7:13, 14+)

Which road will you travel? The road prepared and paved by careful observation, proper interpretation and diligent application of the Scripture or the one wrought by a superficial, inaccurate, irreverent approach? It will make "*all the difference*" in this life and the next for as Paul wrote...

godliness (eusebeia) (produced by discipline and diligent application of God's Word) is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the **present life** and also for **the life to come**. It is a trustworthy (pistos = faithful; cp Paul's 4 "faithful sayings" - 1Ti 1:15, 4:9, 2Ti 2:11+, Titus 3:8+) statement deserving full acceptance...it is for this (godliness) we labor (kopiao = to the point of exhaustion; present tense = continually) and strive (agonizomai = as when striving in an athletic contest emphasizing concentration, discipline, conviction, effort; present tense = continually)." (1Ti 4:8+, 1Ti 4:9, 10+)

Application of God's Word will not always be "pain free", but it will always be profitable. We will not fully comprehend the extent of the "return on our investment" until we enter Paradise and stand before our Lord at His bema (judgment) seat. This is a motivating truth that you can trust and which you should welcome and willingly acknowledge. The old saying regarding application is true that the same Word that afflicts the comfortable, also provides comfort for the afflicted!

The growing numbers of sermon-sippers and seminar-sitters who flit from one doctrinal dessert to another like so many busy, buzzing hummingbirds are most assuredly deceiving themselves unless they are also choosing to assimilate (heed) the truth ("honey" Ps 119:103-[note](#)) which they have tasted (cp Jas 1:22, 23, 24+, Jas 1:25+).

Whenever (every time) we read the Scriptures, the question we should always honestly seek to ask is...

How does the meaning of this text *apply* to me?

NOT

What does this verse *mean* to me?

Scripture reading and Bible study always represents (so to speak) a "God sighting" ("God speaking") and as such always applies to us as His creatures. In other words every divine **revelation** demands a determinative **response**. To not respond to supernatural illumination would be like saying the Biblical teaching on idolatry is great but it doesn't apply to me and then going off to spend the rest of the day seeking anxiously to accumulate wealth in this present but passing (away) world (cp the words of Jesus Mt 6:24+ and Paul Col 3:5+).

John Blanchard underscores the crucial discipline of **applying** God's Word sounding the caution that "There is more to Christian growth than knowing what the Bible says; nobody is ever nourished by memorizing menus."

Yogi Berra's advice is appropriate at this juncture -- When you arrive at a fork in the road, take it. Just make sure it's the one based on careful **observation** and accurate **interpretation**!

As someone has warned...

**Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny!**

John MacArthur argues that...Studying Scripture without allowing it to penetrate to the depths of your soul would be like preparing a banquet without eating it. The bottom-line question to ask is, "How do the divine truths and principles contained in any passage apply to me in terms of my attitude and actions?" Jesus made this promise to those who would carry their personal Bible study through to this point: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17, cp Jn 15:14, 14:15, Lk 11:28, Jas 1:22+, Jas 1:25+, Rev 1:3+)

Bible study is not complete until we ask ourselves, "What does this mean for my life and how can I practically apply it?" We must take the knowledge we have gained from our reading and interpretation and draw out the practical principles that apply to our personal lives. If there is a command to be obeyed, we obey it. If there is a promise to be embraced, we claim it. If there is a warning to be followed, we heed it. This is the ultimate step: we submit to Scripture and let it transform our lives. If you skip this step, you will never enjoy your Bible study and the Bible will never change your life. It is not enough just to study the Bible. We must [meditate](#) upon it. In a very real sense we are giving our brain a bath; we are washing it in the purifying solution of God's Word. ([The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

Jesus explains that relationship (and importance) between **knowing** God's Word and **doing** God's Word, declaring...If (If = 3rd class condition = possibility / probability but not a certainty! This speak of a personal choice that must be made) any man is willing (thelo = desires, wishes, delights [cp Ps 1:2-note], takes pleasure, is inclined to; the present tense - speaks of one's general direction of their life) to do (present tense - again speaks of one's general habit of practice = toward obedience not toward disobedience) His will, he shall know (ginosko = speaks not just of "head" knowing but of an experiential knowledge, a more intimate knowledge) of the teaching (didache - word study), whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (John 7:17)

As you carry out your inductive Bible study you will find that observation, interpretation, and application often occur simultaneously. Your Teacher, the Holy Spirit, can give you insights at any point in your study, so that you need to be sensitive to His leading. When words or passages make an impression on you, stop and [meditate](#) on what God has shown you or as the great preacher C H Spurgeon advised...

**Read the Bible carefully,
and then
[meditate](#) and meditate and meditate**

Devout meditation on the Word is more important to soul-health even than prayer. It is more needful for you to hear God's words than that God should hear yours, though the one will always lead to the other. -- F. B. Meyer

Read it to get the facts, study it to get the meaning, meditate on it to get the benefit. -- David Shepherd

Be alert for the following deceptive dangers regarding application

- (1) Substituting interpretation for application as did the Pharisees;
- (2) substituting superficial obedience for substantial life-change and
- (3) substituting rationalization for repentance.

Let's face it, most of us have a built-in "*early-warning system*" against spiritual change and the moment truth gets too close and too convicting, an alarm goes off and we begin to defend ourselves. Our favorite strategy is to *rationalize* sin instead of *repent*. The older we are, the more experienced we become at rationalizing sin. We build up a reservoir of responses so that whenever the truth gets too convicting, we've got a multiplicity of reasons why it applies to everyone else but us! There's an inherent danger in inductive Bible study -- it can degenerate into a process that's intellectually fascinating but spiritually frustrating. Inductive study should cause us to be mentally excited by the truth, yet we may still fail to be morally changed by it and when that happens, you know there is something wrong with your study of the Bible. We must get into the Word of God for ourselves. But then we must allow that Word to get into us, to make a permanent difference in our character and conduct. We must align ourselves with the Bible, never the Bible with ourselves.

**Study the Bible to be wise
Believe it to be safe**

Practice it to be holy

Or as **Skip Heitzig** advises "A good perspective to adopt when reading the Bible is that of an obedient servant waiting for instruction from the master. When the attitude of our heart reflects a readiness to hear and respond, the text of the Bible comes alive. The adventure of following God's will takes on a whole new complexion when we stop to listen and then act upon what we hear. The young prophet Samuel's response to God is a good example. When God got his attention, Samuel responded appropriately: "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Sa 3:10). It isn't enough just to be a Christian, if you aren't an obedient one. If the Bible seems dry and unexciting, check your attitude (**Ed**: Also do some personal inventory with 1 Pe 2:1+ and then you'll be able to move on to 1 Pe 2:2+!). Is your heart conditioned to **listen** and **obey**? ([How to Study the Bible and Enjoy It - see page 30](#))

Trust and Obey

by John H Sammis

When we walk with the Lord in the **light of His Word**,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we **do His good will**, He abides with us still,
And with all who will **trust and obey**.

Refrain

***Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.***

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Refrain

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross,
But is blessed if we trust and obey.

Refrain

But we never can prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows, for the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Refrain

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Refrain

Here are a few questions to facilitate application of the truth you have observed...

How does this truth apply to my life in four spheres in my (a) personal life (b) my family (c) work (d) church (e) neighborhood? In view of this truth, what specific changes should I make in my life? In other words, am I applying this truth? If not why not? Is it because of ignorance, rebellion or indifference? How do I propose to carry out these changes? We need to be specific here. Don't deceive yourself!

Three vital responses in application are...

(1) Response of confession: The Word of God is like a sword (it penetrates), like a mirror (it reveals), and like a critic of the heart (it judges and reproveth or exposes our attitudes and actions). (Ps 139:23, 24⁺; cf. 1 Jn 1:7, 8, 9; Pr 28:13)

(2) Response of faith: One of our reasons for meditating on the Word is to develop and build our faith. (Ro 10:17⁺). We must mix faith with what we read and hear. In other words, we must act by faith in what God has shown us from His Word or our hearts can

become hardened (cf. Heb. 3:7f+, He 4:2+)

(3) Response of obedience: Genuine faith will obey. When we obey the Word we are demonstrating the reality of our love for the Lord (our obedience is motivated by love not legalism!) and how much we really believe what we have observed. (1 Sa 15:22, 23)

Related resource: Relationship of faith and obedience

Remember that the...

One who uses the Bible as his guide
never loses his sense of direction.

It is God's will that we should read
His Word from day to day,
Not just for knowledge, but much more--
To love Him and obey.
--Hess

Robert Cook wisely advises that we should "Never leave a passage of Scripture until it has said something to you." **Ed:** And I would add that the Word of Truth ALWAYS has something to say to our heart! The real question is do I always want to hear God's voice?)

A T Pierson said that "While other books inform, and some few reform, this one book transforms."

D. L. Moody - "I never saw a useful Christian who was not a student of the Bible."

Martin Luther in extolling the virtues of the pure milk of God's precious and holy Word said...

In truth thou canst not read the Scriptures too much;
And what thou readest, thou canst not read too well;
And what thou readest well, thou canst not too well understand;
And what thou understandest well, thou canst not too well teach;
And what thou teachest well, thou canst not too well live.

David Shepherd rightly exhorts us to leave out not "step" in study of God's Word but to be diligent to...

Read it to get the facts, study it to get the meaning, **meditate** on it to get the benefit.

Skip Heitzig writes that "The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody made a habit of carrying a notebook to record what he learned as he read the Bible or listened to a sermon. As you make it your practice to study God's Word, you will experience the joy of having Him directly unveil His truth and reveal His purpose in your life. Keeping some form of journal will allow you to go back and review what God has been teaching you. Writing it down helps to remind you of God's consistent revelation and reinforces the truth He conveys to your heart. ([Skip Heitzig – How to Study the Bible and Enjoy It](#))

Puritan Thomas Manton adds that "What we take in by the Word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer."

Life Application: What joy is experienced when deliberate Bible study moves from a 'have to' to a 'want to!' How is our desire for, time with, and practice of God's living Word growing?

Puritan Thomas Watson wrote that...

The Word is both a glass to show us the spots of our soul and a laver to wash them away.

Leave not off reading the Bible till you find your hearts warmed. Let it not only **inform** you but **inflamm** you.

The well known **Puritan writer John Owen** had some pithy comments on the need to study the Scriptures with the ultimate intent to apply them to one's life. Owen wrote that...

To seek after mere notions of Truth, without an endeavor after an experience of its power in our hearts, is not the way to increase our understanding in spiritual things. He alone is in a posture to learn from God, who sincerely gives up (surrenders, yields) his mind, conscience, and affections to the power and rule of what is revealed unto him. Men may have in their study of the Scriptures other ends also, as the profit and edification of others. But if this conforming of their own souls unto the power of the Word be not fixed in the first place in their minds they do not strive lawfully, nor will they be crowned (!). And if at any time, when we study the Word, we have not this design expressly in our minds, yet if upon the discovery of any truth we endeavor not to have the likeness of it in our own hearts, we lose our principal advantage by it (John Owen).

**We must adjust ourselves to the Bible—
never the Bible to ourselves.**

The writer of **Psalms 119+** (virtually every verse of which deals with some aspect of God's holy Word) speaks to the importance of one's attitude that should undergird and stimulate right and ready **application** of truth gleaned...

Princes persecute me without cause, but (what's being contrasted?) **my heart stands in awe** of Thy words.
(Ps 119:161)

What is awe? Awe is a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder. It's an emotion variously combining dread, veneration, and wonder inspired here by the absolute authority of the Words of God compared to all words of men. And so we should react with overwhelming wonder, admiration, respect, or dread, this latter emotion relevant especially to those who read but fail to heed God's Word (application).

Puritan Thomas Manton comments that...There is an **awe** of the Word, not that makes us shy of it, but tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not the fruit of slavish fear, but of holy love; it is not afraid of the Word, but delighting in it, as it discovers the mind of God to us; as in the next verse it is written, "I rejoice at Thy word." This **awe** is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear; when we consider Whose Word it is, namely, the Word of the Lord, Who is our God, and has a right to command what He pleases; to Whose will and word we have already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of Him in all well pleasing (Col 1:10-note, Ep 4:1-note, Php 3:17,18-note, 1Th 2:12-note); who can find us out in all our failings, as knowing our very thoughts afar off (Psalms 139:2), and having all our ways before Him, and being one of Whom we read, -- "He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Joshua 24:19), that is to say, if we impenitently continue in them. Considering these things we receive the word with that **trembling of heart** which God so much respects.

Matthew Henry adds: Every gracious soul stands in **awe** of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, Lk 12:4, 5. The heart that stands in **awe** of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution (A good application).

What Is Application?

The best way to define application is to first determine what it is not.

- **Application** is not just accumulating knowledge. This helps us discover and understand facts and concepts, but it stops there. History is filled with philosophers who knew what the Bible said but failed to apply it to their lives, keeping them from believing and changing. Many think that understanding is the end goal of Bible study, but it is really only the beginning.
- **Application** is not just illustration. Illustration only tells us how someone else handled a similar situation. While we may empathize with that person, we still have little direction for our personal situation.
- **Application** is not just making a passage "relevant." Making the Bible relevant only helps us to see that the same lessons that were true in Bible times are true today; it does not show us how to apply them to the problems and pressures of our individual lives.
- What, then, is application? **Application** begins by knowing and understanding God's Word and its timeless truths. But you cannot stop there. If you do, God's Word may not change your life, and it may become dull, difficult, tedious, and tiring. A good application focuses the truth of God's Word, shows the reader what to do about what is being read, and motivates the reader to respond to what God is teaching. All three are essential to application.
- **Application** is putting into practice what we already know (see Mark 4:24 and Hebrews 5:14) and answering the question, "So what?" by confronting us with the right questions and motivating us to take action (see 1 John 2:5, 6 and James 2:17). Application is deeply personal—unique for each individual. It is making a relevant truth a personal truth, and involves developing a strategy and action plan to live your life in harmony with the Bible. It is the Biblical "how to" of life. (Introduction to the Life Application Study Bible)

Girdlestone in his 1887 classic "How to Study the English Bible" has a chapter on application that speaks to "THE PRACTICAL AND DEVOTIONAL USE OF THE BIBLE" - We have now come to the last and most important stage of our subject. The student has sought God's blessing on the Word, and has endeavored to find out its meaning and teaching; and it remains for him to ask, How does this passage apply to me? to my own life and destiny and relation to God? What guidance does it offer me in my social intercourse? in my business life? in my dealings with the world? in my teaching, visiting or mission work? We need to be honest

with ourselves at this point. We are inclined to qualify and modify the precepts of Christ and His claim on the Christian disciple. We tone down unconsciously the vigor of St. Paul's remonstrances, the force of his figures, such as 'Death to sin,' the strictness of the law of retribution, and of judgment according to works ; the demand of absolute self-sacrifice, and of truth at any cost ; the need of meekness, forbearance, self-restraint and sympathy. Again, we feel God's promises to be too high for us, we know He is perfect, and we are vile. What can He have to do with such as we are He is faithful, but will He be so to us? He is a prayer-hearing God, but will He hear our prayers? Nevertheless our duty is clear. Every promise must be grasped and realized as true : every precept must be registered in the heart, and acted out in the life, in the strength of God. In this spirit of readiness we seek to turn God's truth into action.

Our first duty is to meditate. Some people say they cannot meditate; they do not know what it means, or they have no time, or they go to sleep when they begin. But meditation is a matter of habit, and we can all be trained into it. What are its elements ? It consists **primarily** in picturing up the actual state of things brought before us in our reading, whether it be an incident, a prayer, an exhortation, a proverb, a prophecy. **Then** we have mentally to adjust the picture thus formed with the pictures already in our mind—to hang it, so to speak, in its right place, so that it may blend with the convictions of truth already attained. **Thirdly**, we seek to link the spirit of the passage with our own personal experience of things human and Divine. **Fourthly**, we seek to stir up our soul to notes of praise and thanksgiving, delighting ourselves in God's Word, rejoicing in the prospect it presents, yielding ourselves in joyful submission to its precepts, and at the same time searching ourselves in the light of its cautions, humbling ourselves over our past coldness or doubts—for most of our failures come from doubting God. This seems to be the process called inwardly digesting God's truth.

2. Turn Scripture into Prayer.— When in a spirit of quiet thought we have thus *resolved* and *revolved* God's Word, we are prepared to pray over it. The Bible is the best prayer-book in the world, as it has been called the best story-book in the world. It is full of instances of prayer; it supplies us with those thoughts about God which stimulate our faith to approach Him expectantly, earnestly, confidently. The records of human need and Divine generosity are not far-fetched ; they answer to our own case. The intercession of Abraham for Sodom, the prayer of Abraham's servant, the wrestling of Jacob, the pleadings of Moses, the strong crying of David, the spiritual conflicts of Elijah, Jonah and Jeremiah, the public and formal prayers of Solomon and Ezra, and the secret confessions of Daniel—all are the outpourings of hearts like our own. They do not seem very ancient. In most respects they might have been written in our own life-time. The New Testament gives us further teaching about the way of approach, and makes new demands on our spiritual life, whilst offering us a new standard to live up to. Thus, we are called and encouraged to new labour in prayer, whilst we have a new example in Him Who prayed, and wept, and bled. Every precept in Scripture may be turned into prayer, and every promise into praise. We may find something in every passage which comes before us both to pray over and to thank God over. Coleridge once said that, if we wish to make old truths fresh, we must turn them into action. All action presupposes prayer, and all prayer ought to lead on to action. God's promises are not a substitute for prayer, but a stimulus to it. He knoweth what we have need of before we ask, but He expects us to ask all the same. He will be inquired of by us. And so prayer is not a substitute for action, but the deliberate contact of the soul with God, whence we draw an enabling force whereby we go forth conquering and to conquer. ([How to study the English Bible](#))

Related Resources:

- Summit I - [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy](#)
- Summit II - [Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics](#)
- Summit III - [Chicago Statement on Biblical Application](#)
- [How can we know what parts of the Bible apply to us today?](#)
- [What is the key to applying the Bible to my life?](#)
- [How much influence is the Bible supposed to have on society?](#)

APPLICATION

SPACE PETS A Silly yet Serious Acronym to Aid Application

1. **S** – Is there a **Sin** to avoid, forsake or confess?
2. **P** – Is there a **Promise** to believe or condition to meet in order to partake of the promise?
3. **A** – Is there an **Attitude** to change or guard against or an **Action** I need to take?

4. **C** – Is there a **Command** to keep?
5. **E** – Is there an **Example** to follow?
6. **P** – Is there a **Prayer** to pray or a **Priority** to change?
7. **E** – Is there an **Error** to mark?
8. **T** – Is there a **Truth** to **memorize** and **meditate** upon ([Click here](#))?
9. **S** – Is there **Something** to thank or praise God for?

In short, as **John MacArthur** says "Bible study is not complete until we ask ourselves,

"What does this mean for my life and how can I practically apply it?"

We must take the knowledge we have gained from our reading and interpretation and draw out the practical principles that apply to our personal lives. If there is a command to be obeyed, we obey it. If there is a promise to be embraced, we claim it. If there is a warning to be followed, we heed it. This is the ultimate step: we submit to Scripture and let it transform our lives. If you skip this step, you will never enjoy your Bible study and the Bible will never change your life. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#))

Practice Moody's T & P Approach

In the margin of many pages in D. L. Moody's Bible, he wrote the letters **T** and **P**, meaning "**Tried and Proved**." He had put into practice (applied) passages from God's Word, proving that they work which of course they always do! You too can try and prove God's wonder-working precious and magnificent promises that provide everything needed for life and godliness -- but only if you seek to apply them to your life.

Don't be like Crowfoot, the chief of the Blackfoot nation in southern Alberta, who gave the Canadian Pacific Railway permission to lay track from Medicine Hat to Calgary, and in exchange received a lifetime railroad pass. Reportedly, Crowfoot put the pass in a leather pouch and wore it around his neck for the rest of his life—but he never once availed himself of the rights and privileges it spelled out. He had the "truth" but never **acted upon** it. If we study to **know** but never **do**, we like Chief Crowfoot will never fully tap into the blessing of

every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ep 1:3-note)

Application is where the proverbial "rubber meets the road", where our walk either does or does not back up our talk and where head knowledge becomes heart knowledge.

As **D. L. Moody** once quipped...

The only Bible the world reads is the one bound in shoe leather: you and me!

J A Bengel exhorts us as believers not just to observe the Word but to...

Apply yourself to the whole text, and apply the whole text to yourself.

Or as **Jerry Bridges** put it...

As we search the Scriptures, we must allow them to search us, to sit in judgement upon our character and conduct.

The world desperately needs to see the Word's miracle-working power at work in our own lives as living proof! Before the Word of God can bring change to our **world**, it must first change our **life**. It is still as true today as when **Martin Luther** first said it that...

"The world does not need a definition of religion as much as it needs a demonstration."

The story is told of several pastors who were arguing over which Bible translation was the best.

One of the pastors startled the group with the declaration that "My grandmother's translation is the best I've ever read." To which his colleagues exclaimed "What! Your grandmother translated the Bible?" To which he responded "Yes, she translated the Bible into her life, and was the most powerful translation I've ever seen!" Needless to say, the group of pastors got the point!

Will H. Houghton put it this way...

Lay hold on the Bible until the Bible lays hold on you.

Pastor Houghton assiduously applied what he preached. He pastored Calvary Baptist Church in New York City and later served as president of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute till his death in 1946. When Dr. Houghton became pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, a man in that city hired a private detective to follow Dr. Houghton and report on his conduct. After a few weeks, the detective was able to report to the man that Dr. Houghton's life matched his preaching. As a result, that man became a Christian. May we all seek to so diligently apply what we observe and interpret that we see "the world turned upside down."

A (supernaturally charged and) **changed life** is the clearest testimony of genuine understanding of the Bible.

After **personal application**, the best way to make the truth your own, is to **teach** it and even if you are not gifted to be a formal Bible teacher, there is always someone in your sphere of influence whom you are teaching by your life and your lips.

Ezra records that...

the good hand of his God was upon him (which should prompt a **"Why?"** to which the context answers) **for** (every time you see a "for" at the beginning of a sentence pause and ponder why it's there and remember you can usually substitute the word "because" in place of "for" to help understand the meaning) Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel. (Ezra 7:9, 10) (**Click** to read an in depth unpacking of this practical powerful principle - the "**Ezra 7:10 Principle**")

Inductive Bible study students should strive to be men and women like **Ezra** whose pattern was to **teach** the truth that he had put into **practice**. What was the result in his life and by way of application what will be the result in our life if we emulate his example? The **good hand of the LORD** will be upon us even as it was upon Ezra the scribe! Yes, the Scripture (through your Teacher the Spirit) will bestow spiritual blessings, not by **knowing** but by **doing**! Like Ezra we should make every effort to handle it accurately and live it out assiduously (with perseverance and care)! If you are a leader (and most of us are leaders in some sphere of influence) remember that a good leader is one who...

**Knows the way,
Goes the way,
and
Shows the way.**

If a Christian is **careless** in Bible reading, he will **care less** about Christian living.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night (this is the parallel of **observation** and **interpretation**), so that you may be careful **to do** (the **application**) according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success (the blessing of proper **application**). (Josh 1:8-note)

Christian author **Jerry Bridges** reminds us that....

Memorization is the first step to meditation.

John Blanchard adds the caveat regarding "memorization" writing that...

There is more to Christian growth than knowing what the Bible says; nobody is ever nourished by **memorizing** menus.

William MacDonald explains **meditation** as follows...

Christians should meditate on the Word of God (chew the cud) and have a separated walk (the cloven hoof). [MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#)

The godly preacher **F. B. Meyer** wrote that...

Devout meditation on the Word is more important to soul-health even than prayer. It is more needful for you to hear God's words than that God should hear yours, though the one will always lead to the other.

Reading the Bible without **meditating** on it is like **eating** without **chewing**. (Ps 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148 - see A Primer On Biblical Meditation)

I love how **John MacArthur** describes Biblical [meditation](#)...

It is not enough just to study the Bible. We must meditate upon it. In a very real sense we are giving our brain a bath; we are washing it in the purifying solution of God's Word (cp Ep 5:26-note). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

Andrew Murray writing about the discrepancy between **knowing** and **doing**, remarked

What a terrible delusion to be content with, to delight in **hearing** the word, and yet not **do** it. And how prevalent the sight of multitudes of Christians listening to the Word of God most regularly and earnestly, and yet not doing it! If a servant were to hear but not do, how quickly the judgment would be given. And yet, so complete is the delusion, that Christians never realize they are not living good Christian lives. Why are we deluded in this way? For one thing people mistake the pleasure they have in hearing the Word of God for Christianity and worship. The mind delights in having the truth presented clearly; the imagination is gratified by its illustration; the feelings are stirred by its application. To an active mind knowledge gives pleasure. A person may study some branch of science—say electricity—for the enjoyment the knowledge gives him, without the least intention of applying it practically. So people go to church, and enjoy the preaching, and yet do not do what God asks.

H. P. Barker has a graphic illustration emphasizing the importance of both knowing and doing the Bible's truths...

As I looked out into the garden one day, I saw three things. First, I saw a butterfly. The butterfly was beautiful, and it would alight on a flower and then it would flutter to another flower and then to another, and only for a second or two it would sit and it would move on. It would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could, but derived absolutely no benefit from it.

Then I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist. And the botanist had a big notebook under his arm and a great big magnifying glass. The botanist would lean over a certain flower and he would look for a long time and then he would write notes in his notebook. He was there for hours writing notes, closed them, stuck them under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away.

The third thing I noticed was a bee, just a little bee. But the bee would light on a flower and it would sink down deep into the flower and it would extract all the nectar and pollen that it could carry. It went in empty every time and came out full (A. Naismith, 1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes [Chicago: Moody, 1962], p. 15.)

Comment: Don't be like the butterfly flitting from one Bible study [preacher, devotional, commentary, etc] to another, but failing to personally apply what you learn. Neither are you to be "Bible botanists" (even good inductive students), who laboriously observe the Biblical text and derive accurate interpretation but fail to apply these truths. Instead, we need to be Bible "bees", using inductive study to go deep into the Scriptures obtaining its divine nectar and then allowing God's "nectar" to change us. And when we do, like the bee, we will find that we never go away from God's Word empty.

Study the Bible to be wise.

Believe it to be safe

Practice it to be holy.

Read And Apply

C H Spurgeon in his sermon [How to Read the Bible](#) wrote...

The third rule for our guide should be — **Read And Apply**. What I mean is just this. Do not read the Bible as a book for other people. Do not read it merely to say, "Yes, it is true; very true; I believe its doctrines to be the revelation of the infallible mind of God himself." But endeavour also in reading a page of the Scriptures, always to see how much it belongs to you. For some of you there is very little in the Word of God except threatening. Pray God to help you to feel the solemnity even of the threatening, for if you feel deeply the threatening now, you may be delivered from the tragic fulfilment of it by-and-by. If you are made to tremble under God's Word, you may never be made to tremble under God's hand. If you feel the wrath to come now, you may never have to feel it in the next world. Ask God that his threats may drive you out of your sins, and drive you to seek pardon in Christ. Then when you read descriptions of the human heart, and the fall, the corruption, and the depravity of our nature, look, and see yourselves as in a looking glass, and say of each man as you hear of his sin, "I am such a man as this was, and if I do not fall into precisely the same sin, yet the possibility and peril of it is in my heart, and I should do so, but for God's restraining grace." Take the very histories home to your heart, and find a point in them, either of encouragement or of warning for yourselves. As for the doctrines, recollect that a doctrine killeth except as it is personally grasped and as you feel your interest in it. I have known some rejoice greatly in the doctrine of election who never were elected, and some who were very pleased with the doctrine of

justification by faith, but who had no faith by which to be justified. I have known of some, too, who gloried in final perseverance, but who, if they had finally persevered would certainly have been in hell, for they were on the road there. It is one thing to know these truths, and even to fight for them with the zeal and bitterness of a controversialist, but it is quite another thing to enjoy them as our own heritage and our portion for ever. Ask the Lord to show you your interest, in every truth, and; do not be satisfied until you have an assured personal interest therein. Especially let this be so with the promises. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!" Well, it is a very fine promise, but if it is read to me thus: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," what a transformed and glorified promise it then becomes! Stout old Martin Luther used to say, All vital religion is in the personal and possessive pronouns." Is it not so? "When thou passest through the river I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee!" Oh! truly, such a promise is as a cluster of Eshcol, but it is in Eshcol's valley and I cannot reach it there; but the promise applied is the cluster brought to me just where I am, and I can receive it, and delight myself in its luscious sweetness.

Take care, nonetheless, to seek for the application of precepts. Some are always looking out for other people's duty, and are great judges and critics for what others ought to do. "Who art thou that judgest another man?" To his own master he stands or falls. See what precepts are binding upon thyself, and then, as a child of God, be thy feet swift to run in the way of his commandments. Read the Bible as a man reads his relation's will, to find what legacy there is in it for himself. Do with the Bible as the sick man does with the doctor's prescription. Follow it by personally doing what it bids thee. Ask God not to let thy Bible be another man's Bible, but thine own Bible, God's own mouth speaking to thy soul of the things which make for thy peace.

Read And Practise

Fourthly — and this is very hard work — Read And Practise. If you do not this, you are reading to your own condemnation. If you read, "He that believeth on him is not condemned," if you believe not then you are "condemned already," because you have not believed in the Son of God. The gospel is a very solemn thing to every man, because if it be not a savour of life unto life, since it must always be a savour of some sort, it therefore becomes a savour of death unto death. Some seem as if they read the Bible in order to know how not to do, and the more God commands the more they will not obey. Though he draw them they will not come to him, and when he calls them they will give him no answer. A sorry, sorry heart is that which so uses God's Word as to make it an aggravation of its sin. Our life ought to be — and if God's grace be much in it, it will be a new translation of the Bible. Speak of bringing the Bible down into the vernacular! Well, this is it. The worldling's Bible is the Christian. He never reads the book, but he reads the disciple of Christ, and he judges the Christian religion, by the lives of its professors. The world will learn better, and will more likely be brought to know Christ when the lives of Christians are better, and when the Bible of the Christian Life shall be more in, accordance with the Bible of Christian doctrine. God make us holy; sanctify us, spirit, soul, and body, and then we shall be made finely serviceable both to the Church and to the world. Read and practice; but we shall only be able to do this, as God the Holy Spirit shall help us.

...Try (**Ed**: in the sense of to test or examine) what you hear; try what you profess; try what you read. Goldsmiths keep bottles of acid by which they test everything that is offered them for sale, whether it is gold or merely tinsel, and the Christian should keep God's word near at hand and treasured in the soul, to test thereby all that he hears. " (Read the entire sermon - [How to Read the Bible](#))

"Our Master's field is full and rich.
The precious promises lie in front of you.
Gather them.
Make them your own.
Grasp these sweet promises.
Thresh them by [meditation](#).
Feed on them with joy"
--C H Spurgeon