

## 3 – APPLICATION

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- SUBJECT: What is application of Scripture, why is it important, and how do we do it?
- COMPLEMENT: Application is the Word in action and without it I will not grow. To apply Scripture, I must be deliberate!
- IDEA: “To know and not to do is not to know at all.” – Howard Hendricks

### I. INTRODUCTION

### II. WHAT IS APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT, AND HOW DO WE DO IT?

#### A. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY APPLICATION?

- 1. How am I defining application?** Application is obedience to what the Scripture is teaching us. When the Holy Spirit through *the ministry of the Word* enlightens our understanding of *a text*, God places before us the choice: Do we live in the status quo, or do we *change* in accordance with the truth we now know?
  - The *ministry of the Word* comes through objective biblical preaching/ teaching, through discipleship/ mentoring/ counseling, through personal study of the Scriptures, through prayer and meditation, or through some other means of objectively based liturgy and worship.
  - For our purposes, *a text* refers to the Bible, typically taught or studied systematically or canonically, but it can also refer to theologically/ topically or thematically organized truths.
  - *Change* (repentance) is our response to the Spirit and the Word. When God speaks something must happen.
- 2. The Bible assumes change and obedience (or application).** Not that people will always do what God commands (in the Bible, people usually don't), but change is what God wants. (Essentially, change is repentance.) The Bible presupposes change as the result of its ministry:

2 Timothy 3:14–17 (NASB95) - <sup>14</sup>You [Timothy], however, continue in the things you have **learned and become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, <sup>15</sup>and that from childhood you have known **the sacred writings** which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

*What was the “ministry of the Word” in Timothy’s life? (vv. 13-14)*

*What changes are described in verse 16?*

*What changes are described in verse 17?*

## 3 – APPLICATION

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### 3. Change (or application) happens in 3 domains. They are...

- What we know and how we think (**mind**).
- What we desire and what we feel (**heart**). Belief is in this domain.
- What we do (**hands**; actions).

After Peter's first sermon in Acts, we read the following. *Where do you see these three domains?*

Acts 2:37 - Now when they (the "men of Israel" present to witness Pentecost) heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

*What would you call teaching that does not appeal to at least one learning domain?*

*Must application happen in all three domains?* No! In Peter's sermon, he hit all three, but any movement on the part of the hearer in any domain is some kind of application.

### 4. Because it is the Word of God, which is meant to change people, ministers of the Word are responsible to preach and teach with change in mind.

- a. Turning from sin (repentance) and growth in faith toward God are universal goals of Scripture and change.
- b. The specificity of thinking, feeling, and action applications depends on the size and makeup of the audience. For example, a pastor preaching to thousand-person congregation which includes whole families; versus a woman counseling another woman.
  - **For the pastor**, the thinking and feeling applications may be very specific when the passage is very specific. But the "doing" applications may be very general or even silent, since what a given congregant should "do" may depend on their particular situation. Generally, the pastor may focus more on the broad *implications* of a passage particularly in the action/doing domain, leaving specific *application* to the Spirit working on the conscience of the congregant. This of course can change depending on the target audience being addressed, as when the pastor is speaking at a men's conference.
  - **For the woman** counseling another woman, her application can be much more specific in the "doing" domain. The counselor may assign a specific passage of Scripture to study, or a specific relationship to be working on, or a particular habit to break (or begin).

### 3 – APPLICATION

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5. **The Bible teaches that we are responsible to change and become more like Christ.** Whether or not the Minister of the Word does their job, we are responsible to God for what we hear and read.

- **Unbelievers:** Because all humanity is created in the image of God, every person is personally responsible to God.
- **Believers:** Because Christians have *a personal relationship* with Jesus Christ, the Bible applies to us *personally*. Applications which only affect the thinking domain are impersonal, but our goal is always to become more like Christ (transformation). When what we think becomes personal, we move toward faith and action.
- **Everyone:** Biblically, when Scripture challenges how we think, it places a responsibility on us for what we do with that truth. We only “hear” something when it has an affect on what we believe and how we act.

Matthew 11:15 - <sup>15</sup>“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

James 1:22 - <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

6. **Personal for the minister.** The most affective applications are ones where the Word has worked in the Minister first!

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 - <sup>24</sup>Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only one* receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

#### B. WHY IS APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE IMPORTANT?

Howard Hendricks taught that people avoid change. We tend to substitute four things for application.

1. **We substitute INTERPRETATION for application.** We are content to know or learn something, but not to change in accordance with what we now know. This was the sin of the scribes and pharisees. Hendricks said, “they mastered the Old Testament Scriptures, but were never mastered by them.” He also said, “to know and not to do is not to know at all.”

James 4:17 - <sup>17</sup>Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

## 3 – APPLICATION

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2. **We substitute application in areas WHERE IT IS NOT NEEDED for areas we need to change.** We see this in a man who, having trusted in Christ for salvation many years ago shows little to no growth in any other area. Is the area for change that he needs - to know the facts of the gospel and believe them? No! What he needs is to see is how those facts relate to his sharp business practices, or the harsh way he treats his kids, or his occasional use of pornography.

Hebrews 5:12–13 - <sup>12</sup>For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. <sup>13</sup>For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. <sup>14</sup>But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

3. **We substitute RATIONALIZATION for application.** Rationalization is reasoning why the truth of God’s Word won’t work in our situation. “It doesn’t really apply to me... at least not right now.” It is simply too hard, too painful. “I tried that before and it didn’t work.” The older we are, the more adept we become at this – especially at procrastinating until the conviction that we ought to do something goes away or at least quiets down.
4. **We substitute EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE for a VOLITIONAL DECISION.** Application happens in the domains of thinking, feeling, and doing, but don’t be paralyzed by waiting until you “feel” something. In the Bible, religious affections of loving God and having faith in him are often stated in volitional terms. In the Psalms alone “I will” or “I shall” occurs over 200 times!

Psalms 77:11 - <sup>11</sup>**I shall** remember the deeds of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

Psalms 5:3 - <sup>3</sup>In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning **I will** order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch.

### C. HOW DO WE APPLY SCRIPTURE? (PSALM 77)

1. **Know the content.** That is what the observation and interpretation phases of Bible study was about. Before you can accurately apply it, you must know and understand it.

**Read Psalm 77 (last page) and summarize what each section as briefly as you can (word or phrase).**

- **VV. 1-3:**
- **VV. 4-9:**
- **VV. 10:**
- **VV. 11-15:**
- **VV. 19-20:**

## 3 – APPLICATION

---

2. **Summarize in a question (subject).** A great way to summarize a passage is to ask, “what question is this passage answering?” If you are teaching, this question would become your subject or topic question. Here is an example, not from the Bible. *Read the content below and then determine the question is it answering.*

(1) PLACE eggs in saucepan large enough to hold them in single layer. ADD cold water to cover eggs by 1 inch. HEAT over high heat just to boiling. REMOVE from burner. COVER pan.

(2) LET EGGS STAND in hot water for about 12 minutes for large eggs (9 minutes for medium eggs; 15 minutes for extra large).

(3) DRAIN immediately and serve warm. OR, cool completely under cold running water or in bowl of ice water, then REFRIGERATE.

**Subject:** How \_\_\_\_\_?

**You will find that if you can develop a good subject question to which the passage is the answer, then you have a grasp of what the passage is about.**

*What is the subject question to which Psalm 77 is the answer?*

3. **Summarize the answer to your subject question (the complement).** Here you answer the subject question as succinctly as possible. For Psalm 77, I think it is helpful to bring in elements from the sections:

- **VV. 1-3: MOANING IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE**
- **VV. 4-9: MY EXPERIENCE BRINGS NO RELIEF, ONLY DOUBT**
- **VV. 10: THE TURN**
- **VV. 11-15: RESOLVE TO REMEMBER GOD’S WONDERS**
- **VV. 19-20: GOD LED HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE TUMULT**

*In response to the day of trouble, I find no comfort from personal experience or even from the worship which used to bring comfort. My grief makes me wonder if God has finally given up on me! But who is God? He is the God of wonders, who can take the tumult of my life and lead me like a flock through troubled waters.*

## 3 – APPLICATION

### 4. Comb the text looking for applications. (See Bible Study “At A Glance” chart.)

#### PRACTICE – What do I learn and apply?

##### **Promise** I should claim?

- *V.1 – God hears my cries. Do I cry to him in trouble?*

##### **Relationship** I should build (or bust) with . . .

###### **God – Who is God?**

- *V. 4 – Sometimes God keeps us awake when he wants to draw us to himself in a deeper way.*
- *V.7-9 – Sometimes God can seem distant, especially when he does not answer prayer.*
- *V. 13-18 – God is the God of wonders! His way is through the tumult!*
- ***V. 20 – As a shepherd does his sheep, the Lord leads his people through tumultuous times.***
- *V. 19 – Just because God’s “footsteps are not seen” doesn’t mean God is not there and is not at work.*

###### **Others**

###### **Enemy** (World, Flesh, Devil)

- *V. 7-10 – The devil will use circumstances to raise doubt about God’s covenant faithfulness.*

###### **Self – What do I learn about myself?**

- *V. 2-9 – I seek comfort in times of trouble, and that is normal.*
- *V. 5-6 – Sometimes my own experience and the things that used to “work” don’t bring comfort.*
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##### **Attitude** I should adjust?

- *V. 10 – My circumstances and my grief blind me to God’s work. Be aware and careful!*

##### **Condition** I should meet?

- *V. 11-12 – Comfort comes from turning to the Word and recalling the mighty deeds of the Lord. No Word, no comfort!*

##### **Trespass (sin)** I should confess?

##### **Imperative (command)** I should obey?

##### **Challenge** I should face?

##### **Example** I should follow?

- *V. 1-2 – Asaph is persistent in prayer. Am I?*
- *V. 3 – Asaph may not find relief in meditation, but at least he does it. How am I doing?*

### 3 – APPLICATION

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#### PSALM 77 (ESV) - In the Day of Trouble I Seek the Lord

77 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF ASAPH.

- <sup>1</sup> I cry aloud to God,  
aloud to God, and he will hear me.
- <sup>2</sup> In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;  
in the night my hand is stretched out  
without wearying;  
my soul refuses to be comforted.
- <sup>3</sup> When I remember God, I moan;  
when I meditate, my spirit faints.  
*Selah*
- <sup>4</sup> You hold my eyelids open;  
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
- <sup>5</sup> I consider the days of old,  
the years long ago.
- <sup>6</sup> I said, "Let me remember my song in the  
night;  
let me meditate in my heart."  
Then my spirit made a diligent  
search:
- <sup>7</sup> "Will the Lord spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?
- <sup>8</sup> Has his steadfast love forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all  
time?
- <sup>9</sup> Has God forgotten to be gracious?  
Has he in anger shut up his  
compassion?" *Selah*
- <sup>10</sup> Then I said, "I will appeal to this,  
to the years of the right hand of the  
Most High."
- <sup>11</sup> I will remember the deeds of the LORD;  
yes, I will remember your wonders of  
old.
- <sup>12</sup> I will ponder all your work,  
and meditate on your mighty deeds.
- <sup>13</sup> Your way, O God, is holy.  
What god is great like our God?
- <sup>14</sup> You are the God who works wonders;  
you have made known your might  
among the peoples.
- <sup>15</sup> You with your arm redeemed your  
people,  
the children of Jacob and Joseph.  
*Selah*
- <sup>16</sup> When the waters saw you, O God,  
when the waters saw you, they were  
afraid;  
indeed, the deep trembled.
- <sup>17</sup> The clouds poured out water;  
the skies gave forth thunder;  
your arrows flashed on every side.
- <sup>18</sup> The crash of your thunder was in the  
whirlwind;  
your lightnings lighted up the world;  
the earth trembled and shook.
- <sup>19</sup> Your way was through the sea,  
your path through the great waters;  
yet your footprints were unseen.
- <sup>20</sup> You led your people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

## 3 - APPLICATION

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