

Finer Grounds

How to Study the Bible Lesson 12: Application

We have now reached the last and most important chapter in our How to Study series: Application. In order to understand how a text applies to us, we must first see what it meant to the people to whom it was written. If you have reached this part in our study, you should be well acquainted with the meaning of the text. Now that we have determined these things we will dive into applying the text to our lives.

The first step in this process is one I have been encouraging you to do throughout this study. You should list the ways that you and the audience or characters in the text are similar and how you are different. If you are going to find meaning you must find parallels between your lives, trials and stories. Once you do this it will be much easier to apply the text.

Then we want to look for theological principles that guide the message. I might tell my older daughter not to hit my younger daughter with her stuffed elephant. In saying that I am addressing a very specific action; however, the idea of what I told her would apply universally. Be kind to your sister! I did not say those exact words, but that is the message I was trying to get across. In the same way we must be careful not to look at a very specific scenario that plays out in scripture and say "I don't have a stuffed elephant so that doesn't apply to me." We should continually be looking for the broad principles that govern the idea.

Now we have a general idea, what do we do next? If you leave an idea too generic it becomes easy to neglect actually applying it to our lives, and the whole reason we have scripture is so that it can change us in amazing ways. We can't simply say: "God wants me to

be nice." What does that mean? What does that look like in my life? What are some specific things I can do to accomplish this goal? If I take the generic and make it specific to my life it might sound something like this: "God wants me to be nice, so today I am going to go out of my way to serve my husband by making him sweet tea when he gets home." Now I have an actual, tangible goal that is measurable.

Let's take a look at a Galatians 2:11-14. Assuming we have done the background work on this passage we will understand that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Galatia to address a very specific issue. Jewish Christians were coming into the church and behaving as if the Gentiles who converted to Christianity were second class citizens. In these specific verses even Peter himself is participating in this by refusing to eat with the Gentile Christians, causing many others to follow along. Paul confronted Peter about this hypocrisy.

Now let's list some of the theological principles behind this text. First and the most generic is that one shouldn't show partiality within the church. We can also see the idea that even a strong "super-star" Christian can fall into sinful behavior. I can also glean from this passage the idea that your mistakes can make others follow you into sin. The final principle is that if we see a brother in sin, even if he is a "super-star" Christian, we should confront him about it.

So now we have some very generic ideas. Let's look at each and some ideas for specific application.

- One shouldn't show partiality in the church → This Sunday, before and after

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worship, I will seek out someone that I would not normally talk to and invite them to lunch.

- Even a strong “super-star” Christian can fall into sinful behavior → I will look for one of my brothers or sisters that I consider to be strong in the faith and I will make it a point to let them know I am praying for them this week.
- Your mistakes can make others follow you into sin → This week I will make a mental list of the people whom I know I have influence over. I will be vigilant to be the best example to them that I can be.
- If we see a brother in sin, even if he is a “super-star” Christian, we should confront him about it → I will be brave this week and kindly mention when my best friend Sandra starts gossiping about Kathrine that we shouldn't participate in such talk.

Now that you have very specific goals in place you can act on them and watch how scripture can change your life in ways you never dreamed. Thank you so much for joining me through this study and I pray that you are more comfortable studying through your Bible on your own and that you will share your new found knowledge with others!

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Exercise 1:

Read Acts 2:43-47. Using the tools and methods we've learned about describe in your own words what is happening in this passage.

What are the similarities and differences between the church today and the church described here.

What are the general theological principles that are contained in this passage?

What specific applications can I make to myself?

Exercise 2:

Read 1 Samuel 17:31-58. Describe the story and list the theological principles found in this passage.

List some specific applications you can make from this passage.

Exercise 3:

Read James 3:1-12. Analyze and make application from this passage.
