

## Session Five: How to Study the Bible - Application

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### 1. Application

- a. Our goal of this series is to learn how to prayerfully study the Bible so that we can hear and encounter Christ. Thus far we have focused on how to better study the Scriptures by learning how to properly observe and interpret.
- b. Application is the third and final step needed to form proper and complete study practices that will achieve our final goal.
- c. On the surface this may seem like the easiest step of the three, simply do what the text says but that is a gross oversimplification. For many this is just as hard if not harder than observation or interpretation for three main reasons.
  - i. It is necessary and therefore burdensome.
  - ii. It is deceptive and therefore dangerous.
  - iii. It is a process and therefore difficult.

### 2. The Need for Application

- a. The Bible could not be clearer about our responsibility as followers of Christ to take what He says seriously and obey His commands that sometimes can be daunting.

*“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” - John 14:21*

*“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” - John 15:10*

*“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” - Luke 6:46*

- b. According to these verses only those who obey God’s word can claim that they experience God’s love on an ongoing basis, actually love God and truly serve God.
- c. The weightiness of such statements are compounded by the stark reality that we are all familiar with, mainly that we regularly fail to do what is expected of us.
  - i. We know we should love our neighbor but regularly find angst or simple complacency for them. We know we should pray but too often don’t. Fasting is a chore, giving generously is difficult, evangelism is terrifying, standing for righteousness is costly, and opening our home to the uncomely is dangerous.
- d. Because of this many Christian’s look at the expectations of Christ and either cringe with fear, cower in condemnation, or avoid them altogether for ease. But none of these will do because Jesus said what He said and we cannot escape it.

### 3. The Deception of Application

- a. Not only can obedience feel burdensome it can also be also be deceptive. This deception happens two different ways.
  - i. Hearing Without Doing - The first way we can become deceived is when we hear the word of God without ever attempting to obey; that is if we skip step three (application) altogether.

*“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to save your soul. But **be doers of the word**, and **not hearers only, deceiving yourselves**. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” - James 1:21-25*

*“Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works...Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and **by works faith was made perfect?**” - James 2:18, 21-22*

1. Opening the Bible is dangerous. Going to church is perilous. Why? Because every time you hear the word, either through reading or preaching, and do not act upon that word you are hardening your heart by walking farther into deception.
- ii. Doing as Righteousness - If you swing the pendulum all the way to the other side you also end up in deception. If obeying the word becomes the source of our confidence before God we also are deceived.

*“...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” - Galatians 2:16*

1. If I believe that God's approval of me is based upon my keeping of the law I will either be crushed by that weight or I will become arrogant and haughty towards others. Both are wicked and deceptive in nature.

### 4. The Process of Application

- a. The burden and deceptiveness that many of us have felt or walked in becomes even more destructive when we consider what the Bible says about nature of God's word related to time.
- b. Rarely does complete and total obedience and transformation come in a moment but rather it comes over time. The Christian life of hearing and obeying the word is not a sprint to be won but a marathon to be endured.

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*“Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a **sower went out to sow...**’ - Matthew 13:3*

*“...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us **run with endurance the race** that is set before us...” - Hebrews 12:1*

*“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. **But he who endures to the end will be saved.**” - Matthew 24:12-13*

- c. Our sanctification (becoming more like Christ) is a process, usually a long process. The truest test of all is the test of time. However when you place this test of time on top of the burden we carry to fulfill the word of Christ and the innate deceptions of either being a hearer only or basing our confidence upon our ability to perform the word, this test becomes difficult.

#### 5. What Should We Do Then?

- a. Application is far more than simply obeying the command of Christ and we've shown that to be true. Obedience is burdensome because you can't do it perfectly; it is deceptive because you either ignore it or define yourself by it; and it is difficult because you must keep attempting to obey for the rest of your life.
- b. So where does this leave us? It leaves us with the point of prayerful Bible study- needing to hear and encounter Christ. Or you could rightly say that application done correctly will always lead you back to the gospel.

*“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. **I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith** in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave Himself for me.** I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” - Galatians 2:19-21*

- i. The burden of obedience is absorbed by the gospel truth that in Christ's death I also died to the law and therefore have been liberated from the requirement to fulfill the law. Christ perfectly fulfilled the law and then imputed that perfection upon me.
  - ii. The deception of the law is exposed in the love of God displayed on the cross. This love motivates me to obey Christ while keeping me from thinking that my obedience is what justifies me in the sight of God or others.
  - iii. The difficulty of time is therefore removed because I can now rest in Christ as Christ lives in me.
- c. Why is the application step so important? Because it is our avenue to continue to encounter the God of the gospel and hear Christ upon the cross say, “Father, forgive them.”

- d. Instead of the burden crushing us it already crushed Him. Instead of the deception leading us astray Christ was willingly lead outside the city by the deceived masses and in so doing revealed the truth of God's character to us. And rather than the difficulty of time discouraging us Christ made Himself the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world and forevermore so that no matter what season of life we are in we have a way to God.
- e. The gospel flips these challenges on their heads and makes them the very avenues by which we continue to hear and encounter Christ. Whether you stumble and fall or triumph and conquer in your application the gospel will always lead you back to hear and encounter Christ in and through the Scriptures which starts the cycle all over again.