

How to Study the Bible – Week 6 – The Application Factor – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Missing Dimension

Unlocking the Bible Through Three Basic Applications

Sermon Summary: This sermon, part of a Wednesday night series called "How to Study the Bible in 2026," presents a foundational framework for understanding Scripture through three distinct but interconnected applications: historical, doctrinal, and devotional. The sermon argues that the Bible is not merely a collection of religious stories but a historically perfect, prophetically rich, and personally transformative book. By recognizing that every passage of Scripture carries an accurate historical account, a doctrinal or prophetic teaching, and a personal life application, believers can approach the Bible as a living book that speaks directly to the human condition. The sermon warns against the allegorical method of interpretation, which strips Scripture of its historical accuracy and opens the door to false teaching. Ultimately, the message calls believers to slow down, ask better questions of the text, and allow the three-dimensional nature of Scripture to produce genuine life transformation rather than mere information gathering.

Key Points:

- All Scripture has three basic applications: historical, doctrinal, and devotional, and understanding all three is essential to proper Bible study
- The Bible is historically perfect in every detail, and no archaeological discovery has ever successfully disproved its accuracy
- History repeats itself, as taught in Ecclesiastes, meaning that past biblical events carry prophetic significance for future events
- The doctrinal application of Scripture includes both practical truth for daily living and prophetic truth that points forward to Jesus Christ and future events
- Jesus Christ himself declared that Moses wrote of him, meaning the Old Testament is filled with prophetic pictures of Christ even where his name does not appear
- The devotional application can only be properly made after first establishing the historical facts and then identifying the doctrinal teaching of a passage
- The allegorical method of Bible study, traced to Origen of Alexandria, is dangerous because it denies the literal historical meaning of Scripture and opens interpretation to personal opinion and manipulation
- Bible study groups that ask "what do you think it means?" without anchoring the answer in the text itself risk producing subjective and potentially false conclusions

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Scripture Reference:

- Romans 15:1-4 (the foundational passage for the series, emphasizing that things written in the past were written for our learning and hope)
- 2 Timothy 2:15 (the series headline verse on rightly dividing the word of truth)
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 (Old Testament events written as examples and instruction for believers)
- Ecclesiastes 1:9 and 3:15 (history repeats itself; that which has been will be again)
- John 5:39 and 5:45 (Jesus declares that the Scriptures testify of him and that Moses wrote of him)
- Numbers 21:5-9 (the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness)
- John 3:12-15 (Jesus connects the brazen serpent to his own crucifixion)
- Genesis 4:1-8 (Cain and Abel and the acceptable sacrifice)
- John 14:6 (Jesus as the only way to the Father)

Stories:

- The Brazen Serpent (Numbers 21 and John 3): Israel murmured against God in the wilderness and was judged with fiery serpents. God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and lift it on a pole, and all who looked upon it lived. Jesus explicitly connected this event to his own crucifixion, declaring that as Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that all who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life. The sermon also noted that the symbol of a serpent on a pole appears on modern medical emblems, pointing to the enduring and universal echo of this biblical truth.
- Cain and Abel (Genesis 4): Cain brought an offering from the fruit of the ground while Abel brought a lamb from his flock. God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. Cain murdered his brother in anger. The sermon taught that this story prophetically contrasts God's way of salvation through the lamb (pointing to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God) with man's way of approaching God through human effort and religion, representing the two fundamental categories into which all world religions fall.
- Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22): God commanded Abraham to offer his only son Isaac on Mount Moriah, the same location where Jesus Christ would later be crucified. Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice, asked where the lamb was, and was bound by his father before God provided a substitute. The sermon described this as a profound prophetic overlay, with Abraham and Isaac's sacrifice on the bottom layer of history and the crucifixion of Christ thousands of years later on the top layer, both pointing to the truth that God provided Himself a lamb.
- Job: Job was a righteous man who suffered intensely through a spiritual war between God and Satan, by no fault of his own. His friends wrongly accused him of hidden sin. The sermon noted that Job's 42 chapters correspond to half of the 7-year Tribulation Period – the 42 months of the great tribulation, and that Job's suffering prophetically pictures what the Jewish people will endure during

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the time of Jacob's trouble under the Antichrist. Devotionally, Job's story teaches believers how to trust God through suffering and trials when the reasons for their pain are not visible to them.

- The Strange Woman of Proverbs: Solomon wrote practical warnings to his son about the seductive and destructive nature of the immoral woman. The sermon identified the doctrinal teaching as a prophetic picture of false religion, connecting it to the mother of harlots described in Revelation 17. The devotional application includes both practical wisdom about avoiding harmful relationships and a broader warning to beware of false religious systems that attract people with appealing promises while leading them away from God.

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Discipleship Questions

The sermon describes three applications of Bible study: historical, doctrinal, and devotional. Which of these applications do you find most natural to engage with when reading Scripture, and which do you find most challenging to develop?

The sermon argues that the Bible is historically perfect and that archaeology consistently catches up to confirm its accuracy. How does your confidence in the historical reliability of Scripture affect the way you trust its spiritual and prophetic teachings?

In the story of Cain and Abel, the acceptable sacrifice was a lamb, which the sermon connects prophetically to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. What does it reveal about God's character that He embedded the message of the gospel so early in human history?

The sermon draws a striking parallel between Abraham offering Isaac on Mount Moriah and God offering His own Son on that same ground thousands of years later. How does understanding that connection deepen your appreciation for what God the Father experienced at the cross?

Jesus told Nicodemus that Moses wrote of Him, and the sermon uses the brazen serpent in Numbers 21 as a key example. What does it mean to you personally that the act of looking to the serpent on the pole and being healed mirrors the act of looking to Christ in faith and being saved?

The sermon warns against the allegorical method of Bible study, which treats Scripture as figurative rather than historically literal. Why is it spiritually dangerous to allow personal feelings or perspectives to determine the meaning of a passage rather than letting Scripture interpret Scripture?

The sermon teaches that history repeats itself and that understanding biblical history can prepare us to recognize future events. In what ways does a knowledge of Old Testament history give you greater clarity about what is happening in the world around you today?

The book of Job is presented as a prophetic picture of Israel's suffering during the tribulation period, with its 42 chapters mirroring the second half of the 7-year Tribulation Period – 42 months. How does understanding the prophetic dimension of Job change the way you read his story, and how does it shape your response to unexplained suffering in your own life?

The sermon observes that Jehovah's Witnesses are often more devoted to spreading their false religion than many Christians are to sharing the truth. What does that observation challenge you to examine about your own commitment to knowing and declaring what the Bible actually teaches?

The sermon closes with the statement that the Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible. What practical steps can you take this week to ensure that the living Word of God is shaping your daily life rather than sitting unopened on a shelf?

Small Group Guide

"The Missing Dimension: Three Applications of Scripture"

Based on Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 2:15

Overview

This session explores the "application factor" in Bible study -- the truth that all Scripture carries three basic applications: historical, doctrinal, and devotional. Understanding and applying all three transforms Bible reading from mere information gathering into genuine life transformation.

Key Verse

Romans 15:4 -- Written in the past, these Scriptures were preserved for our ongoing learning, so that through the endurance and encouragement they provide, we might hold onto hope.

Key Takeaways

1. The Historical Application Every passage of Scripture records real people, real places, and real events. The Bible is historically perfect and accurate in every detail. Before applying any passage to your life, you must first establish what actually happened.

2. The Doctrinal Application After establishing the history, we ask: what is God teaching here? Scripture teaches both practical truth (how to live) and prophetic truth (pointing forward to God's larger plan, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ). The story of the brazen serpent in Numbers 21 is a powerful example -- a historical event that Jesus himself connects directly to his own death on the cross in John 3.

3. The Devotional Application Only after working through the historical and doctrinal layers can we properly ask: how must I apply this to my personal life? The Bible speaks directly to the unchanging realities of the human heart -- pride, fear, greed, anger, faith, forgiveness, suffering - - and because of that, it is as relevant today as the day it was written.

A Caution The allegorical method of Bible study, which treats Scripture as figurative rather than historically accurate, opens the door to personal interpretation disconnected from what God is

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actually saying. We are not looking for what a passage means to us personally before we understand what it means historically and doctrinally.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think about a time when a Bible passage genuinely surprised you or changed the way you thought about something. What was it, and what made it impactful?

Section 1: The Historical Application

1. The Bible is "historically perfect in all of its details." Has there ever been a passage or story in Scripture that was difficult for you to accept as literally and historically true? How did you work through that?
 2. Why do you think it matters that we establish what actually happened in a passage before we try to apply it to our lives? What can go wrong when we skip that step?
 3. Archaeology and historical research have consistently caught up to the Bible over time. How does that reality affect your confidence when you encounter a headline or claim that seems to challenge Scripture?
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Section 2: The Doctrinal Application

4. The sermon drew a connection between the brazen serpent in Numbers 21 and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in John 3. Before this sermon, had you ever seen that connection? What does it mean to you that Jesus himself used that Old Testament story to explain his own death?
 5. The sermon described two layers within the doctrinal application -- practical truth and prophetic truth. Can you think of a Bible story or passage where you have seen both layers at work? Share it with the group.
 6. The sermon pointed out that the symbol of a snake on a pole appears on ambulances and in medical imagery today. How does it change your perspective when you recognize that symbol's biblical origin? What does it say about the reach of Scripture into everyday life?
 7. In John 5:39 and 5:45-46, Jesus told the religious leaders that Moses wrote about him, and that the Scriptures themselves testified of him. What does it mean to read the Old Testament with that lens? How might it change the way you approach books like Genesis or Numbers?
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Section 3: The Devotional Application

8. The sermon said the reason many people avoid the Bible is that "it tells you all about you." Have you experienced a moment when Scripture felt uncomfortably personal or convicting? What did you do with that discomfort?
 9. The sermon used the story of Job to illustrate how a historical account can speak directly into seasons of suffering and unanswered questions. Is there someone in your life right now -- or perhaps yourself -- who needs the encouragement found in Job's story? What would you say to them?
 10. Considering all three applications together -- historical, doctrinal, and devotional -- which one do you tend to spend the most time with when you read the Bible? Which one do you tend to skip? What would it look like to be more intentional about all three?
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Reflection and Application

11. The sermon warned against Bible studies where someone reads a verse and immediately asks, "What do you think it means?" Why is that approach potentially dangerous? How can your small group protect itself from that tendency while still having open and honest conversations about Scripture?
 12. The sermon said: "That book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from that book." How does that statement land with you personally? What is one practical change you could make this week in how you approach your time in Scripture?
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Practical Applications for the Week

Individual

- Choose one familiar Bible story -- something you have known since childhood. Work through all three applications deliberately: What happened historically? What is God teaching, both practically and prophetically? How should it change something specific in your life this week?

In Your Bible Reading

- When you read Scripture this week, pause after each passage and ask three questions: What happened here? What is God teaching me through this? How must I respond?

For Further Study

- Read Numbers 21:4-9 alongside John 3:1-21. Trace the connection between the brazen serpent and the crucifixion. Write down what you observe about how the historical event points forward to the gospel.

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In Conversation

- False religion is often attractive on the surface, just like the "strange woman" of Proverbs. This week, pray for one person in your life who is caught in false religion or spiritual confusion, and ask God for an opportunity to point them toward the truth.
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Closing Thought

The sermon described these three applications as putting on 3D glasses -- the Bible does not change, but the way you see it does. History, doctrine, and devotion working together do not simply give you more information about an old book. They bring you face to face with a living God who has been telling one consistent story from Genesis to Revelation, and who has written you into that story through faith in Jesus Christ.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by asking God to give each group member a deeper hunger for Scripture, a sharper eye for what he is teaching in every passage, and the courage to let his Word change not just their thinking but their daily lives.

5-Day Bible Reading and Devotional Guide

Themes: God's Word, Faith, Salvation, Hope, and Divine Presence in Suffering

Day 1: The Living Word That Changes Everything Reading: Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Devotional: The Bible is not a collection of ancient opinions. It is the living, breathing Word of God, written in the past and perfectly relevant to your present. Every verse carries weight. Every passage carries purpose. God did not give you Scripture merely to inform your mind but to transform your life. The question is not whether the Bible applies to you. It does. The question is whether you will slow down long enough to receive what God is actually saying. Open it today expecting God to speak. He will.

Day 2: Look and Live Reading: Numbers 21:4-9 and John 3:14-16

Devotional: The children of Israel were dying in the wilderness, bitten and broken, and God provided one remedy: look at the serpent on the pole and live. Centuries later, Jesus stood before a religious expert and pointed back to that very moment, declaring that He Himself would be lifted up so that all who believe would not perish. The remedy has never changed. You have been bitten by sin. There is no human cure. But God has provided one. Look to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and live. It is that simple and that glorious.

Day 3: God's Way or Your Way Reading: Genesis 4:1-7 and John 14:6

Devotional: From the very beginning, humanity has faced the same choice Cain and Abel faced: approach God on His terms or your own. Abel brought what God required. Cain brought what he preferred. God accepted one and rejected the other. Nothing has changed. Every religion on earth can be reduced to those two offerings. Either you come to God through Jesus Christ, the Lamb He provided, or you come on your own terms and find yourself rejected. There is no middle ground. Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life. Believe Him. Come His way.

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Day 4: The Father Who Provides the Lamb Reading: Genesis 22:1-14 and Isaiah 53:4-6

Devotional: When Isaac asked his father where the lamb was, Abraham answered with words that echo across all of human history: God will provide Himself a lamb. He did not know the full weight of what he was saying. But God did. On that very mountain, thousands of years later, the Father provided His own Son as the sacrifice for sin. Isaac carried the wood. Jesus carried the cross. Isaac was spared. Jesus was not. Every detail of that ancient account was pointing forward to Calvary. When you read your Bible slowly and carefully, you will find Jesus on every page.

Day 5: When You Cannot See Why Reading: Job 1:1-3, 1:20-22, and James 5:11

Devotional: Job was a righteous man caught in the middle of a spiritual war he could not see and did not choose. His suffering was not punishment. It was a proving ground. His friends assumed the worst. God knew the truth. There will be seasons in your life when suffering arrives without explanation and friends offer more confusion than comfort. In those moments, remember Job. He did not have all the answers. He had something better. He had God. And God never abandoned him. You may not understand your trial today. Trust the God who sees what you cannot. He has not forgotten you.