FOUR STEPS TO PRACTICAL APPLICATION

When you do a devotional Bible study, follow four simple steps. These steps can be summarized in the words *pray, meditate, apply, and memorize.*

**Step One: Pray for insight on how to apply the passage.**

Ask God to help you apply the Scripture you are studying and show you specifically what He wants you to do. You already know that God wants you to do two things: obey His word and share it with others. In your prayer tell God that you are ready to obey what He will show you and that you are willing to share that application with others.

**Step Two: Meditate on the verse(s) you have chosen to study**

Meditation is the key to discovering how to apply Scripture to your life. Meditation is essentially thought digestion. You take a thought God gives you, put it in your mind, and think on it over and over again. Meditation may be compared to rumination; that what a cow does when it chews its cud. It eats some grass and sends it to its first stomach; then it lies down, brings the grass up, chews on it, and swallows it again. This process of digestion is repeated three times. Scriptural meditation is reading a passage in the Bible, and then concentrating on it in different ways. Here are several practical ways you can meditate on a passage of Scripture:

*Visualize the scene of the narrative in your mind.*
Put yourself in the biblical situation and try to picture yourself as an active participant. Whether you are reading the historical books of the Old Testament, the Gospels, or the book of Acts, imagine yourself in that historical context. As yourself how you would feel if you were involved in that situation. What would you say? What would you do?

*Emphasize words in the passage under study.*
Read through a verse aloud several times, each time emphasizing a different word, and watch new meanings develop. For instance, if you are meditating on Philippians 4:13, you would emphasize the words as follows:

“I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”
“I *can* do everything through Him who gives me strength.”
“I can do *everything* through Him who gives me strength.”
“I can do everything *through* Him who gives me strength.”
“I can do everything through Him who *gives* me strength.”
“I can do everything through Him who gives me *strength.*”

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**Paraphrase the passage under study.**

Take the verse or passage you are studying and rephrase it in your own words. As you think on it, use contemporary words and phrases to express timeless biblical truths. *The Living Bible* and Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* are two examples of paraphrases of Scripture.

**Personalize the passage you are studying**

This can be done by putting your name in place of the pronouns or nouns used in Scripture. For example, John 3:16 would read, “For God so loved _______ that He gave His one and only Son that if _______ believes in Him he shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**Use the S-P-A-C-E-P-E-T-S acrostic.**

This acrostic is a useful aid to meditation. Each letter represents a question that helps you apply the passage to your life. If you memorize the nine questions that this acrostic represents, you will have them available every time you want to meditate on a passage. This acrostic asks: *Is there any ...*

- Sin to confess?
- Promise to claim?
- Attitude to change?
- Command to obey?
- Example to follow?
- Prayer to pray?
- Error to avoid?
- Truth to believe?
- Something to praise God for?

**Pray the verse or passage back to God.**

Put the passage under study into the first person singular, turn it into a prayer, and pray it back to God. The book of Psalms is a good example of this method of meditation. An example of this method of meditation may be seen in the use of the first three verses of Psalm 23:

- Thank You, Lord, for being my Shepherd, and that I lack nothing.
- Thank You for making me lie down in green pastures, for leading me beside quiet waters, for restoring my soul.
- Thank You for guiding me in the paths of righteousness for Your name’s sake.
**Step Three: Write out an application.**

Write an application of the insights you have discovered through your meditation. Writing your application out on paper helps you be specific. If you don’t write something down, you will soon forget it. This is particularly necessary when you are dealing with a spiritual truth. If you can’t put it down on paper, you haven’t really thought it through. It’s been proven that if you write something down, you will remember it longer and be able to express to others what you have learned.

You need to remember four factors in writing out a good application:

1. Your application should be **personal** – you should write it in the first person singular. Use the pronouns *I, me, my and mine* throughout.

2. Your application should be **practical** – it ought to be something you can do. Plan a definite course of action that you intend to take. Design a personal project that will encourage you to be a “doer of the Word.” Make your application as specific as possible. Generalities can make you feel helpless and produce little action.

3. Your application should be **possible** – it should be something you know you can accomplish. Otherwise you will get discouraged.

4. Your application should be **provable** – you must set up some sort of follow-up to check up on your success in doing it. It has to be *measurable* so you will know that you have done it. This means you will have to set some kind of time limit on your application.

**Step Four – Memorize a key verse from your study**

So that you can continue to meditate on the passage you are applying, and to help remind you of your project, memorize a verse that is a key to the application you have written.