

Principles for Applying Scripture

Before You Apply Scripture, make sure you take the time to Interpret Scripture correctly.

Barriers to Understanding Scripture...

- **The Bridge of Time** / The Scriptures were written at least 2000 to 3500 years ago.
- **The Bridge of Culture** / The Scriptures were written in different cultures from ours, and not all scripture was written in the same old culture, there were many.
- **The Bridge of Language** / The languages that scripture was written in was different from our own, and translation does not perfectly bridge that gap.
- **The Bridge of Biblical Genres** / There are specific genres of scripture, and they all have their own interpretive challenges / A psalm is not an epistle / a narrative history is not a wisdom writing / etc.
- **The Bridge of the Student** / Each student of scripture comes to scripture with different educational levels, holes of knowledge, individual idiosyncrasies, sins and more.

Bridge Spanners and Makers

- **God's Work of Illumination** / God works through the Spirit of God to help us understand, interpret, and apply scripture through his Spirit / God does not simply remove sin that gets in the way, and our interpretations may be sometimes twisted or ignored due to our sin. God is perfect, his Spirit is perfect; but he is working on our imperfect and sinful hearts.
- **A Proper Attitude toward Scripture** / are you willing to learn from God's word and primarily change yourself and your sin rather than just using it to bolster your theology, opinions, and person? Are you willing to allow it to be your authority?
- **Proper Study Habits** / Consider scripture in its context.
 - **Cultural context** / what was the culture like at the time, what would the people of that day have understood this passage to mean?
 - **Literary context** / what is the genre of the Biblical text? What special means of interpretation do we apply to this kind of text?
 - **Grammatical context** / Understand both the larger context of the book, and the immediate context of the passage to keep the point the author is making from becoming too extensive, or too narrow.
 - **Biblical context** / What else does the Bible say on this topic or idea? How does this passage contribute to the greater understanding of a topic?



When Applying Scripture...

(This section and next; Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. and expanded, 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. Print.)

Problem / *Distanciation* / cultural gap between biblical times and today

Wrong Approaches... Do Not Do Theses

Literalistic Preaching / assuming that God overcomes the gap and preach it as if it was written for today. No serious effort to understand the text.

Allegorizing / believing the “real meaning” lies under the text. Sometimes ignores the real meaning of the text.

Spiritualizing / actions are a parable, illustrating a spiritual reality /

Moralizing / consider all texts as examples of virtues (imitated) or sins (to be avoided). Tend to see ethical demands for scripture as caricatures.

Steps or Stages of Determining Application

1. We Must be constrained by the context of the passage, and understand the interpretation before moving on to application. What was the application that was drawn by the original hearers? Is it explicit or implicit?
2. Determine the theological principle behind the application. This might be stated clearly in the passage and can be directly applied, sometimes these will be more indirectly applied.
3. Search for parallel situations in our current life. How is what we go through similar to what they went through?
4. Make the application not only general, but specific.

Example of the Above

Ephesians 5:21 / “*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*”

- Does this passage mean that we should always listen to other people and put ourselves under their leadership at all times?
- Does this passage mean that we should in principle submit to others, and put ourselves under their authority, as they are submitted to Christ?

