

HOW TO APPLY SCRIPTURE

I. WHY IS IT HARD TO APPLY SCRIPTURE?

We could list many reasons such as laziness, apathy, lukewarm spiritual condition, sin in your life, don't know how, giving up too quickly, never taking the time, not knowing what scripture says of "ignorance" in any form. (This is dealt with in further detail in the "Study of Biblical Change"). However scripture indicates in Matt. 13:3-23 that the heart attitude is the real key to applying God's Word. We'll look at that in more detail but let's examine another question that the Bible specifically answers in relationship to this.

II. WHAT HINDERS GOD'S WORD FROM WORKING IN US?

In order to help you cultivate the habit of searching scripture, look up the following verses and write a few statements in answers to the above question:

Matt.15:8-9 -

Ps.66:18 -

Jer.5:25 -

Js.1:22,26 - (being deceived)

Mark 7:13 -

Heb.3:13 (hard hearted),...

Matt.13:21 -

Matt.13:22 -

Matt.13:58 -

(Rom.4:20; 11:20-23,30-32)

The above are clearly road blocks to applying scripture. However, we still need to cultivate the right attitude or heart condition!

III WHAT ARE THE FOUR CONDITIONS OF OUR HEARTS?

The Bible gives in Matt.13:1-23 (in the "Parable of the Sower"), four types of soil upon which the seed fell. The seed is the Word of God. The soils are representative of the type of life or the condition of the heart on which the Word came in contact with. For instance in every church service there are not 10 to 200 different heart conditions represented, but Jesus said whenever the Word of God goes forth, it will fall into one of four heart conditions. Please study through the passage in order to know what's being explained.

The "wayside" is the Hard heart (vs.19).

The "stoney" place is the Feeble heart (vs.20-21).

The "thorny" ground is the Preoccupied heart (vs.22).

The "good" ground is the Good-obedient heart (vs.23).

Let me explain why I entitled these heart representations as such. Notice what happened to the seed (word) as soon as it was received (heard). "By the wayside" indicates that there was no understanding. Satan had taken it away. It had no effect. It was as if it was never there, a waste as far as the hard heart was concerned. Then the stoney ground "took in" the word, but because of no root or depth (not being rooted and grounded in the Word, Col.2:7, indicating no devotional life). This feeble weak life couldn't endure when problems and trials and persecution came. Instead of enduring, it collapsed

and gave up. It was not mature spiritually. Then the word is heard by a preoccupied heart. In this instance, the thorns are pictured as cares, worries, riches and pleasures of the world, choking out the word so it won't be fruitful. The word grows up, but unfortunately there's a lot of other "junk" in the garden or life which chokes it out. This speaks of the Christian who is just too entangled in the affairs of the world (Js. 1:27; 2 Tim.2:4). They are so preoccupied with this and that that when God speaks they are just too busy with the world to do what God says! Now we come to the heart attitude that is the key to applying scripture! Look what happened when the word fell on the good ground where there was spiritual depth (devotional life), where there were no thorns to choke it out. It was heard, understood and then it did exactly what it was meant to do - brought fruit or results. Action was the outcome. In doing what it was "supposed to do" it is evident that the word was applied and appropriated (made use of). It didn't just blow away, or give up, or become choked out. It effectively brought results by the hundreds!

So how then do we develop/cultivate a good ground/heart on which the Word of God will be fruitful?

IV. HOW DO WE APPLY SCRIPTURE?

1. Be careful HOW you hear God's Word. Whenever I hear God's Word from the radio, from a preacher, through a testimony, a choir, a song, a tape, etc., I must hear it:
 - EXPECTANTLY - God is going to tell me something about Himself, His will, me...
 - REVERANTLY - God is speaking. This is His Word and not just some book of suggestions, opinions, man's philosophies or counsels but God's truth.
 - RESPECTFULLY - This is God's messenger who is communicating the truth of God. I must not be critical, rude or judgemental. If I am, I've cut off the very one God wants to use to benefit my life.
 - RESPONSIBLY - I must do something about what I hear. I'm accountable to God to apply this. from what I've heard. What is God requiring of my life? What is He telling me to do?

2. I also must be aware of and clearly identify my sins, problems, weaknesses and questions so that when the word is presented, I'll be alert to God's solutions and answers. I'll never hear the solution if I'm not even sensitive to where I've got problems.

3. Once I've discovered God's solution and principles from His Word that deal with a particular area, I need to work out a "Biblical Plan of Action" to impliment. A "Biblical Plan of Action" is the best way to apply the following:

*Js.1:22-25 -

Phil.2:12-13 -

Josh.1:8 -

I Tim.4:15-16 -

I Tim.4:7b -

2 Tim.2:15 -

*Jn.14:21,23 -

Phil.4:13 -

Phil.4:9 -

*Lk.6:46 -

I Jn.2:5 -

Deut.11:26-28

Isa.48:17-18

Now here are three words that help to break down as practically as possible what application involves in a Biblical Plan of Action.

FOCALIZATION - simply What specific thing must I do? (write it down)

MOTIVATION - WHY must I do it? (God commands it) ...

What if I do? (benefits, blessings, results...)

What if I don't? (consequences, complicated problems...)

ACTUALIZATION - How do I do this? Do I need further understanding, explanation, teaching, equipping?

When will I do this?

Example: Focalization - I must read the Bible daily.

Motivation - God commands it. I need spiritual food for spiritual growth. I'll never experience victory, joy, happiness or the fulness of the Spirit unless I do.

Actualization - I will sit down at the table, open to I John and begin reading at 7:30-8:00 every morning and evening.

I'm convinced that application can't be any more specific than this. Don't complicate the process - just do it. Begin with the developing of a good obedient heart attitude and work through these steps with everything God tells you. Soon enough you'll begin to see the results of developing this life discipline. The power comes in the doing! (Phil.4:13). The more I practice and do what God says, the easier it becomes. Also the more it becomes a part of my life. Therefore, the more I develop righteous habit patterns of obedience to God's principles, the more Christlike I'll be and the more of my life He will be controlling!

I'm always responsible to do something about what God has said. You can't get anywhere unless you start. Begin where you are, but don't stay where you are. What good are the Physician's orders and medication if it's not going to be followed and applied?