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# Week 5 — Be Doers of the Word

## Introduction

- Defining Application
  - Andreas Kostenberger: *Application is a multifaceted step based on the idea that the Word of God is eternally relevant, speaking not just to an ancient audience but to a contemporary one as well.*<sup>1</sup>
  - John Frame: *I would suggest that we define theology as “the application of the Word of God by persons to all areas of life.”*<sup>2</sup>
  - John Frame: *Theology is the application of Scripture, by persons, to every area of life.*<sup>3</sup>
  - John Frame: *When God communicates information, we are obligated to believe it. When he tells us to do something, we are obligated to obey. When he tells us a parable, we are obligated to place ourselves in the narrative and meditate on the implications of that. When he expresses affection, we are obligated to appreciate and reciprocate. When he*

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 41.

<sup>2</sup> John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 81.

<sup>3</sup> John Frame, quoted in Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 311.

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*gives us a promise, we are obligated to trust. Let's define the authority of language as its capacity to create an obligation in the hearer. So the speech of an absolute authority creates absolute obligation.*<sup>4</sup>

- John Frame: *Knowing the meaning, then, is knowing how to apply. The meaning of Scripture is its application.*<sup>5</sup>

## The Necessity of Application – James 1:22–25

- **Observe: What does the text say?**
- **Interpret: What does the text mean?**
- **Apply: How should we respond?**

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<sup>4</sup> John Frame, quoted in Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament*, 309.

<sup>5</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 67.

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# How to Apply the Bible

- Bernard Ramm: *All usages of the Bible must be based upon sound exegetical principles. The notorious dictum: "The ends justifies the means," is frequently baptized into the Christian fold under the guise of: "The blessing justifies the means."*<sup>6</sup>
  
- Guiding Principles of Application
  - That which is meaningful for our day must have its foundation in correct interpretation, the meaning of the text in its original context.<sup>7</sup>
  - *A text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers.*<sup>8</sup>
  
- Summary of the process
  - Establish the meaning (the author's original intended meaning)
  - Application to its original audience
  - Identify timeless principles
  - Develop specific application

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1970), 185.

<sup>7</sup> Fuhr and Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study*, 291.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 34.

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# Application

## From Interpretation to Application

Move from the meaning of Scripture to a specific response of faith and obedience.

| STEP                                    | KEY QUESTION                                    | WHAT TO DO                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 Establish the Meaning</b>          | What did the author intend to communicate?      | Determine the passage's meaning in its literary, historical, and theological context.                         |
| <b>2 Consider the Original Audience</b> | How were the first readers expected to respond? | Identify the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors they were called to embrace or change.                         |
| <b>3 Identify Timeless Principles</b>   | What enduring biblical truths apply today?      | Distinguish enduring theological and moral principles from circumstances unique to the original audience.     |
| <b>4 Develop Specific Application</b>   | How should I respond to this truth?             | Apply the passage to your beliefs (Head), desires (Heart), and actions (Hands). Name a concrete response.     |
| <b>5 Evaluate Your Application</b>      | Is my response faithful to Scripture?           | Check that your response fits the author's meaning, is grounded in the gospel, and is appropriately specific. |

**Governing principle:** A passage cannot mean something today that contradicts what it meant to its original audience.

## Three Dimensions of Personal Application

| HEAD • Believe                                                           | HEART • Desire                                                                     | HANDS • Obey                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What does this passage teach me about God, Christ, myself, or the world? | What affections, desires, or attitudes should this truth produce or change?        | What commands must I obey, sins must I forsake, or habits must I cultivate?                                        |
| My words can build others up and give grace.                             | I should desire to serve others through my speech rather than vent my frustration. | In my next difficult conversation, I will pause, consider the other person's need, and choose words that build up. |

Worked example in the bottom row: Ephesians 4:29

## Make It Personal

Because this passage teaches \_\_\_\_\_

With God's help, I will \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_

**Stay with the passage. Let its meaning shape what you believe, desire, and do.**