

# **HOW TO APPLY THE WORD OF GOD**

**by Dr. J. Robert Clinton**

**Manuals  
For Development in Bible Disciplines**

**Barnabas Publishers**



# **HOW TO APPLY THE WORD OF GOD**

Part of  
Bible Disciplines Series

**by Dr. J. Robert Clinton**

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# HOW TO APPLY THE WORD OF GOD

## Part of the Manuals For Development in Bible Disciplines Series

introduction      This unit describes a practical and simple 5 step procedure for a believer to use in applying Bible truth to his/her life. The procedure is offered as a guideline to be used if helpful. Some will find this structured approach helpful. If, internalized, it will help them become sensitive to the inner voice of the Spirit who constantly wants us to see and use truth. Others will find it legalistic or binding. They, perhaps already very sensitive to the Spirit, skip these intermediate steps and intuitively move on to application of the word. Two attitudes should be embraced. (1) If it is helpful then use it. (2) If not, don't, but do recognize that it may be helpful to others.

The overall aim of the Bible Discipline Series is to give practical help in,

- understanding principles of interpreting the Bible using,
- these interpretive principles in Bible study,
- studying the Bible using various study sheets and methods which are inductive or semi-inductive in methodology and which are based on proper interpretive principles,
- learning to obtain and apply truth from the Bible in terms of principles,
- providing supplementary materials which will aid small groups in studying the Bible together,
- the analysis of various books of the Bible,
- providing doctrinal studies on various Bible topics.

## **A SIMPLE FIVE-STEP PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING SCRIPTURAL TRUTH (A Programmed Text)**

### Brief Description

The following short, programmed unit is designed to give a simple procedure to help Christians apply Biblical truth to their lives. It is only suggestive and of course not binding or necessary in order to apply truth to one's life. However, it will insure better self-discipline in order that a person make better use of what is being learned than might be the case without any procedure. Many have used this kind of procedure with good results and personal satisfaction. It is a refinement of an applicational procedure which was repeatedly taught me in my discipling days with Navigator types.

### How To Study Programmed Instruction

This booklet is written in a self-study format called programmed instruction which contains items called frames. You are expected to do certain things to take advantage of this initial learning technique.

### Actively Respond

As you go through this book read actively. Interact mentally with what you read. Ask questions to yourself as you read. Think of related ideas which the material might suggest. In addition to your own musing you will be asked to think out answers to questions or problems. Many times you will be asked to give some kind of written answer (at the conclusion of each frame there is a question or exercise). Other questions will ask for you just to think your answer. However, it may be a good idea to write out answers to all the questions. Most learn much better when they have a definite written answer. I'll leave space for you to write your answers, even to the *thought* questions. But whether you write out your answers or think them aloud--remember, your active response and interaction with the material plays a very big part in your learning process. Don't give up without some definite response to each question or problem.

### Use an Answer Shield

Use a blank sheet of paper to cover up my answer while you are forming your own answer. Never look at my answer first. You cannot

honestly think for yourself if you have peeked at my answer first. So when you come to a new frame, slide your answer shield down to the answer line which looks like this

-----  
**ANSWER**

Then after making your answer, remove the shield and check it with mine.

What Is A Frame?

Perhaps you are asking yourself, “What is he talking about when he says frame?” This book is made up of a number of frames, in fact 14. A frame is a small unit of teaching. Normally each frame concentrates on teaching one concept. The frame not only introduces the concept but it will also ask you to answer a question or two to see if you understood the concept. You are expected to work through a frame, do what it says and then go on to the next one. Each frame is numbered and sequenced to teach concepts in a progressive manner. Here is what a frame looks like.

A line indicates the beginning of the frame. Notice the frame is numbered in the upper left hand corner with a bold faced number.

---

1. This space will contain teaching information. Then follows a question or exercise or other requested response based on the teaching information.. The request will be given in all CAPS.

HERE WILL BE THE QUESTION OR OTHER KIND OF  
RESPONSE WHICH YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO ANSWER.

-----  
**ANSWER**

The actual answer will be given here. Now after you have answered you can slide your answer shield past this answer and check to see how well you did.

You should read carefully the **teaching information** in a frame. Then read the **question** and **respond with your answer**. Finally, check **my answer**. If all is well, go on to the next frame and continue the

process. After answering and checking sometimes you may want to go back and reread the frame.

The dark line across the page, the frame number, information, response, dashed answer line, and the answer itself make up a frame. Occasional there will be some explanatory remarks following the answer to give further detail. And sometimes there will be a lead in introductory sort of

paragraph to prepare for the next frame. If the lead-in material is lengthy it will be identified and called a panel. Sometimes several frames will then follow and refer to a given panel of information.

You may not always agree exactly with my answer. If your answer is equivalent, fine! Go on to the next frame. If your answer is not O.K. perhaps you will want to review the teaching portion again. I hope you will enjoy this challenging method of learning.

## SECTION I. PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES--WHAT IS PERSONAL APPLICATION?

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1. Personal application means that you personally apply to your own life truth that you learn from God. It is the ability to sense that God is personally concerned with you as an individual and is speaking to you in order to make you what He wants you to be. This personal care is what makes Christianity exciting. In thinking of how you can use truth for yourself let me warn you of two extremes to avoid.

Extreme 1. Doing nothing because you are waiting for God to apply the Scriptures.

Extreme 2. Doing too much in your own strength and moving ahead of God's leading in applying the Scriptures.

The Scriptures point out to us the proper balance. We are to respond to teaching we see in the Scriptures. At the same time we are to trust God for His enabling grace and strength to work in us the needed truth. It is not an either/or but rather a both/and perspective.

BELOW IS GIVEN A LIST OF VERSES. BESIDE EACH VERSE MARK THE EMPHASIS OF THE UNDERLINED WORDS. USE EITHER "GR" TO INDICATE GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY OR "MR" TO INDICATE MY RESPONSIBILITY.

- \_\_\_ 1. 1 Tim. 4:15 Take heed unto yourself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you.
- \_\_\_ 2. 2 Tim. 3:14 But continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them.
- \_\_\_ 3. Phil. 2:13 For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.
- \_\_\_ 4. John 16:13 Nevertheless, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth;
- \_\_\_ 5. Psalm 119:9 How shall a young person cleanse his/her way? By taking heed according to your word.

---

1. continued

- \_\_\_ 6. Psalm 119:34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

- \_\_\_ 7. Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your law.
- \_\_\_ 8. 1 John 2:6 He that says he abides in him ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.
- \_\_\_ 9. Hebrews 8:10b ...says the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.
- \_\_\_ 10. James 1:22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves.
- \_\_\_ 11. 1 Thess. 2:13 ..when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it, not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.

-----  
**ANSWER**

MR 1. MR 2. GR 3. GR 4. MR 5. MR 6. GR 7. MR  
GR 9. MR 10. GR 11.

---

**2.** Don't forget the two extremes to avoid as you consider the next several remarks. You might ask yourself...well, Just how do I go about getting a personal application? How can I be sure that it isn't me, but God really indicating that I need this truth? Well, here are some suggestions that have been helpful to me.

Suggestion 1. I seek to have a heart attitude which is willing to obey anything that I think God is pointing out to me. That is, I am on the lookout for truth from God.

Suggestion 2. I specifically ask God to reveal truth to me as I study or listen to scriptural teaching.

**2. continued**

- Suggestion 3. Normally, if after I am willing and have asked God to give me truth, I get an idea which seems consistent with what I know of the word of God, I take it by faith that God has guided me to that idea. I will continue to believe this unless this idea is contradicted somewhere in scripture. Sometimes, I am not always certain that an idea is from God. If I have doubts about an idea whether it is from God or not, I will not act on it immediately but will wait to see if God will confirm this idea through other means. Often, when God is trying to teach me a truth I get besieged with that truth from several different sources.
- Suggestion 4. Having become convinced that God is directing me to this truth, I then seek to obey that truth in terms of my life situation by noting some specific action that can be taken in terms of the truth.
- Suggestion 5. I ask God to enable me to obey this specific action.
- Suggestion 6. I ask God to show me if my application is not from him (Phil. 3:15 ... if you be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you.) I therefore watch closely my circumstances in the days that follow.
- Suggestion 7. I continue to obey, believing it was God who led me to the truth and God who shall do it through me (Phil. 2:13).

THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS ARE REQUIRED PROCEDURE FOR ONE TO GET A PERSONAL APPLICATION FROM GOD. (True or false.)

-----  
**ANSWER**

False - These suggestions have been helpful to me as I work out the balance between self-effort and God's effort in my own Christian walk. They are simply offered as suggestions.

3. Let's suppose you do have a willing heart and that you have specifically asked God to give you truth as you study. How will God give you ideas? Here are some prompts that have helped me.

Prompt 1. I use questions to aid my thinking:

What example did I see in this chapter that I should follow?  
What command or principle did I read that I should obey? What warnings were there for me to heed?  
Is there some promise from God that I can claim?

Prompt 2. Another way that God especially prompts me is through deep needs in my actual life situation. Because of things happening in my life I become very sensitive to answers to these needs.

Prompt 3. I try to have an alert, inquisitive mind when I study the Scriptures. A tired and weary mind will not be very responsive. For me, some of my best Bible study comes early in the morning. I am more alert then than any other time of the day.

Prompt 4. I study carefully each of the principles of truth that I have obtained in my Bible study to see if God wants to do something in my life with one or more of them. I have usually spent a great deal of effort and time in analyzing my study. I have trusted God to lead me. It follows logically that He will then use one or more of the principles I see in my own life.

SUMMARIZE EACH OF THESE PROMPTS IN NOT MORE THAN FIVE WORDS.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
**ANSWER**

Here is the way I summarized them.

- 1. use helpful questions

2. recognize your deep needs
3. be alert as you study
4. study carefully principles of truth

Perhaps some of these ideas will be as helpful to you as they have been to me.

## **SECTION II. PERSONAL APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES--A FIVE STEP PROCEDURE**

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4. In the last several frames I have told you some things that have helped me to arrive at a personal application. Let me also share a 5 step procedure that has helped me to discipline myself to carry out a personal application. Perhaps it can help you too.

1. DISCOVER your truth.
2. Point out your NEED.
3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY.
4. CHECK-UP on yourself.
5. TRUST GOD.

WHICH OF THE TWO EXTREMES BELOW MUST A PERSON BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT. WHEN FOLLOWING A PROCEDURE SUCH AS THIS 5 STEP APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- 1. Doing nothing because you are waiting for God to apply the Scriptures.
- 2. Doing too much in your own strength and moving ahead of God's leading in applying the Scriptures.

-----  
**ANSWER**

2. Doing too much in your own strength

---

5. Suppose a person feels that such an application procedure is too binding and requires too much discipline.

OF WHICH OF THE TWO EXTREMES MUST SUCH A PERSON BE VERY CAREFUL?

- 1. Doing nothing because you are waiting for God to apply the Scriptures.
- 2. Doing too much in your own strength and moving ahead of God's leading in applying the Scriptures.

-----  
**ANSWER**

1. Doing nothing

6. The first step in the application procedure,

---->**1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH.**

2. Point out your need.
3. Plan specifically.
4. Check-up.
5. Trust God.

**MEANS THIS:**

On the basis of the principles of moral truth previously discovered ask God to point out one of the principles from which you should derive some personal help. God will usually indicate this to you through some impression or some conviction. Sometimes God will indicate the principle in terms of some obvious need in your life.

**WHAT TWO WORDS IN THIS EXPLANATION GUARD AGAINST YOUR DOING TOO MUCH AND THUS MOVING AHEAD OF GOD'S APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES.**

-----  
**ANSWER**

Ask God. You are depending upon God to point out the truth for you.

7. FILL IN THE FIRST APPLICATION PROCEDURE (in the blank) AND THEN READ THE ONE POINTED TO BY THE ARROW BEFORE GOING ON WITH THE REST OF THE FRAME.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

--> **2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED.**

3. Plan specifically.

4. Check-up.

5. Trust God.

The second procedure, *POINT OUT YOUR NEED*, **MEANS THIS:**

Write down why you feel you need to have an application of this principle in your life. State in personal terms your need. Use the personal pronoun "I" and "me" and relate it to some specific circumstance in your life. Perhaps you can honestly state failures from recent experience which point out your need.

IN THE LIGHT OF THIS EXPLANATION WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CHOICES WOULD REALLY BE POINTING OUT A PERSONAL NEED? CHECK YOUR CHOICE.

- \_\_\_ a. Last week I lost my temper three times. I know God wants me to "give a soft answer" rather than "stir up wrath."<sup>1</sup>
- \_\_\_ b. To be able to give a soft answer is a high standard for any Christian and worth striving for.

---

<sup>1</sup>Choices a. and b. allude to Proverbs 15:1, one of the many verses in Proverbs which speaks about use of the tongue and cautions us about how we use words with others. Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath but grievous words stir up anger. Having studied this verse the question is--How do I relate it to my own life? Choices a. and b. suggest two ways to do so.

-----  
**ANSWER**

**1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH**

  x   a.



**8.** Look again at the two choices.

\_\_\_ a. Last week I lost my temper three times. I know God wants me to "give a soft answer" rather than "stir up wrath."

\_\_\_ b. To be able to give a soft answer is a high standard for a Christian and worth striving for.

I could reword the b. statement to include the personal pronoun,

To be able to give a soft answer is a high standard for me to strive for.

But still it is not the best choice.

WHY NOT?

-----  
**ANSWER**

It does not relate to some specific circumstance like the first one does (three times last week I had need of this truth.) However, it is a nice general statement of a truth that may be needed someday.

**9. FILL IN THE FIRST TWO APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND THEN READ THE NEXT ONE BEFORE GOING ON WITH THE FRAME.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

**--> 3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY**

4. Check-up

5. Trust God

Here is what *PLAN SPECIFICALLY MEANS*.

Write down something specific you plan to do to apply this principle of truth. Make it something definite so that you can know when you have done it. (e.g., memorizing a verse, spending a special time alone with God, going and apologizing to someone, talking to someone, talking to someone about something God has shown you, given a specific time element in which the application must take place.)

**IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXPLANATION ABOVE CHOOSE THE STATEMENT WHICH BEST FITS THE THIRD STEP, PLAN SPECIFICALLY.**

- \_\_\_ a. Certainly a "soft answer" is what I need to have in my own Christian life. Therefore, I plan to be a better Christian in this regard.
- \_\_\_ b. I plan to memorize Proverbs 15:1 "A soft answer turns a wrath but grievous words stir up anger," by Friday. I will ask God to bring this verse to mind when I am about to lash out at someone. I will count the number of times this week, in which God helps me by this verse.

-----  
**ANSWER**

1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH
  2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED
- x   b.

---

**10. FILL IN THE FIRST THREE APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND THEN READ THE NEXT ONE BEFORE GOING ON WITH THE FRAME.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**--> 4. CHECK UP**

5. Trust God.

Here is what *CHECK UP MEANS*:

Write down some way in which you can check-up on yourself to see if you actually do the application. (e.g., plan a time of reviewing your application, share your application with someone else and have him/her check-up on you.)

**ACCORDING TO THE ABOVE EXPLANATION WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FIT(S) THE PROCEDURE "CHECK-UP" ON YOURSELF. MARK YOUR CHOICE(S).**

- a. I will share my application with my wife and ask her to point out to me any instances she sees this week where I fail to give a "soft answer."
- b. I will meet with my prayer partner next week and honestly review with him my own failure of this application. Then we will pray about it together.

-----  
**ANSWER**

1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH
2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED
3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY

a.

b.

**Important Aside**

What I am suggesting is that you learn to be transparent and accountable to someone who knows you well. My study of mentoring<sup>2</sup> shows that it is these two items, learning to be transparent on the part of the mentoree, and holding one accountable, on the part of the mentor, which protects the mentoree and allows for great growth and development. Accountability is a lacking item in our Christian world of leadership today.

---

**11. FILL IN THE FIRST FOUR APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND THEN READ THE NEXT ONE BEFORE GOING ON TO THE REST OF THE FRAME.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**--> 5. TRUST GOD**

---

<sup>2</sup>Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person (called the mentor) empowers another (called the mentoree) by sharing God-given resources. See the handbook, **The Mentor Handbook**, by Drs. J. Robert Clinton and Richard Clinton available through Barnabas Publishers, 2175 N. Holliston Ave, Altadena, CA, 91001. Mentors are careful to make sure mentorees become sensitive to the Holy Spirit and learn to obey truth being revealed.

Here is what procedure 5, *TRUST GOD*, MEANS:

Select some promise<sup>3</sup> from God which will enable you to carry out this application in the freedom of the SPIRIT rather than in an effort at self-improvement only. Make a determination of the will to trust God to do this application in you. Recognize that it is God who is working in this application process and deliberately believe that He will enable you to carry out this application. In short, be sensitive to God in the midst of this whole process.

Here are some favorite verses<sup>4</sup> that I claim from God sometimes for specific applications: Phil. 2:13; Phil. 3:15; Prov. 3:5,6; Rom. 8:3; Rom. 8:13; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 4:15; John 16:13; Psa 119:9; Psa 119:34; Psa 119:18; Heb 8:10b;

WHICH OF THE TWO EXTREMES DOES THIS FIFTH APPLICATION PROCEDURE GUARD AGAINST.

- a. DOING NOTHING because you are waiting on God to apply the Scriptures.
- b. DOING TOO MUCH in your own strength and thus moving ahead of God's leading in applying the Scriptures.

-----  
**ANSWER**

1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH
2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED
3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY
4. CHECK-UP

  x   b.

---

<sup>3</sup>Selecting a promise is just one way of *TRUSTING GOD* in the application. There are others such as, journalling the progress and praising God for each step gained, specific pointed prayers (maybe even written down) which turn the application upward to God. Perhaps you can think of other creative ways that will help you focus on trusting God to enable in the process.

<sup>4</sup>The more you study God's word, the more you will become familiar with passages of Scripture which focus on God's revealing of truth and applying it to life. Promises made by God to others usually contain some eternal principle relating to the character of God. Frequently these promises or rather, the truth underlying them can be also claimed for our time.

---

**12. LIST HERE THE FIVE STEP APPLICATION PROCEDURE.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
**ANSWER**

1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH
2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED
3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY
4. CHECK-UP
5. TRUST GOD

13. Lets see how well you have understood what I have said about the five step procedure.

MATCH THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE BELOW WITH THE CONCEPT WHICH RELATES MOST CLOSELY WITH IT (by placing the letter of the concept in the blank in front of the application procedure--more than one answer possible for some blanks).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>___ 1. DISCOVER YOUR TRUTH</p> <p>___ 2. POINT OUT YOUR NEED</p> <p>___ 3. PLAN SPECIFICALLY</p> <p>___ 4. CHECK-UP</p> <p>___ 5. TRUST GOD</p> | <p>a. I will use Phil. 2:13 to help me in this application, trusting God to make me want to do it and to do it.</p> <p>b. I don't know why I seem to have very little compassion. I noticed that when he asked me for help I cared more about avoiding him than helping him.</p> <p>c. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding."</p> <p>d. I will spend 15 minutes a day studying 1 Corinthians 13 looking for principles of applying love.</p> <p>e. I will mark down this application in my notebook and look again next week recording my progress.</p> <p>f. I think I had better wait before doing anything about this command.</p> <p>g. God has compassion on human beings in need.</p> |
|--|--|

-----

**ANSWER**

g 1. b 2. d 3. e 4. a,c 5.

- 14.** One worksheet which may help you in applying God's word is given on the next page. It is called the **PERSONAL APPLICATION WORKSHEET**. It uses the principles of this application program. You will find that after using it several times that you will have internalized the basic principles. You will then be able to discard the worksheet because you do it automatically. See the next page for a sample of this worksheet. You are free to copy and use this sheet. You may find this sheet something useful in your discipling or mentoring of others.



SUMMARY

Let me summarize the underlying principles that guided me writing this program and which are behind this worksheet that I have just given.

Principles

- Avoid doing nothing because you are waiting for God to apply the Scriptures.
- Avoid doing too much in your own strength and moving ahead of God's leading in applying the Scriptures.
- Make sure your heart is willing to obey anything that God points out to you.
- Specifically ask God to reveal application truth to you as you read, study, or hear God's Word.
- Expect God to prompt you via His Holy Spirit in your spirit. You have asked for it. He will do it.
- Follow what you feel to be God's prompting unless this prompting is contradicted in Scripture.
- Seek to fit the truth to your life situation.
- Ask God to reveal if the application isn't from Him.
- Obey the application in faith taking it from God.
- Use questions when reading the Bible which will prompt application.
- Be alert physically when reading or studying the Scriptures.
- Expect God to increase your sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's ministry of internalizing truth in you through this 5 step procedure until it becomes second nature to hear and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Let me review again for you, one last time, the 5 Step procedure.  
Procedure

1. **DISCOVER** your truth.  
One of the reasons the Holy Spirit was given to indwell us is to make us conscious of truth and to bring our lives in conformity to truth. We should expect the Holy Spirit to convict us and sensitize us to hearing and obeying truth.
2. Point out your **NEED**.  
One of the ways the Holy Spirit gets our attention is via needs in our own life or ministry. We see these needs and are sensitized to them. The Holy Spirit then comes along with truth which will help us meet these needs.
3. Plan **SPECIFICALLY**.  
The more pointed is your application of truth the more likely it is that you will actually use the truth and internalize it. One measure of true learning is change of behavior (attitudes and actions).
4. **CHECK-UP** on yourself.  
Accountability puts teeth to any application. Find a way to have accountability in your use of the truth. Accountability is a missing ingredient in today's world.
5. **TRUST GOD**.  
Some people are more self-disciplined than others. It is easier for them to do things in their own strength. But in the long haul, all people, both those who are self-disciplined or not, will see that God in fact must enable in applying truth to life and ministry. Appropriating the Holy Spirit as enabling power in changing a life is an essential ingredient to growth. We hear truth from God. It fits us and our situation. We want to do something about it. We make commitments to do so. We seek to measure our progress. And we trust God in the whole process.

