

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN APPLYING SCRIPTURE

There is more to the Christian life than just reading a Bible passage and checking off that it has been read. Jesus told us we aren't to be just hearers (or readers) of the word but doers of it. To be a doer of the word, it helps to ask ourselves some key questions while reading the word.

What sin do I need to confess (Psalm 139:23-24)?

Pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me." As we read the Bible, God will point out that which needs to be confessed in our own lives.

Is there an attitude that needs to be changed (Philippians 2:5)? What needs to be transformed (Romans 12:2)?

When our attitude does not match the mind or attitude of Christ, it needs to be adjusted. As we read and answer this question, God nudges us about attitudes to be changed, and how we need to be transformed to become more like Him.

What passage needs to be applied (James 1:22) or example followed (Romans 15:4)?

Sometimes, it is clear that a passage needs to be applied to our lives. Perhaps we are grieving the loss of a loved one and come across 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. When we are struggling, we remind ourselves of how the Lord describes death like sleep, and that loved ones who have put their faith in Christ will be with Jesus when He returns to the earth. Perhaps we are struggling with depression, and we apply the example of Elijah in 1 Kings 19 and 22 to our situation. Throughout our lifetimes, we are to be applying passages and lessons learned from biblical examples.

What action do I need to take (James 1:22, 27)?

No matter what particular issues we face at various points in life, as we read the scripture we are constantly determining what actions the Lord would have us to take. Let's try this out with Philippians 4.

Think about those questions on the bookmark that we shared at nafwb.org/jeremiah29. What did the passage mean to the people who received it the first time? The original recipients of the letter probably sensed that Paul was telling them to *get along* and *be content*. What is the timeless principle? Clearly, there

is a need for us to labor together, lean on the Lord, and be content. What steps should you take to apply the passage? Everyone is going to go through difficult times and need God's peace. This could be a relationship problem, fear about our health, job or pandemic. How could I specifically apply this passage?

Focus specifically on the section in verses 4 to 9. How do you apply verse 4? Rejoice in the Lord always. Begin the day rejoicing in the character of God, regardless of circumstances. Verse 5 reminds us God is close to us, and that we should be gentle. I apply the passage by reminding myself that, no matter what happens, God is near. When I read verse 6 I am reminded not to worry about anything, but instead pray to God about everything, starting with thanksgiving. I can pray about concerns I have about my family, work, or school—anything! As soon as something concerns me, I take it to the Lord. Verse 7 tells me the result will be peace. Now, I may be experiencing terrible stress, so this peace "passeth all understanding." Others may not understand it, but it comes from and through Christ Jesus.

The key to this peace is found in verse 8, where I am told to think about things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy. So, I must not dwell on my fear or a problem; I must focus my thoughts. Do you know anyone who does that? In verse 9, Paul told the Philippians that if they would do the things they had learned, received, heard, and seen him do, the result would be peace. For us, we think of those godly people in our lives who we have watched endure stress, pain, or some other type of upheaval. Think about how they handled their situation according to Scripture and experienced this peace Paul described. Then, understand that we, too, can experience this same type of peace.

As we think about applying Scripture, we begin to understand why it is truly the key to a successful life. What are you dealing with today? Find a passage or example in Scripture that deals with the issue and apply Scripture to your life.

JEREMIAH 29

INITIATIVE

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