

The Application Factor

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

Case #1 Recently a pastor in western Michigan, where I live, told his congregation: “We do not greet one another with a holy kiss, so why would we understand that elders should only be men, not women.” He was trying to, and eventually did (by a narrow vote), convince his congregation to change the church constitution to allow women to become pastors and elders. His argument was that, although Paul said an elder was to be a husband, and women were not to teach men, it doesn’t apply today because it was just culturally relevant for that day.

Case #2 Those teaching a “Prosperity Gospel” of health, wealth, and happiness, point to Old Testament promises of blessings for Israel, if they obey. Their conclusion is that God wants all Christians to prosper (be healthy, wealthy, and happy) today.

Case #3 Some charismatic groups teach that every believer should speak in tongues. This is not simply the Pentecostal view that all the gifts exist today, but an insistence that every single believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues. Therefore, every believer should seek the gift of tongues. The Apostle Paul said he spoke in tongues more than all, therefore, all believers will speak in tongues if they are Spirit-filled.

Case #4 There are those who emphasize “Experiencing God” through circumstances. They find God’s will by looking at the things that happen to them. They believe that God’s will for our lives is to be found in the circumstances of our lives. God led Moses circumstantially, therefore, He leads us circumstantially. As we become sensitive to what God is doing in the circumstances of our lives, we can make decisions about the will of God for our lives.

Case #5 Those promoting Christian political involvement point out that God told Israel that He would heal their land if they turned to Him in obedience. Therefore, they believe God will heal America, if we turn to Him in obedience.

Case #6 Some believe that the church should be organized around a clergy, a pastor, or priest, who stands apart from the people and represents those people before God. People can only come to God through the clergy of the church.

Case #7 The Amish believe it is best to avoid all forms of technology that weaken the family. Their lifestyle is an attempt to avoid worldly ways, which erode the family as the basis of the community. The Bible says to come out from the world and be separate. This basic idea dictates the way they dress, eat, marry, and most of their social practices.

If you disagree with any of the above positions, my guess is your disagreement with those teaching these things is not about the interpretation of any biblical text.

I am guessing that you, and the position you disagree with, both have the same understanding of the author’s meaning.

YOUR INTERPRETATION WOULD BE THE SAME. YOUR APPLICATION WOULD BE DIFFERENT.

How Would You Apply These Passages?

Genesis 9:7—*As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.*

Genesis 20:2—*Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.”*

Genesis 22:1-2—*Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”*

Exodus 34:26—*You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.*

Leviticus 11:4-8—*... you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof... the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you. You shall not eat of their flesh nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.*

Job 2:9—*Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”*

Exodus 31:14-15—*Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ‘For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.*

Leviticus 25:3-5—*Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. Your harvest’s aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year.*

Leviticus 25:10—*‘You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.*

2 Samuel 5:4—*David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.*

Ezekiel 24:16-18—*“Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not come... So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died.*

Daniel 9:3—*So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

1 Samuel 15:3—*Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.*

2 Samuel 6:6-7—*But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.*

1 Kings 11:3—*He [Solomon] had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines ...*

Hosea 1:2—*“Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry*

Ezra 10:2-3—*Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.*

Matthew 5:29-30—*If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.*

Matthew 5:42—*Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*

Matthew 10:5-6—*Do not go in the way of the Gentiles... go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*

Matthew 10:8—*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.*

Luke 6:24—*But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.*

John 13:14-15—*“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.*

John 14:14—*If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

Romans 16:16—*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

1 Timothy 1:3—*Remain on at Ephesus*

1 Timothy 2:8—*Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

Titus 3:13—*Help Zenas the lawyer.*

The interesting thing here is that, for the most part, we would have no trouble interpreting these passages. The author's meaning to his historical audience, in most cases, is clear and easy to understand. But even with a clear and obvious understanding of the meaning of these passages, the application is often difficult, vague, or unclear.

Observation, Interpretation, and Application

Application is putting an interpretation into practice. Interpretation is tied to history. Application extends the author's meaning through all the centuries to today. According to the dictionary, application is "an act of putting to use" ["Webster's Dictionary," p. 97].

Application does not necessarily mean that I should do something. It may mean that I should think something, or believe something, or have a certain attitude about something. But application will always be a matter of putting the meaning of the passage to use.

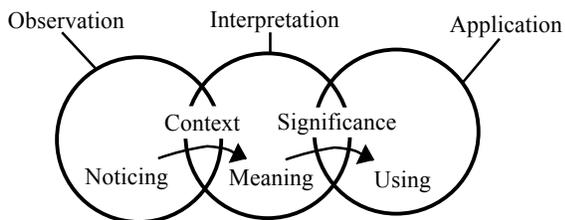
But just exactly how do we do that? How do we bridge the gap, or make the transition, from the meaning to the application? The key to application is what I shall call **SIGNIFICANCE**. That is, **Application is putting to use the significance of a passage.**

Application answers the question: If the author of the passage we are studying were alive today, how would he respond to our situation? It's like we are sitting around a table discussing how to apply a certain passage. Then we slide another chair up to the table for the biblical author and ask him how he thinks we should apply that passage today. In order to know what his answer would be, we need to get inside his thoughts.



Application brings the author to the table today

The *significance* of a passage is the mind of God, which is determined through the mind of the author, which is determined through the text of Scripture. *Significance* is the (moral, theological, and philosophical) **mentality of the author**, which is manifested in a specific passage. In the case of Scripture, it's that piece of **the mind of God** that inspired the human author. And I want to keep emphasizing that the author's mentality must be determined from the biblical text.



Application does not always perform what the passage means, but it always puts to use what God means in that passage.

We apply the Bible the same way we apply any literature. We must **observe** what the author says, use the **context** to **interpret** what he means, then look for the **significance** of that before **applying** it to our lives. But there are two differences between applying the Bible and applying other literature:

1. Most literature does not need to be applied. If I am reading a novel, a newspaper, or an article from a website, usually I don't intend to (or need to) apply it. But the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, so all of it merits, indeed, demands, application.
2. Most literature has just one author. The Bible has two—God and the human author. The thoughts of God superintend the thoughts of the human author, but do not eliminate the personality and understanding of the human author.

The **significance** of a biblical passage is always in the mind of God. But our only access to the mind of God is through a biblical author. It is possible that God may have something in mind that the human author does not have in mind. But the only way we can know that is through the mind of some other human author who wrote down his God-inspired thoughts.

For example, Isaiah records this revelation:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

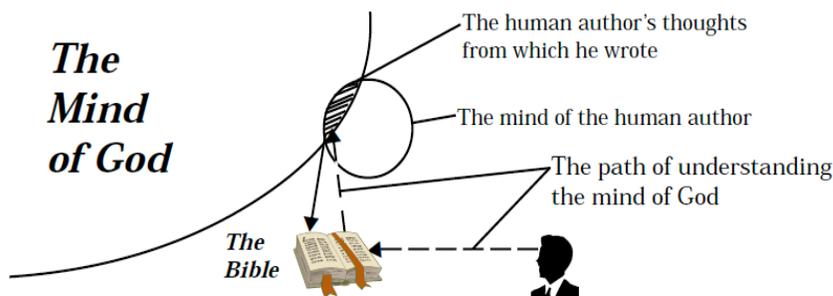
It could be that Isaiah understood that to be his own son, because in the next chapter he writes:

So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son (Isaiah 8:3).

But we know, whether or not Isaiah had the Messiah in mind, God did. How do we know that? Because Matthew used that in reference to the coming of Christ in 1:23. [There are many other examples, like David’s suffering in Psalm 22, and Peter’s use of Joel 2:28 in Acts 2:17.] But the only way we can know God had it in mind is because a New Testament author had it in mind.

We should NOT ALWAYS apply the *meaning* of a passage, but We SHOULD ALWAYS apply the *significance* of a passage.

The following diagram shows the path of special (verbal) revelation. Some specific aspect of the mind of God is communicated to the mind of some specific human author who writes it down without error in some specific text. So the way back to the mind of God is through what the human author has written. As we read the text of the human author, our objective should be to get back to the mind of God. What we should apply is that aspect of the mind of God.



Significance is determined from the shaded area, in this diagram, where the mind of God is revealed to the mind of the human author. *Significance* is about the mindset of the author of the text, and it is determined from the Bible. We need to understand that the

inspiration (of the words) of Scripture comes through the mind of the human author. I like Ryrie’s definition of Inspiration:

“Inspiration is God’s superintending of human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error in the words of the original autographs His revelation to man” (“Ryrie Study Bible,” p. 2055).

For example, David said: *The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue (2 Samuel 23:1-2)*. The Spirit of the Lord did not simply dictate the Psalms to David. David was not just a stenographer for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit controlled what David wrote so that it was without error. But the Psalms of David are full of his own passions, determinations, thoughts, and feelings. And all those were involved when David composed and recorded the words the Holy Spirit (inerrantly) put on his *tongue*.

Peter says inspiration was not just something human authors decided to write. It was not *made by an act of human will*. It came from the Spirit of God. But the way God revealed it was *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*. (2 Peter 1:20-21).

On rare occasions, that would be direct dictation from God. For example, the Ten Commandments were written by God Himself, and some of the Mosaic Law was dictated directly to Moses from God. But, for the most part, Scripture was revealed by the Holy Spirit moving men of God to compose and record (without error) what God had supernaturally placed on their minds.

Not everything the author thought was right. But what he thought about what he wrote in Scripture was right. Determining his thoughts about what he wrote is the interpretation, the author's intended meaning, of a passage. But those specific thoughts come from a certain mentality that reflects a tiny sliver of the mind of God. That's what I have called the **significance** of the text, and it generalizes the interpretation from local (his place in time and history) to universal (any place at any time in history).

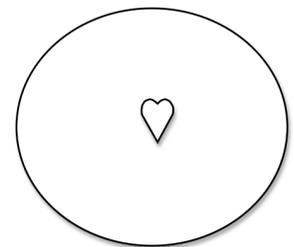
<p>Meaning is true for one time or in one situation Significance is true for all times and all situations</p>

The author knew what he wrote. He did not just write gibberish. He wrote something his mind understood. Even on the rare occasion where God or an angel directly dictated a revelation, the human author understood the words he was writing. He may not have understood all the implications of it, or every fulfillment of it, but he understood the meaning of it.

Daniel 10:1 says this about a prophecy given to Daniel by an angel: *but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision*. It seems that Daniel was given a specific verbal message from God in the form of a vision. But it was not just words he mindlessly wrote down. Rather, *he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision*.

Pursuing the Heart of God

Imagine a circle representing biblical Christianity. In the center of the circle is what is closest to the heart of God. Many Christians live as close to the outside of the circle as they can without stepping over the edge. Most ethical questions I get are basically: "How close can I get to the outside of the circle without stepping over the line?"



For example, suppose someone comes and asks me if it is "okay" if they get a divorce or remarried (because their special situation is intolerable and God would not want them to live like this). Usually, they are asking what they can get by with, or get away with, and still be a Christian. What I do is give them five or six passages to read and study on divorce and remarriage. Then I tell them: "As you read these passages, instead of asking what you can get by with or get away with, ask yourself what is closest to the heart of God. Not what can I do and still stay in the grace of God (or the Christian community), but what is closest to the mind and heart of God." That is the significance of any passage, and the only true path to application. There is another way to look at **significance** ...

The Significance of a Passage Is the Spirit of the Law

Significance is the **Spirit of the Law** rather than just the letter of the Law (Romans 2:29; 2 Corinthians 3:6). I realize the phrase “Spirit of the Law” is used to justify all kind of wacko departures from the text. But Paul used it to go through the text to the mind of God.

Speaking of circumcision, Paul told the Romans:

*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, **by the Spirit, not by the letter**; and his praise is not from men, but from God (Romans 2:29).*

It seems that when God gave the Jews the Law about circumcision, He did not want them to just practice it physically. He also wanted them to think about His intention for giving it to them. True circumcision follows the **Spirit of the Law**, which is the Holy Spirit, which reveals the mind of God, which is the **significance** of the passage.

The Significance of the Law In the Teaching of Christ

Let me repeat something Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill... For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17, 20-21).

It is interesting that the Pharisees said Jesus broke the Law, and Jesus said He fulfilled the Law. Why did the Pharisees think Jesus broke the Law, and why did Jesus think He fulfilled it? The answer to both questions is the same. Jesus kept the **significance** of the Law, which is the mind of God.

When Jesus said, *I did not come to abolish but to fulfill* the Law, He did not just mean the ceremonial Law, but all the Law. And He did not mean He kept all the particulars of the Law but that He fulfilled what God had in mind when He gave Moses the Law. Jesus kept the significance of the Law with His whole life.

The Pharisees took the Law in the opposite direction. Instead of looking toward the mind of God, they looked toward the welfare of Israel and applied the Law with Israel in mind. They treated the Law like the Gentiles (the ones Paul addresses in Romans 1:25) treated nature. They worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator. The Pharisees worshipped and served the Law God created, rather than the God who created the Law.

Significance is what Christ had in mind when He said: *You have heard ... **But I say to you**.*

Six times Jesus said: *You have heard ... **But I say to you**.* Of course, Jesus was doing more than applying the Mosaic Law. He was also giving some new revelation from God. However, His *But I say to you* statements are also an application of the **significance** of what *you have heard*. They are an application of the mind of God who inspired Moses to write what *you have heard*. *But I say to you* is the **significance** of what *you have heard*.

Let's look at one of those statements.

*You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not commit murder” and “Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.” **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, “You good-for-nothing,” shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, “You fool,” shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell (Matthew 5:21-22).*

Here's what Jesus said using our analysis.

Observation: *You shall not commit murder.*
Context: This is one of the Ten Commandments given to Israel on Mount Sinai.
Interpretation: The Israelites were not to take it upon themselves to murder one another.
Significance: God does not want us to act out of anger toward one another.
Application: *I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty ...*

Jesus also told His followers that their righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20), because the Pharisees applied the Law without considering its **significance**. And the **significance** of the Law comes not from the letter of the Law but from the Spirit of the Law, which is the mind of God.

The Significance of the Law Requires Understanding

In the parable of the soils, Jesus focuses on understanding.

*And the one on whom seed was sown on the **good soil**, this is the man who hears the word and **understands** it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matthew 13:23).*

Notice Jesus says the good soil, the one who is fruitful (meaning the one who applies the Word of God), is the one who understands the Word. So, application is not just a matter of keeping commands but understanding the **significance** of those commands.

The point of every command, narrative, poem, parable, or any revelation of Scripture, is to be holy as God is holy. But to do that we must know something about the mind of God. Application is always about the mind of God, and God's thoughts are only available through the intentions of the author, which are only available through understanding the text of Scripture. Understanding is the **significance** of the text.

The Significance of the Mosaic Law

Later on, Jesus told the Pharisees:

But go and learn what this means: "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice," for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:12; 12:7).

If He desires *compassion, and not sacrifice*, why did God give commands about doing sacrifices? Not because He wanted people to mindlessly perform them, but because He wanted them to know something about Himself. Application is about *the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings* (Hosea 6:6).

Isaiah wrote:

What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.... New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, ... Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight (Isaiah 1:11-17).

Why does God complain about Israel's sacrifices and the keeping of Sabbath assemblies, when He commanded them to do sacrifices and keep Sabbath assemblies? Because they were doing it without first removing their evil deeds, and learning to do good. In other words, they were misapplying the Law because they were not seeking the mind of God who revealed the Law. And how were they to know the mind of God? Through (what I have called) the **significance** of the Law.

"Knowing God" Is Unique to Biblical Christianity

The other four major world religions do not ask you to know God in order to apply their teaching. Islam is about mindless "submission" to the laws of the Quran. Today's Rabbinic Judaism is about keeping the traditions outlined by the rabbis and collected in the Talmud. Hinduism pantheistically follows mystical gods, and in Buddhism you are your own god seeking to rid yourself of all desires. Only in biblical Christianity do you seek the mind of the Creator as a basis for living. So applying the Bible is very different than applying the Quran or the Gita.

Accurate Application Applies Significance

Whenever any statement by anyone is applied correctly, it will be applied according to the **significance** of that statement, which is in the mind of the author(s).

An accurate application of a national constitution is an application of the **significance** of the words in that constitution. And the significance is whatever was in the mind of the founding fathers.

The application of medical advice is to follow the **significance** of the doctor's orders. And the significance is whatever the doctor had in mind when he gave those orders.

Children who truly obey their parents, understand and apply the **significance** of the parent's directives. Children who do not want to do that, take the parents exact words (the letter of the law) and figure out a way to apply that outside of the parents' meaning.

For example, suppose you (as a father) said to your teenager: "Don't drive fast down the street outside our house, because lots of small children play there, and you could hit one of them." Later, your teenager gets a ticket for speeding where children play, two blocks away. You might say: "Didn't you hear what I said?"

If they thought of your directive as keeping the letter of the law they might say: "I did hear what you said, I didn't speed outside our house." But what you hoped for was that your teenager would have taken the application of your statement from the **significance** or "spirit" of your statement. The "spirit" of your directive was what you had in mind, "Don't drive fast around small children."

Okay, so we need to get to the mind of God, the spirit of the Law, through what I have called the **significance** of the passage. But just exactly how do we do that? Let's talk about ...

Determining the Significance of a Passage

When we look for the significance of a passage we should go:

- From the most specific clues to the more general concepts
- From the most immediate context to the more general text

One difference between Interpretation and Application is:
Interpretation is always determined from the context
Application may come from elsewhere in the Bible

We can think in terms of four basic steps when determining the significance of a passage. The general idea is to always start close to home, the interpretation of the passage in its own context. If that doesn't give us the significance, then we begin moving away from the context, though never leaving the Bible.

Step #1—If the meaning and the significance are the same, then simply restate the meaning as the significance.

Take, for example, Leviticus 19:2.

- Observation: *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*
- Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.
- Meaning: Moses is telling *the congregation of the sons of Israel* to be holy because God is holy.
- Significance: Those who belong to God should be holy as God is holy.
- Application: I should focus on being holy as God is holy.

Step #2—If the meaning and the significance are not the same, look at the near context to see if you can get some clues about the author's thinking.

Even if the specific command, promise, or example is clearly not to be performed today, there may be an explanation in the immediate (near by) context, which tells us how it can be applied today.

As an example, let's go to Leviticus 19:9-10.

Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger.

As we read this command and think about applying it, we would tend to say: "Well, I don't think God wants all farmers to leave some of the harvest in the fields, even though that is the specific command of the passage." But after the command, we have a statement of the significance of the command. Leaving crops in the field was a way to care *for the needy and for the stranger*. So we can structure the passage like this:

- Observation: *you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest*
- Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.
- Meaning: Moses is telling the Israelites that when they get established in the Land, they should not harvest to the edge of their fields or gather all their fruit.
- Significance: God's people should make provision *for the needy and for the stranger* from the product of their work.
- Application: I should use some of the money I earn from my work to help the needy.

In this case, the clue to the significance of the passage, the mind and heart of God, is not in our observation, but it is in the immediate context, the phrase *for the needy and for the stranger*.

But what happens when there is nothing in the immediate context to help us get a focus on the significance of the passage?

Step #3—If the significance is not the meaning, and it’s not in the context, look for basic biblical concepts from which the author is getting his meaning.

Let’s consider one more example from Leviticus 19. Verse 13 reads:

The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.

It doesn’t seem like God expects all employers to pay all their laborers every day. But there is nothing in the immediate context to give us a clue to the significance of this command. However, if we look elsewhere in the Bible, we find some clues. For example, James 5:4 warns against withholding wages from laborers. So Leviticus 19:13 could be structured like this:

Observation: *The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.*

Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.

Meaning: The Israelites were to pay every laborer every day, at the end of the day.

Significance: The basic concept is not to cheat your hired workers (James 5:4).

Application: I must honestly and timely pay all workers their fair wages.

Step #4—If the significance is not in the meaning, the context, nor taught elsewhere, then generalize it until something, that the Bible teaches, is clear.

For example, Leviticus 19:19 reads:

You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.

Here we have a command where the meaning is clear, but:

- It does not seem appropriate to apply this directly.
- There is no clue about the significance of the command in the context.
- There is no other passage anywhere else in the Bible that addresses this subject.

So now what do we do?

Let’s consider what we should **not** do. First, we should not say this passage does not apply today because Paul said: *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16). Second, we should not speculate. For example, some suggest that these were Canaanite or Egyptian customs, and the point was for Israel to not be like the pagans around them. So the application would be “Don’t be like the world around you.” Some have said this is against mixing together the things God has created. So an application might be “Don’t mix God’s commands with those of the world.” But these are based on speculations never mentioned in the Bible. There is no biblical basis for seeing this as a pagan practice or keeping everything separated.

If we are not to speculate, and we have no specific clues, what should we do? We do what we have been doing. We generalize the command until we find a biblical principle which **can** be applied. Here is a possibility. There is a sort of basic concept from which this specific command comes, which can be known. The last verse of Leviticus 19 says:

You shall thus observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them; I am the LORD (verse 37).

Statutes and *ordinances* had to do with the details of their lives. So God is interested in the details of our lives, even how we do our work and how we dress.

So the passage could be structured like this.

Observation: *You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.*

Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.

Meaning: The Israelites were not to breed cattle (like Holsteins, Herefords, and Angus). They were not to sow different seeds in their fields (like wheat and rye) or wear clothing of mixed fabrics (like wool and cotton).

Significance: God is interested in every aspect of our lives, even the details of how we do business, what we eat, and what clothes we wear.

Application: I should be sensitive to applying what God has commanded me to do in every aspect of my life, including what I wear, what I eat, and how I do my work.

Application of any written text requires knowing the significance of that text. When that's not part of the meaning, we need to generalize our search until we arrive at the author's mind on the subject. But there is one issue we still need to address.

How Do We Know When the Significance Is Not the Same as the Meaning?

For example, how do I know it is **inappropriate** to forbid wearing clothing mixed with two kinds of cloth, and command people to greet one another with a holy kiss, yet it is **appropriate** to not make idols and to *love your neighbor as yourself*? Here are four questions to keep in mind.

1. Is the meaning of the passage universal in nature?

If the interpretation is local, historical, or individual, the significance must be pursued outside the immediate context. But if the nature of the statement in the passage is:

- For all mankind
- For all believers of our age
- Directly connected to the character of God
- Dealing with the nature of man
- Declaring the way things always are (such as basic truth and wisdom)

Then the passage is generally true for everybody. In this case, it is clearly the intention of the author for the significance of the passage to be the direct extension of the meaning. Here are a few examples:

- *You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy* (Leviticus 19:2).
This is for believers of all ages because it is based in holiness, which is an attribute of God.
- *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God* (John 1:12).
This is universal because it is written to *as many as received Him*.
- *Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:16).
This is universal because it is written to ***whoever believes in Him***.

2. Does the author make a moral or theological case for this specific action?

But what if the context of the passage is not (clearly or obviously) universal in nature? Should the meaning of a text ever be applied directly in a non-universal passage? Answer: Yes, if the author makes a moral or theological case for it.

For example: five times the New Testament says (something like):

Greet one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14).

But in none of these passages is a moral or theological case made for kissing one another. Therefore, we would not conclude that the command is to be applied directly. Here, it seems that kissing, as a greeting, is not the significance of the command. Therefore, we need to find the significance of the passage before we apply it. In this case, the significance of the kissing seems to be in the greeting.

Consider this passage from the Apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Here we have not only a statement of what Christ did and what Paul was told, but a theological case for continuing to practice it. *This is My body, which is for you ... This cup is the new covenant in My blood.* The reason we are to repeat this ceremony is because it remembers the significance of the body and blood of Christ given for our sins. Since a theological case is made for the practice, we can take it as a general command for the church.

3. If the author does not make a case for it, does the Bible elsewhere make a moral or theological case for it?

For example, the Bible nowhere make a moral or theological case for not wearing *a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together* (Leviticus 19:19). So we would not conclude this specific command is a universal command. The same would be true for not boiling a young goat in his mother's milk and not shaving your beard.

On the other hand, the command *You shall not steal* in Leviticus 19:11 is given without any moral or theological explanation. But the command is explained repeatedly throughout Scripture. The same would be true of narrative passages like Abraham saying his wife was his sister, Joseph being kidnapped by his brothers, and Judah's fornication with Tamar. The author does not comment directly on the morality of the action, but elsewhere in the Scripture, it does.

There is one other case where the significance goes beyond the meaning of the passage.

4. Is the case the author makes for it, negated or modified in another age?

If part of the interpretation of the passage is that this is for a specific age or person or group of people, then we must look beyond the specifics for the significance of the passage. And that's true, even if the author make a case for it.

For example, God made a case for Israel keeping the Jubilee Year. The reason all property was to return to the original family after every 49 years was to show the Israelites that the land belonged to God, and they were just living on God's land. Even though God made a case for the command, it is not a command for everyone living in every land to return all land after 49 years.

Through Moses, God made a case for the animal sacrifice system which was commanded for the age between Moses and Christ. But it was negated for the church in Hebrews 10 and 11. So, if the author makes a case for a certain practice, but the Bible specifically says that the practice is negated or modified in a future age, then the significance goes beyond the meaning of the original passage.

Appendix

Analysis of the Passages Listed Above

Consider this Appendix as an opportunity to test yourself in application. Try following the analysis procedure discussed in this book to apply the verses listed. There are, in all, five steps in the process. Three basic steps and two transitional steps: OBSERVATION, CONTEXT (to determine) INTERPRETATION, and SIGNIFICANCE, (to determine) APPLICATION.

Of course, for most passages, most of the time, these steps are done quickly, mentally, and automatically. But, just for the practice of it, take these passages and write out (or discuss with others) a full analysis. I suggest you try it yourself before you look at mine.

Here is my analysis of those passages listed.

Genesis 9:7

- Observation: *As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.*
Context: God was speaking to Noah when he got off the ark, and there were only 8 people on the earth.
Interpretation: God told Noah (and by implication his sons and daughters-in-law) to have children and repopulate the earth.
Significance: God wants the earth to be populated. In the New Testament, there was no mandate to reproduce, although reproduction is assumed because sex is a directive for married couples.
Application: I should understand that God wants the earth filled with people. I should not be involved in limiting the population of the earth.

Genesis 20:2

- Observation: *Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."*
Context: Abraham traveled south to Gerar and was afraid that Abimelech king of Gerar would kill him and take Sarah his wife.
Interpretation: Since Sarah was his half sister, Abraham told a half-lie to preserve his own life, which nearly led to Abimelech's adultery with Sarah (this from the immediate context in Genesis 20:3-7).
Significance: A lie is an attempt to deceive and a half-lie is all wrong.
Application: I should never tell a half-lie/half-truth. When it is an attempt to deceive, it's a lie.

Genesis 22:1-2

- Observation: *Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering.*
Context: After Sarah finally had a child in her old age, the child God told Abraham He would multiply as the stars of the sky, God verbally spoke to Abraham with this command.

- Interpretation: God told Abraham to sacrifice the only son he had with Sarah on Mount Moriah (probably the temple mount area of Jerusalem today), as he would sacrifice an animal for a burnt offering. That meant to kill the child and burn the body.
- Significance: From the immediate context, we learn that this was a test of Abraham by God. God tests His people to see if they will keep His Word.
- Application: I should expect God to test me to see if I will keep His Word.

Exodus 34:26

- Observation: *You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.*
- Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.
- Interpretation: The Israelites were not to kill a young goat and boil it in the milk of the mother goat.
- Significance: God expects His people to follow His directives, even to the details of how they live their daily lives.
- Application: I must keep all of God's specific directives, given through the New Testament authors, for this (church/grace) age.

Leviticus 11:4-8

- Observation: *... you are not to eat of these, among those which chew the cud, or among those which divide the hoof... the rabbit also, for though it chews cud, it does not divide the hoof, it is unclean to you; and the pig, for though it divides the hoof, thus making a split hoof, it does not chew cud, it is unclean to you. You shall not eat of their flesh nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.*
- Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.
- Interpretation: Israelites, between 1500 BC and the death of Christ, were to follow certain food regulations, including not eating animals which have a spilt hoof but do not continually chew their food, and visa versa.
- Significance: God gave different food regulations for different ages. It is important to God that each age follow its own regulations. There are no food regulations for the church age [except possibly to not eat blood—like, say, blood soup (Acts 10:9-13; 15:20, 29)]. But when weaker brothers follow food regulations, we should not be a stumbling block (Romans 14:1-4).
- Application: I am free to eat any food (with the possible exception of blood) except whatever may cause my Christian brother or sister in Christ to stumble.

Job 2:9

- Observation: *Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"*
- Context: Because of a confrontation between God and Satan, Job had lost his wealth, his health, and his children.
- Interpretation: Job's wife gave him advice in the midst of his suffering to give up, stop suffering, curse (blame, or blaspheme) God, and die, as a means of escaping his suffering.
- Significance: The author is telling us that when we are suffering, those close to us may advise us to do the wrong thing, because they are focused on us and our suffering rather than on obedience to God.
- Application: I should not listen to the advice of those close to me when they are focused on my situation rather than obedience to God.

Exodus 31:14-15

- Observation: *'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death.*
- Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law. The previous verse says: *You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you* (verses 13).
- Interpretation: This is an extension and explanation of the 4th commandment. Here God (through Moses) is telling the Israelites that not doing any work on Saturday is to be a sign between Him and the Hebrew people for all generations.
- Significance: Only Israel was under the Law of the Sabbath. There is no evidence that Adam, Noah, Job or Abraham kept a Sabbath day. Paul says that keeping of special days is up to the faith of each individual (Romans 14:5). But we are also told God rested on the seventh day after creation, and Moses gave that as a reason to keep the Sabbath (Exodus 31:17).

Application: Keeping Saturday a rest day seems to only be mandated for Israel, but it would be appropriate to keep a day of rest, in honor of creation.

Leviticus 25:3-5

Observation: *Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year... the land shall have a sabbatical year.*

Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law.

Interpretation: Every seventh year, the land of Israel was to rest in the sense that the fields and the vineyards were not to be worked.

Significance: God wanted the land to rest as well as His people. We can also observe from nature that God has created most living things to go through times of rest.

Application: We should be sensitive to the need for an extended time of rest at certain intervals in life. We should not just work, or cause people to work, constantly.

Leviticus 25:10

Observation: *You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.*

Context: This is part of the Mosaic Law

Interpretation: God told Israel that every 50th year all land returned to the original families. The reason for the Jubilee was to let the Israelites know *the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me* (Lev. 25:23).

Significance: God owns everything: our money, our land, our houses, our families...everything. Some day it will all return to its original Owner.

Application: I should look at everything I have as simply renting it, leasing it, borrowing it, using it for a short time before I leave it to others — whoever God gives it to after me.

2 Samuel 5:4

Observation: *David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.*

Context: This is a narrative describing the anointing of David as king in Hebron.

Interpretation: The author tells us David's age at that time and how long he reigned.

Significance: The use of these chronological dates shows us that the Bible is a historical document, not a mystical fairy tale.

Application: I must understand the Bible as a historically accurate document, describing actual historical facts, not myths or legends.

Ezekiel 24:16-18

Observation: *"Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow..." So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died.*

Context: Through the death of Ezekiel's wife, God was telling Israel: *Behold, I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword* (verse 21).

Interpretation: God told Ezekiel that He would kill Ezekiel's wife as a sign and a prophecy of the suffering the people would go through when He destroyed Jerusalem.

Significance: God's judgment of sin is certain, and it will cause suffering, and the suffering will include the suffering of His own people. Sometimes (or usually) God's servants will also suffer because of the sins of His people.

Application: If I serve the people of God, I can expect to suffer because of their sins.

Daniel 9:3

Observation: *So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

Context: Daniel read in Jeremiah that Israel would be in captivity for 70 years. Daniel, realizing this time is almost up, prayed, confessed Israel's sins and asked God (based on His compassion) to restore Jerusalem.

Interpretation: Daniel prayed in a manner where he was fasting, dressed in sackcloth and sitting in ashes.

Significance: No theological case is ever made for praying in sackcloth, etc. But God desires for us to come to Him in humility, confessing our sins, being completely dependent upon His grace and mercy, and asking for that which He has already promised.

Application: I should pray with humility, confessing my sins, dependent upon the grace and mercy of God, asking for what is according to His will.

1 Samuel 15:3

Observation: *Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.*

Context: After Saul was anointed the first king over Israel, Samuel gave him this command from God. Before the above observation, He told Saul, "*I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt*" (verse 2).

Interpretation: God told Saul to go and completely wipe out all the Amalekites.

Significance: When God gives us a specific, direct, verbal command, we should keep it literally and completely, not allegorically, figuratively, or partially.

Application: I should obey the Word of God completely, not compromising it for what I think would be preferable in my situation.

2 Samuel 6:6-7

Observation: *Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.*

Context: David was moving the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem on an ox cart (it was supposed to be carried by Levitical priests).

Interpretation: When the oxen almost dumped that Ark off the cart, a man named Uzzah reached out to steady it, and God killed him.

Significance: The reason for this is in the context. The author says Uzzah's action was irreverent. The next verse tells us it instilled fear in David. The significance of this incident is to tell us to fear God. Anything else is irreverent.

Application: I should fear God, not just give Him awe and respect.

1 Kings 11:3

Observation: *He [Solomon] had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines ...*

Context: This is a description of the beginning of the fall of Solomon. Apparently, Solomon married all these wives to keep peace with all the neighboring kings by marrying their daughters and granddaughters. The next two verses read: *For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.*

Interpretation: The author is informing us of Solomon's harem of wives and concubines. But he is saying this in the context of the fall of Solomon.

Significance: By inspiring the recording of this sin of Solomon, God is telling us that Solomon's wisdom did not keep him from sin because he did not fear God enough to keep him from following the gods of all his wives.

Application: I must be careful about following worldly wisdom which leads me away from the fear of God alone.

Hosea 1:2

Observation: *Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry.*

Context: The reason for the command is the rest of the statement: *the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD.*

- Interpretation: When God first spoke through Hosea as a prophet, He told Hosea to go find and marry a woman who was a harlot.
- Significance: By telling Hosea to marry a harlot, God was giving an example to illustrate Israel's idolatry. This was a visual example showing that God felt like a man who was married to an unfaithful harlot.
- Application: I should communicate very clearly to those I am responsible for how God feels about us paying attention to other gods (like magic, Ouija boards, astrology, yoga, etc).

Ezra 10:2-3

- Observation: *We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women ... So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children.*
- Context: *While Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.* Then two men came to him confessing that they had married foreign wives and suggested all Israelites put away their foreign wives.
- Interpretation: Two men suggested to Ezra (and Ezra later agreed) that the Israelites who had married foreign wives, divorce their wives, putting away both the wives and the children they had with those wives.
- Significance: Israel was to be racially pure. Marrying foreign wives polluted the race. This story is included, in the context of Ezra's prayers of confession, to show how hard it is, and how essential it is to get back on the path of righteousness when we have strayed off. Once we have sinned, there are no painless solutions. Confession requires painful changes.
- Application: When I confess my sin, I must also make the painful changes necessary to live consistently with my confession.

Matthew 5:29-30

- Observation: *If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.*
- Context: This is part of Christ's "Sermon on the Mount" addressed first to the disciples, but also to a crowd who gathered.
- Interpretation: This is a hyperbola, a statement of exaggeration made to emphasize a point. Jesus often used these. Here the point is that they should completely (radically, if necessary) remove any temptation which causes you to sin and be cast into hell.
- Significance: Christ made the point that our focus should be on our eternal state. Every sin leads to hell (without the cross), and to loss of rewards (for the believer), so every temptation should be removed.
- Application: As a believer, I should focus on the eternal and remove any temptation which would hinder my eternal rewards.

Matthew 5:42

- Observation: *Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*
- Context: This is part of Christ's "Sermon on the Mount."
- Interpretation: Jesus is telling His disciples to give to those in need and lend to anyone who asks you, because those who are asking are in need of basic life sustenance.
- Significance: Jesus is following the Mosaic Law, which used lending and borrowing as a form of welfare. The lender was to consider it a gift, and the borrower was to consider himself responsible to pay it back. All debts were canceled at the sabbatical year. All loans were for life needs (food, clothing, and shelter), not business advancement or living higher materially.
- Application: I should give to the poor in such a way that it provides for their basic life needs (food, clothing, shelter), without encouraging them to be irresponsible.

Matthew 10:5-6

- Observation: *Do not go in the way of the Gentiles... go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*
- Context: This is part of the instructions Jesus gave the 12 disciples before He sent them out on a ministry journey.
- Interpretation: The disciples were not to proclaim the Kingdom of God or Jesus as the Messiah to the Gentiles, only to the Jews.

Significance: Jesus was the Messiah to the Jews, not the Gentiles. After the resurrection, He was proclaimed as the Savior of the World (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Each age is given unique commands, and we should specifically follow the commands of God for our age.

Application: I should follow the directives given for the church, which included proclaiming the Gospel to everyone (2 Timothy 4:2).

Matthew 10:8

Observation: *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.*

Context: This is part of the instructions Jesus gave the 12 disciples before He sent them out on a ministry journey.

Interpretation: Jesus is giving the 12 power to *heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons* on their journey.

Significance: God gives us the power to do what He asks us to do.

Application: I should do those things which God has gifted me to do.

Luke 6:24

Observation: *But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.*

Context: This is part of the sermon Jesus preached on a *level place* north of the Sea of Galilee. He was surrounded by His 12 disciples, plus people from as far as Tyre and Jerusalem, looking to be healed.

Interpretation: The rich were in danger of losing eternal blessings because they were living in comfort now.

Significance: The Bible does not condemn being financially wealthy. Many biblical heroes were wealthy (Abraham, Joseph, Job, David, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Lydia). The problem is consistently one of living in luxury (James 5:4). The sin of the rich Jesus is addressing is they *are receiving their comfort in full*.

Application: I live in the wealthy western world where I must be careful not to use my wealth to live in luxury.

John 13:14-15

Observation: *“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”*

Context: This is part of the instruction Jesus gave His disciples in the upper room before His crucifixion.

Interpretation: The 12 were to serve one another as a household servant would when he washed the feet of those who came in the house. Some claim this was meant to be a ceremony. Most think not, because there is no evidence that the apostles carried it out as a ceremony.

Significance: The significance is the example of serving one another in humility.

Application: I should see myself as a servant, especially to those close to me, and I should serve them in humility.

John 14:14

Observation: *“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”*

Context: This is part of the instruction Jesus gave His disciples in the upper room before His crucifixion.

Interpretation: Anything the apostles asked Jesus to do, He would do it for them. The apostles were being used by Christ to start His church. As such, all of their prayer requests would be positively answered.

Significance: God desires prayer from His saints. The Bible does not say all of us will get everything we ask for, because we may ask for foolish things which are not in the plan of God (Romans 8:26-27). We are to pray because we are commanded to pray, and God wants to hear our prayers and grant the requests that are according to His plan.

Application: I should pray according to the biblically expressed will of God.

Romans 16:16

Observation: *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

Context: This is part of Paul’s personal comments to those in Rome at the end of his letter to them, before he visited them.

Interpretation: Paul is telling the believers in Rome that when they gather together they are to greet one another with a kiss, which comes from a character and context of separation from sin.

Significance: Although this command is repeated 5 times in New Testament, there is never a theological case made for it. Therefore, we must conclude the kiss, as a form of greeting, was a common social practice of the first century. But it is not commanded as a ceremony. What is commanded consistently in the Bible is greeting one another in a context of holiness.

Application: I should greet the brethren warmly, with a physical expression, and in a manner separated from sin.

1 Timothy 1:3

Observation: *Remain on at Ephesus.*

Context: This is part of Paul's instruction to Timothy. Paul said: *As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines.* Through verse 7, Paul talks about correcting false teaching.

Interpretation: Timothy was to remain in Ephesus so that he could continue correcting false teaching, and give them accurate teaching, until Paul sent for him or directed him elsewhere.

Significance: This is basically a command to be faithful, to endure a ministry of correcting false teaching, and teaching the truth.

Application: I need to hang-in-there and continue to challenge the false teaching around me, and teach the truth whenever I can.

1 Timothy 2:8

Observation: *Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*

Context: This is part of Paul's instruction to Timothy in Ephesus, as an apostle and teacher to the Gentiles (verse 7).

Interpretation: Paul wants Timothy to instruct people everywhere to pray lifting up their hands, when and only when they have separated themselves from sin, specifically *wrath and dissension*.

Significance: It is not clear whether Paul wanted everyone in all the church throughout the ages to lift their hands when they pray. It seems unlikely, since this is the only place this appears in the Bible. There is no example of the other apostles recommending or practicing this. Prayer in the Bible was made standing, sitting, kneeling, laying down, in sackcloth and ashes, and here by raising hands. It always seems like it's the attitude, not the form, which is significant. But the attitude is displayed by some form.

Application: There is nothing wrong with raising hands in prayer. I should never criticize people for doing that. But whatever way I pray, I should always pray from a context of holiness, *without wrath and dissension*.

Titus 3:13

Observation: *Help Zenas the lawyer.*

Context: This is part of Paul's instruction to Titus when he was on the island of Crete. The whole sentence is: *Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.*

Interpretation: Paul is telling Titus to help a lawyer named Zenas as he traveled, apparently, as an itinerate missionary.

Significance: We are to help fellow believers as they have needs, especially itinerate missionaries.

Application: I should help believers, especially as they travel as itinerate missionaries.