

Conclusion

Leaving Guilt Behind: Working on Applying

I will never forget the day I realized that I had spent the first 20 years of my Christian life not applying God's Word in truth. In reality, I didn't even know *how* to apply His Word. I knew a lot about Scripture and could quote quite a bit of it, but application was not prevalent in my life. I *thought* I was applying His Word because I was doing good things and held many jobs at the church, but in God's eyes I wasn't. However, in God's grace He brought this moment of realization at a time when His joy overwhelmed me so much that I couldn't do anything but praise Him. I recorded this event of my spiritual walk in my journal and I share it with you below.

November 23, 2006 - Thanksgiving Day:

"I realized for the first time today that most (if not all) of the work I did for the church before the Lord got my attention at the beginning of this year will probably be burnt up in the fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Why do I feel this way? Because other than my writings I can't remember ever doing anything specifically because I knew the Lord wanted me to do it. I did most of my work because I thought no one else would do it. The Lord will be the judge of this though and I praise Him for His justice. I also pray for forgiveness of my attitude then and I praise Him for being faithful to me making me realize my faults. In Psalm 51, I glean this also . . . David says in verse 17, "*The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God, You will not despise.*" The Lord doesn't want sacrifices from someone who doesn't have a repentant heart. He wants to break our spirit (our selfishness) and from that broken spirit we must have a repentant heart. It is then and only then that He will accept our sacrifices. Why is this? Because before our spirit is broken anything we "sacrifice" to the Lord was not done for the Lord it was done for selfish motives and, therefore, will burn up in the test of fire. I praise the Lord for revealing this to me this morning. I am thankful for His faithfulness and praise Him for His mercy. Even though it saddens me to realize that my works will burn up in the fire, I am overjoyed that the Lord has broken my spirit and I can go forth serving Him with a true sacrificial heart."

And then on December 16, 2006 I reflected back on this journal entry and wrote:

"Instead of sitting in the pool of regret that Satan wanted me to be in - I set in the warmth of the light; the peace of repentance. Yes, my works would burn up and yes, that is not a good thing - but thank the Lord He has brought the sin of pride to the surface and He has convicted me of that pride and brought me to a place of peace and contentment."

I share these journal entries with you so you may realize how easy it is to fall into the trap of thinking you are applying God's truths in your life when you really are not. We spend so much time doing good things that we don't ever learn how to apply God's truths because these lessons are being blocked by our own desires to do the good things *we* see needs to be done and not what *God* wants us to be doing.

As I stated in the previous section, learning how to reach for God is the most important lesson we can learn when it comes to strengthening our relationship with Him. After we have taken these steps to reach for God, He then takes us further in the development of being Christ-like by expecting us to apply what we have learned in His presence. One of the traps the enemy uses when we have been wounded by holding on to guilt in our lives is to get us wrapped up in doing good things. Why would Satan want us to do good things? It is simple. Not all things we do that are good are in the will of God. And if we are not in the will of God, then we are exactly where Satan wants us.

Read Matthew 7:24-27. What does the wise man do?

What does the foolish man do?

When we listen to and follow Jesus' teachings we are wise and are building on a firm foundation – Jesus Christ. We begin listening to His teachings when we accept Jesus as our Savior. He then equips us with the Holy Spirit to guide us in fulfilling God's will in our lives.

When we are guilt ridden, many times we do good things thinking we are applying the truths of God when in reality we are just doing good things to make us feel a little better about ourselves because we are still carrying the guilt of our past. We are being foolish because we are not building on the firm foundation of Jesus. We are building on our own feelings that are not firm because in reality we are just doing good things to make ourselves feel better. We have never taken the time to really find out if the actions we are taking are in His will. To find out what really is the will of God, we must seek God on a regular basis asking for the Holy Spirit to give us guidance.

We seek God by applying His truths and we apply God's truths in our lives by living a holy life. God tells us in the Old Testament that we should be holy because He is Holy (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2) and Peter reiterates this in 1 Peter 1:16.

According to 1 Peter 1:15-16, when should we be holy? Why should we be holy?

Peter did not come up with this concept out of the blue. He is referencing when God stated it to the Israelites in the Old Testament. Write God's words below that are recorded in Leviticus 20:7-8.

God wants us to set ourselves apart and be obedient to all of His decrees. Therefore, we are being holy when we apply God's truths in our lives. We begin this process by thinking holy and then the actions of acting holy will follow.

Application begins by thinking holy!!

Application of God's truths doesn't begin with action it begins with thought. I truly believe that all things that bring us closer to God begin with a vision that God Himself has given us. God created us with a complex mind that is able to accomplish amazing things. Therefore, if He wants to draw us closer to Him, He will begin by giving us a vision of how we can do so. God wants to transform and sanctify us by the renewing of our minds and by learning how to become holy like He and His Son Jesus. He begins this process by teaching us how to develop right thinking in our thought process and working with the power of the Holy Spirit to develop us into the kind of person God wants us to become in Him.

According to Romans 12:2, what do we accomplish when we are transformed by the renewing of our minds?

This is where God wants to take us. He wants us to prove what is His good and acceptable and perfect will. There are three ways that we can begin to do this and ultimately begin to think holy.

First, we begin by **obtaining knowledge from the Word of God**. There are millions of self-help books on the market, but there is only one Book that will tell you exactly what it is that God wants to do with you on the inside to change you for the better - and that Book is the Holy Bible. There are no other books out there that will tell you the specific and exact points that God is looking to target to make you holy as He is holy. We must study God's Word so that the Holy Spirit can then remind us of it later as we begin to apply God's will to our lives.

In Joshua 1, the Lord gave instructions to Joshua in preparation to take his people into the Promised Land. Read Joshua 1:1-9 and answer the following questions.

1. What does the Lord tell Joshua that He will be giving them? (verse 3-4)
2. What does He further promise in verse 5?
3. In verses 6 – 9, God gives Joshua instructions, what are these instructions?

Right in the middle of God's instructions to Joshua He tells him to meditate on the Word day and night. At that time it was just the laws of Moses, but today we have the benefit of much more of God's Word. God also has a promise land for each of us. He promises to renew us and transform us into being Christ-like. We must not stand in God's way. We must allow Him to fulfill this promise in our lives by following the same commands He gave Joshua which include meditating on His Word.

Second, we must **put away thoughts of sinful acts**. When we allow our minds to think upon sinful actions then before we know it we will be actually performing those actions. Once you became a child of God you were equipped by the Holy Spirit to put away even the thoughts of these sinful acts.

Read 1 Peter 1:13-14.

What does this Scripture tell us to prepare our minds for?

How does it tell us to do this?

Read also Romans 13:12-14

We must prepare our minds by keeping sober in spirit and by putting away the lusts of our minds. This lust goes beyond just a sexual content to the lust of any worldly pleasures. These can be numerous in our lives and we must make a conscious effort to put them away from our thoughts and place Jesus as our only focus.

Third, **submit to the Holy Spirit**. If we are to be successful in applying God's truths to our lives we must set our minds on submission. The reason there has been little, if any, true changes in a believer's life after they are initially saved is because they have not spent enough quality time in the Word of God to learn exactly what it is God wants to change about them, and they have not made any real concerted effort on their end to try and change for the better - to try and put on godly and saintly qualities. Both of the first two steps are essential in the process of submitting to the Holy Spirit.

According to Galatians 5:16-18, if we live by the Spirit what will we not be doing?

Many times we try to apply God's truth without being led by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible for us to ignore the Holy Spirit and seek to apply God's will in our lives at the same time. The Holy Spirit is Who God gave us to guide us in knowing all about Him. Therefore, if we want to know how to apply God's truths in our lives, we must condition our minds to submit to the Holy Spirit.

Final Reflections: I began this conclusion with two journal entries from my journal. One of the reasons why I included the second entry is to share with you the state Satan tried to have me partake in. The enemy wanted me to sit in the pool of regret for all the things I thought I had done for God that will burn up in the fire of judgment. This pool of regret that he tried to get me to partake in is another way he opens up the thought process of guilt. The reason I did not give in to Satan is because I had conditioned my mind with God's Word which gave me the peace of repentance. Furthermore, I had put away the pride and I knew that submission to the Holy Spirit was the only way to obtain true peace and contentment. These steps of application are what equipped me to win this battle against Satan.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I long to apply Your truths in my life. I know by doing so I will live in Your will and I will be full of Your Spirit's fruit. Draw me closer to you as I take the steps to meditate on Your Word and put away sinful acts in my life. Give me wisdom as to when I am not submitting to Your Holy Spirit by convicting me immediately. It is in Your Will I pray. Amen.

Final Thoughts

Many have expressed how the Lord has used this Bible study to draw them closer to Him. I am very grateful that He has allowed me the opportunity to minister for Him. To our Heavenly Father goes all the glory!! It is He who placed the words on paper and it is He who deserves all the praise. I am humbled by this opportunity and by the knowledge that it has made a difference in many lives. I encourage you to continue to look to Jesus and put Him first in your life. He will not only remove the guilt you feel but replace it with a love that is full of joy and peace - a love that you can't help but share with others. I know, for He has done this in my own life.

Your Sister in Christ,
Kelly Dixon



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