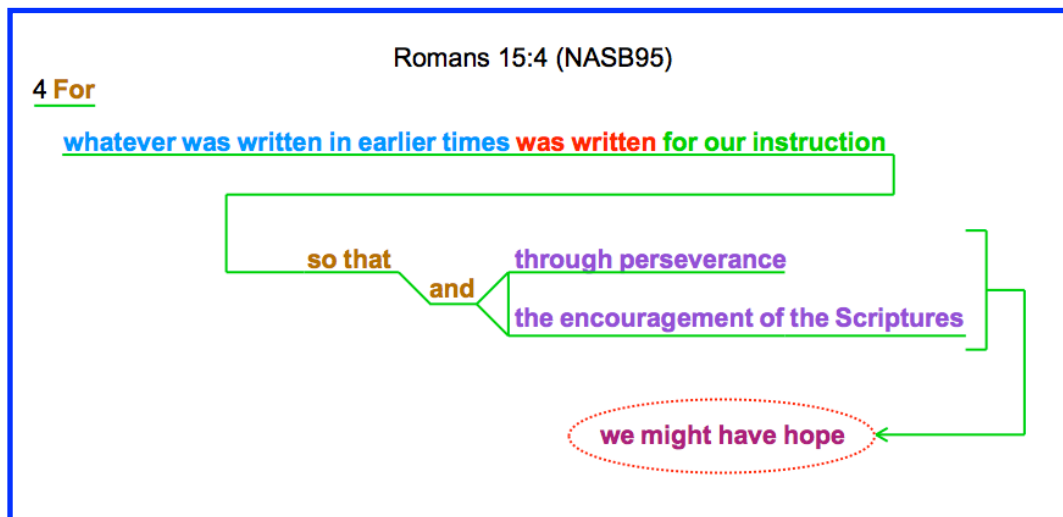


HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Finding Application for New Testament Believers in Old Testament Texts Lesson #9

“Though archers shoot at a godly man, yet the bow of his faith abides in strength. Whatever he loses, he holds fast the jewel of a good conscience. He knows the crown of religion is constancy. And though persecution brings death in one hand, it brings life in the other. Though religion may have thorns strewn in the way, the thorns cannot be as sharp as the crown is sweet.”¹



Teaching Outline for Rom. 15:4

FOUR REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT

- I. SO YOU CAN BE INSTRUCTED
- II. SO YOU CAN HAVE PERSEVERANCE
- III. SO YOU CAN HAVE ENCOURAGEMENT
- IV. SO YOU CAN HAVE HOPE

“Some persons have blasphemously said that the Old Testament is now out of date. But the writers of the New Testament give no such view of the Old. Instead of this, they refer to it as proof, and treat it as of constant use to the people of God.”²

¹ Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, pg. 62

²Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, first published in 1816, reproduced by Banner of Truth Trust, electronic Edition by E4 Group, www.e4.net, Rom. 15:4.

There is an issue that is often erroneously described as "*law and grace*" and sometimes referred to as "*the dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments.*" It is usually addressed when discussing how to study the Bible. It is a question that has to do with the Old Testament and specifically how we apply the Old Testament as New Testament believers. Since the Old Testament is nearly three fourths of the Bible it is a question that needs to be asked and answered. How are New Testament believers to apply the Old Testament to their life?

What does the New Testament tell us about the purpose, value, and application of the Old Testament to modern day believers? In other words, what part/s of the Old Testament still apply to Christians and which do not? If we are not under law, but grace, then why study the Old Testament? Why not get rid of the Law of Moses? Can a Christian study the book of Leviticus, for instance, and still find application for their lives? Can they find truth that *must be applied*? If not, why bother studying Leviticus? What about the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7) which was written in the Old Testament era, does it have application for Christians today? What about the rest of Jesus' teachings in the gospels? Jesus was under the Law of Moses teaching and preaching to Jews who were under the Law of Moses. He hadn't died and rose again yet. Do the gospels apply to Christians today? Why or why not? In this lesson we will seek to explore key issues related to the Old Testament and its application to New Testament believers.

I. **APPROACHING THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER**

A. **Don't Be Led Astray by Old Testament Misconceptions**

1. *The Old Testament has been done away with and does not apply to Christians.* (See Mt. 5:17-19; Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:1-13; II Tim. 3:14-17)
2. *The Old Testament is less important than the New Testament.* (See Psa. 119:89, 138, 142, 152, 160)
3. *The Old Testament teaches salvation by works and the New Testament teaches salvation by grace.* (See Rom. 4:2-3, 6-10, 13)
4. *Old Testament saints had to obey the law in order to be saved.* (See Ex. 20:1-6; Deut. 6:4; Jn. 14:15, 21; I Jn. 5:2-3)
5. *In the Old Testament God is a god of wrath but in the New Testament He is a god of grace.* (See Deut. 4:32-40; Lam. 3:22-23; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; II Pet. 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 14:10-11)
6. *The Old Testament can be divided up into moral, civil and ceremonial law. We only have to obey the moral laws found in the Old Testament.*
7. *We are not under the law of Moses but we are under the law of the Ten Commandments.*

8. *We can use the Old Testament to show that ethical issues like abortion are wrong, and then tell our people the Old Testament doesn't apply to Christians.*
9. *The New Testament is to be used to interpret the Old Testament.*
10. All of the statements above are incorrect in part or whole and yet they are widely held by people who have never studied the Scriptures to see what the Word of God says and how to apply New Testament teachings about the Old Testament.

II. THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING APPLICATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

Below are verses which *seem to contradict each other*. Go through all three groups of verses circling, highlighting and underlining key phrases that relate to the Old Testament.

A. Texts That Seem to Teach the Old Testament Has No Application for New Testament Believers

1. **Jn. 1:17** -- For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
2. **Rom. 6:14** -- For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.
3. **II Cor. 3:7-11** -- But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.
4. **Gal. 3:13** -- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"--
5. **Gal. 5:18** -- But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.
6. **Eph. 2:14-16** -- For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in

ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

7. **Col. 2:16-17** -- Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.
8. **Heb. 7:18-19** -- For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.
9. By looking at texts like those above, divorced from their context, you might come to the conclusion that the Old Testament does not apply at all to New Testament believers. Many, plucking the texts above out of context have come to that faulty conclusion.

B. Texts Which Tell Us the Old Testament Still Applies to New Testament Believers

1. **Acts 28:23** -- And when they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.
2. **Rom. 15:4** -- For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
3. **I Cor. 10:6 & 11** -- Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. . . 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
4. **I Tim. 1:8** -- But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.
5. **II Tim. 3:15-17** -- and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

6. **Rom. 7:12** -- Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.
7. From reading texts like those in the section above, you might conclude that all of the Old Testament applies and that we are still under the Law of Moses.

C. Texts Which Tell Us the Purpose of the Old Testament

1. **Mt. 5:17-18** -- "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.** "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, **until all is accomplished.**
2. **Jn. 5:39, 46** – "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **it is these that bear witness of Me;** . . . 46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.
3. **Rom. 3:19-20** -- Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; **for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.**
4. **Rom. 5:20-21** -- And **the Law came in that the transgression might increase;** but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
5. **Gal. 3:19** -- Why the Law then? **It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come** to whom the promise had been made.
6. **Gal. 3:21-25** -- Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. **But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin,** that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore **the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ,** that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

7. **I Tim. 1:9** realizing the fact that **law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers.**
8. Reading texts like this you would come to the conclusion that the purpose of the Old Testament is:
 - a. To create a standard that only Christ could fulfill.
 - b. To establish truth which will endure until all that is written in the law is accomplished.
 - c. To bear witness of Jesus Christ.
 - d. To give us a knowledge of sin.
 - e. To increase the number of sins.
 - f. To restrain men from sin.
 - g. To show all men they are sinners.
 - h. To cause us to see our need for a Savior, Jesus Christ.

III. THE CRITICAL QUESTION THAT MUST BE ANSWERED

There are two primary ways of approaching the Old Testament listed below. Consider which approach you think is the best.

- A. **Nothing in the Old Testament is relevant or binding on the Christian except that which is repeated in the New Testament.** The reasoning behind this view is that the New Testament says Christ fulfilled the law of Moses, that we are no longer under law, but grace, and that Christ abolished the law with its commandments and regulations. Hence, only those portions of the Old Testament that are repeated in the New Testament are binding and have application on the Christian. If we try to teach Old Testament truth that is not repeated in the New, we place people under the curse of the law, we forsake grace, and fall into the same error as the Judaizers. We become legalists who are saved by grace and kept by works. Thus, you hear people say things like *“the New Testament is the key to interpreting the Old Testament”* or *“we have everything we, as Christians, need in the New Testament, and therefore only the parts of the Old Testament that are repeated in the New Testament, still apply to the believer.”* Consider the implications of this approach. It would mean that we

don't need the Old Testament at all for all we need as New Testament believers is in the New Testament! Thus, we can ignore the Old Testament all together.

- B. Everything in the Old Testament is relevant and binding on the Christian except that which is explicitly or implicitly nullified in the New Testament.** The reasoning behind this view is that the New Testament teaches us that "all Scripture is profitable" for the Christian. Though we are not under the law of Moses as a law system, all the Old Testament contains truth we need to know and apply to our lives. These are not direct applications of the law, animal sacrifice for instance, but timeless principles derived from those laws that apply to believers in any age. This is similar to the first view stated above. It recognizes that many New Testament laws overlap with Old Testament laws. Yet it also realizes that since God is unchanging, whatever we can learn about God in the Old Testament is still true about God today. The Old Testament teaches us many things about God and other subjects like creation that are never mentioned or only alluded to in the New Testament. Thus, everything in the Old Testament, either directly or in principle applies to New Testament believers. The difficulty is learning how to interpret the Old Testament accurately and extracting application from the Old Testament as New Testament believers.
- C. The best view is the second view above. This allows Christians to still treat the entire Bible as relevant, applicable, and yet not place Christians under the Law of Moses. All of the Old Testament either applies directly or in principle containing timeless principles so we can be equipped for every good work.

IV. SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

If you were to ask the average preacher, "*Are Christians under the law of Moses?*" They will quickly reply, "No." And they would be correct in saying this. Yet many of those same pastors teach that we need to obey the ten commandments. This creates an obvious problem. The ten commandments are the heart of the Law of Moses. In fact, it is easy to show that the ten commandments are the Law of Moses in condensed form (**Ex. 24:12**). All the other commands in the Old Testament are merely specific ways of obeying the ten commandments.

This creates an obvious problem. If we tell people they must obey the Ten Commandments, and the Ten Commandments are the heart of the law of Moses, then we are telling them they must obey the Law of Moses or at least nine of the ten commandments as most Christians don't believe you have to keep the Sabbath day. If you ask your average preacher about this dilemma they don't know how to answer the question. However, it needs to be answered if we are going to effectively preach and teach the Old Testament in the church age.

In order to find answers, we need to have good questions. Below are some questions which need to be asked and answered. Though it is not in the scope of this lesson to

answer all of these questions, they will serve us well in trying to better understand the issue of how the Old Testament applies to New Testament believers and lead us to a solution that doesn't place us under the Law of Moses, nor render the Old Testament irrelevant altogether.

- A. **When Paul uses the word "Law," what specifically was he referring to?** Some have argued that Paul had a single definition in mind when he used the word "law." Cranfield on the other hand sees five different uses. John Walvoord sees six different uses in the book of Romans alone. What Paul means by the word "law" in each context in which it is used, is a fundamental question that must be answered.
- B. **What did Paul mean by the phrase "under law?"** Did he mean "under any law system," or a specific law system, or did he mean responsible to obey law, or a law system, or under the curse of the law, or what? In each context where the phrase occurs in the writings of Paul, you have to come to a conclusion concerning what Paul meant by what he said. Paul said we are not "under the law." What does that mean? (See Rom. 2:12; 3:19; 6:14-15; I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 3:23; 4:21; 5:18).
- C. **What does it mean to be "under grace?"** At first, this may seem to be a simple question, but it is not. Does it mean Old Testament saints were not under grace? Does it mean that they were saved by works? Does it mean they were sanctified by works? Does it mean that they were saved by grace and then abandoned to live the rest of their life in the flesh? Does "under grace" mean, under law, but without the curse of the law? Does "under grace" mean we are not under any law, even the law of Christ? (See Rom. 6:14-15)

A thought to consider: ***Paul is speaking to people who have adopted a false view of the Law and when he says, "we are no longer under law, but grace," he is not saying, "God previously placed you under law, but now He has placed us under grace," but He is saying, "God never placed us under Law, but we Jews placed yourselves under Law, but now that Jesus Christ has come, and we know the truth, we are where we should have been all along, under grace."***

- D. **What is meant by the phrase "works of the law?"** Does it mean obeying the law? Does it mean obeying the law for the wrong reason? Does it mean being under the curse of the law? Does it mean obeying the law as a means of salvation, or sanctification or both? You have to answer this question of what Paul meant by the phrase "works of the law." (See Rom. 2:15; 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10)

E. The Solution to the Problem of the Ten Commandments

While the answers to the questions above could consume many large volumes, we only have a short amount of time to arrive at a solution. Below is a simplified solution to the problem of finding application for New Testament believers in the Old Testament. The solution below does not place New Testament believer under the Law of Moses, nor does it require spiritualizing the text and reading a new Christianized meaning into the text.

When solving a difficult problem, it is often best to start with what is known for certain, and then work towards what is unknown. This is the approach we will take below.

1. We know that Old Testament saints were never saved by works, but by grace, through faith, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. (See Jn. 3:1-15; Rom. 4; II Tim. 3:15)
2. We know that the entire law system of Moses was the means by which Israel was to show love to God, not the means of salvation. The Jews had missed this and were seeking salvation by the works of the law. They did not do this because God told them, but because they misapplied the Scriptures. Old Testament saints were to obey God out of love (Deut. 6:4-6).
3. We know from texts like Rom. 15:4, I Cor. 10:6, 11; II Tim. 3:15-17 that all of the Old Testament is profitable for teaching, reproof, training, instruction, encouragement, and example so that we might grow in righteousness. What this means is that in some sense all the Old Testament “applies.” It does not mean we are under the Law of Moses, nor does it mean every Old Testament text applies directly, but there is some sense in which all the Old Testament is for Christians to obey. Therefore, we should preach and teach the entirety of the Old Testament to equip New Testament believers for every good work.
4. We know that we are not under the law system of Moses and that certain aspects of the law, such as the sacrificial system, do not apply directly to New Testament believers. However, since all of the Old Testament is profitable for New Testament believers, there is a sense in which even the ceremonial law and sacrificial system contain truths that “apply” or “have application” to the lives of New Testament saints.
5. We know that all commands in the Bible are law. When God tells us to do something or not do something, He is giving us *laws to obey*. The New Testament is full of commands – laws. Therefore, the Christian, in some sense, is *under law*, not as a means of salvation or sanctification, but like the Law of Moses, God’s intended purpose for the Law of Christ is so believers today can express their love to God. The New Testament says

Christians are under the “*law of Christ*,” “*the royal law*,” the “*law of love*,” and the “*law of liberty*.”

- a. **Jn. 14:15** -- “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
 - b. **I Cor. 7:19** -- Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.
 - c. **I Cor. 9:20-21** -- To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.
 - d. **Gal. 6:2** -- Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
 - e. **I Tim. 6:13-14** -- I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - f. **James 2:8** -- If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.
 - g. **I Jn. 5:3** -- For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.
 - h. **II Jn. 6** -- And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.
 - i. Thus, we can see from the texts above that the New Testament is its own law system and that Christians are under the law of Christ, not as a means of salvation or sanctification, but as the means by which we can express our love to Christ.
6. A lawyer asked Jesus a question in **Mt. 22:36-40**, “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?*” 37 And He said to him, “***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.***’ 38 “*This is the great and foremost commandment.* 39 “*The*

second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

What this text teaches us is we are to love God directly, and love God indirectly by loving our neighbor. When we look at the ten commandments we discover the first four relate to loving God directly, the last six relate to loving God indirectly by loving our neighbor. *Thus, the ten commandments are expressions of the two great commandments.* When we study the law of Moses we discover that all 613 commands in the Law of Moses are expressions of the ten commandments, which are expressions of the two commandments. (2 commands, → 10 commands, → 613 commands) From this information we gain understanding and several important concepts become clear.

- a. Every law in both the Old Testament and New Testament (Law of Moses and the Law of Christ) is designed to show us how to express our love to God, even those laws which relate to loving our neighbor. This is why when David sinned by committing adultery and murdering Uriah, he said in *Psa. 51:4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.* All sins are ultimately a violation of the great commandment to love God. This is why Jesus and John tell us that if we love God we will obey His commandments, including loving our neighbor.
- b. Since two great commandments are repeated in both the Old and New Testaments, it is clear they are the basis for every law in both Testaments. James makes it clear that if we break one law, we break them all, because all laws can be distilled down into the great commandment – to love God. If we fail to obey any law of God, we break the great commandment of all, which all other laws are an expression of and derived from. This is why James says:

"If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. 9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty." (James 2:8-12)

- c. Paul is emphatic that we are not under the Law of Moses (the entire law system), but under the law of Christ. Both law systems are

based on the same two great commandments (love God and love your neighbor), and that is why there is overlap between the two law systems. We are not under the Law of Moses including the Ten Commandments. However, nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the law of Christ. So, we must obey nine of the Ten Commandments, *not because we are under the Law of Moses, but because we are under the law of Christ, which repeats nine of the Ten Commandments*. Yet even the fourth commandment, to keep the Sabbath, contains principles for Christians to obey, though it does not have direct application for the Christian since we have the liberty to worship on any day we please (Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16-17).

Let me illustrate. In America we have a “national building code” which is a set of regulations that all builders must submit to. However, each of the 50 states has their building code based on the national law code. They differ in some respects, but there is overlap because all the fifty law codes are based on the one national law code. If you live in Kansas, there is no doubt that many of the building codes will be identical to the building codes in any other state, however, you are only under one law code, the Kansas law code.

So, it is with the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Both law systems are based on the two great commandments, love God and love your neighbor. This is why we see overlap between the law of Christ and the law of Moses. This does not mean we are under two law systems. We are only under the law of Christ. And, just because the law of Christ tells us all Scripture is profitable, that does not mean we are under the Law of Moses or that we must obey everything in the Old Testament directly. In fact, if the law of Christ tells us explicitly or implicitly that an Old Testament law is nullified, we can ignore its direct application, yet often find timeless principles contained in the law that apply to believers today.

Thus, the New Testament preacher or teacher can preach through the book of Leviticus, extract timeless truths and principles from that book which are based on the character and nature of God, preach from bad and good examples, and help New Testament believers grow in their walk with the Lord. So, we are not bound to obey the Ten Commandments, which are the heart of the Law of Moses, we are bound to obey the law of Christ and it just so happens that the law of Christ repeats nine of the Ten Commandments.

F. **How can you find application in any Old Testament text?**

1. **Ask yourself, “What is the main idea of the text?”** Every text was written for a purpose or has a main idea. Once you discover the main idea of a text you are well on your way to discovering principles and application. For instance, the “big idea” of **Eph. 2:1-10** is the salvation of believers. But if you look at the text you will see that it mentions our spiritual deadness, the grace of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, the free gift of eternal life and how we were saved to obey God, yet all of these topics relate to our salvation in Christ. The big idea then drives the many smaller ideas that support it. The main idea is usually an easier place to find application.
2. **Ask yourself, “What is the main theme of the book you are studying and how does your text fit into that theme?”** Like the example above, every book of the Bible has one or more themes. Each part of the book contributes to that theme. Once you know the theme you can then find application by tracing it back to the main theme of the book. Also remember that the grand theme of the entire Bible and every book of the Bible is “God.” For instance, the theme of the book of **Exodus** is “redemption.” Now once you know the theme, you can teach chapters 4-13 and discuss each of the ten plagues in relation to the main theme of the book. Each plague was part of God’s plan to redeem Israel from Egypt.
3. **Ask yourself, “What does this text tell me about the character and nature of God?”** This question almost always produces clear application from nearly any text. Since God is the grand theme of the entire Bible, dwelling on what the text tells us about God can help us find application from the text. Using the same example above, let’s say you were studying **Ex. 4-13** and you knew the theme of the book was redemption but you wanted to focus on one of the grand themes of the entire Bible itself, “God.” Redemption in the book of Exodus is the “redemption of God.” So, you look at each of the plagues and you ask yourself, “What does this text teach me about the God who redeems, His character and nature?”
4. **Ask yourself, “What does this text tell me about how God responds to man?”** Not only can you discover application from the character and nature of God but also from how God responds to men. Using the same example from **Exodus** above, you might ask yourself, “What does this text tell me about God’s relationship to man?” This of course would lead you in any number of directions e.g., He redeems men. He answers the prayers of His people. He desires to show His power to men. He hardens the hearts of men. He desires to reveal Himself to men. He shows mercy to men. He judges men, etc. Once a specific principle is discovered then application can follow.

5. **Ask yourself, “What does this text tell me about mankind?”** By considering people in the text you can find positive examples of how to obey or negative examples of how not to sin. Using the same example from **Exodus** we can observe many things about mankind in general. Men are sinners. Men have hard hearts. Some men are unconvinced by miracles. Some men are cruel towards those who try to help them. Some men need to suffer greatly before submitting to God, etc.

6. **If there are commands in the text, ask yourself, “Which of two great commands (love God and love your neighbor) does the command being studied relate to?** Let’s say you come across the commands in **Lev. 3** to **“offer up the fat of the kidneys to the Lord as a burnt offering.”** You might quickly realize that this command relates to loving God through worship, which is one way of obeying the great commandment “love God.” From this you can derive the principle that we need to love God directly by worshiping Him in an acceptable way and from that principle give specific application examples.

7. **If there are commands in the text, ask yourself, “Which one of the ten commandments does the command being studied relate to?”** Using the example above from **Lev. 3**, you might see that offering up the fat of the kidneys as a burnt offering and soothing aroma to the Lord relates to the second commandment, *“You shall worship God.”* You might also see that it relates to the fourth commandment to *“keep the Sabbath holy.”* Both commandments relate to being holy before the Lord and both commandments relate to ceremonial acts of worship.

8. **Ask yourself, “What does this text tell me about Christ?”** In the example above from **Lev. 3**, it might be pointed out that Christ is our once for all sacrifice. The theme of redemption from **Exodus** above is ultimately fulfilled in Christ who by His death on the cross, redeemed us from our slavery to sin and Satan.

9. **Ask yourself, “What theme or doctrine does this text mention which is taught in many places in Scripture?”** Sometimes a text may mention a certain doctrine taught throughout Scripture. It may not be the theme of the book, or the main idea of the text itself, but it is a well-established doctrine or theme in the Bible and it is mentioned in the text. The teacher can explain the significance of a doctrine mentioned in the text and teach on that one doctrine.

10. **If studying narrative, ask yourself, “How or in what way does this text illustrate a good or bad behavior? I Cor. 10:6 & 11** tells us that the narrative portions of the Bible are written so we can learn from the examples of those who came before us. We can learn from the example of both godly and ungodly people. Their example can then be affirmed as good or bad by other texts in the Bible.

11. **Remember, the application of the text is usually not derived from comparing our situation with the situation of the ancient audience but in the person, character, and nature of God.** J. I. Packer, speaking of the immutability of God, makes this significant point concerning the problem of applying the Old Testament to modern day believers today:

They tell us that the Bible is the Word of God – a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. They tell us that we shall find in it the knowledge of God, and of His will for our lives. We believe them; rightly, for what they say is true. So we take our Bibles and start to read them. We read steadily and thoughtfully, for we are in earnest; we really do want to know God. But as we read, we get more and more puzzled. Though fascinated, we are not being fed. Our reading is not helping us; it leaves us bewildered and, if the truth be told, somewhat depressed. We find ourselves wondering whether Bible-reading is worth going on with.

What is our trouble? Well, basically it is this. Our Bible-reading takes us into what, for us, is quite a new world – namely, the Near Eastern world as it was thousands of years ago, primitive and barbaric, agricultural and unmechanized. It is in that world that the action of the Bible story is played out. In that world, we meet Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest, and watch God dealing with them. We hear the prophets denouncing idolatry and threatening judgment upon sin. We see the Man of Galilee doing miracles, arguing with the Jews, dying for sinners, rising from dead, and ascending to heaven. We read letters from Christian teachers directed against strange errors which, so far as we know, do not now exist. It is all intensely interesting, but it all seems very far away. It all belongs to *that* world, not to *this* world. We feel that we are, so to speak, on the outside of the Bible world, looking in. We are mere spectators, and that is all. Our unspoken thought is – ‘Yes, God did all that then, and very wonderful it was for the people involved, but how does it touch us now? We don’t live in the same world. How can the record of God’s words and deeds in Bible times, the record of His dealings with Abraham, Moses, David and the rest, help us who have to live in the space age?’ We cannot see how the two worlds link up, and hence again and again, we find ourselves feeling that the things we read about in the Bible can have no application for us. And when, as so often, these things are in themselves thrilling and glorious, our sense of being excluded from them depresses us considerably.

Most Bible-readers have known this feeling. Not all know how to counter it. Some Christians seem to resign themselves to following afar off, believing the Bible record, indeed, but neither seeking nor expecting for themselves such intimacy and direct dealing with God as the men of the Bible knew. Such an attitude, all too common today, is in effect a confession of failure to see a way through this problem.

But how can this sense of the remoteness from us of the biblical experience of God be overcome? Many things might be said, but the crucial point is surely this. The sense of remoteness is an illusion which springs from seeking the link between our situation and that of the various Bible characters in the wrong place. It is true that in terms of space, time and culture, they, and the historical epoch to which they belonged, are a very long way away from us. But the link between them and us is not found at that level. The link is God Himself. For the God with whom they had to do is the same God with whom we have to do. We could sharpen the point by saying, *exactly* the same God; for God does not change in the least particular. Thus, it appears that the truth on which we must dwell in

order to dispel this feeling that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the position of men in the Bible times and our own, is the truth of God's *immutability*.³

³J. I. Packer *Knowing God*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1973) 67-68.