

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs

Adding the Spices: *Applying the Text*

Psalm 139:1–7, 23–24

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In this study we will look at the crowning technique in the searching the Scriptures process—*application*. Failing to apply the truth of Scripture is like a chef gathering everything possible to prepare a wonderfully fulfilling meal, then leaving everything on the kitchen counter! No one is fed and the meal is wasted. Observation, interpretation, and correlation combine to prepare a nutritious spiritual meal—but it's incomplete if application is omitted. Application adds the final spices then delivers it to the waiting guests.



Whetting Your Appetite: Getting Started

In the beginning of the New Testament book of James we find one of the most potent metaphors for the importance of applying Scripture to our lives. James compared the Word of God to a mirror reflecting the unguarded truth about our lives.

By the way, *applying* basically means *obeying*. When we apply God's Word it simply means we are doing what God tells us to do. Let's take a closer look at how James put it. NOTE: Using either the notes that precede James' New Testament letter in your study Bible or using a commentary on James, check out the background from which James wrote.



Read James 1:22–26.

Remember: Before you read, ask the Lord to give you a fresh perspective on this familiar passage. Then, read it as if you're reading it for the very first time.

Why is the metaphor of the mirror so significant to the meaning of this passage?

Quotable

If you are a teacher, make certain that you don't simply teach the meaning of whatever Bible verses you are considering—always take the time to spell out in practical ways how those verses apply to life.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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What results when we only listen to or read the Word but stop short of applying those truths (James 1:22)?

Based on this passage, how would you explain to someone the difference between simply listening to a message about the Bible and actually obeying the truths they hear?

Read James 1:25 again. What does God promise to us when we follow through with applying what we learn from the Word to our lives? Be specific.

Now read James 1:26–27. Using the analogy of the mirror, look closely at these two verses. Imagine your entire Christian life passing in review. Don't hesitate to be open and vulnerable as you answer the following questions.

What specifically does this passage say about the tongue? Allow these verses to say what they say.

Have you had trouble recently controlling words that come from your mouth? Have you uttered anything hurtful to someone? Have those words in any way been dishonoring to the Lord? Think deeply before answering.



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Have you participated in or initiated a conversation about someone else that could be construed as gossip? As you apply the image of the mirror to such talk, what do you learn about gossip from James 1:26?

How would you describe your attitude toward people in real need, such as widows and orphans, and the destitute and the homeless?

Write down a couple ways to apply the role of compassion in your life. Search your soul and be specific.

Following Through on Applying Truth

David's Psalm 139 is a triumphant celebration of both the divine attributes of Almighty God and the personal power of His Spirit in bringing those attributes to bear on our circumstances. Take some time in your study and digest this magnificent psalm. Read it aloud as if for the first time. Let the words speak afresh to you.

Like a grand concerto, Psalm 139 builds to a powerful crescendo as the psalmist applies these truths personally (notice the change in pronouns in verse 23). David was submitting himself to the most vulnerable and exacting scrutiny by the Holy Spirit when he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you (literally, the original words are "any way of pain"), and lead me along the path of everlasting life" (Psalm 139:23–24). Such transparency! Such confidence and trust in the Lord! No wonder God called him "a man after my own heart" (Acts 13:22)!



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What would it take to bring you to open the innermost vault of your affections and thoughts to the penetrating gaze of your Savior? Pause before you answer. Think about it: What else could you possibly engage in today that would be more effective or more helpful to bring you understanding? What is it that grips you in the vise of discouragement? When you apply this prayer to your situation, be ready for the Spirit to reveal “any way of pain” within you.

Write down your thoughts as you reflect on these things.

To release the full impact of Psalm 139:23–24, openly acknowledge the details of what you just described to the Lord. Boldly ask Him, as David did, to *test* your attitude toward your situation and to *examine* your motives thoroughly. Take your time. Implore the Lord to reveal anything in you that may be hindering or blocking the free flow and full control of His Spirit.

As you gain insight from Him, write down those discoveries. Below are some prompts to help get you started:

I need to

I now realize

I'm sorry I

Lord, please

Some Additional Tips on Applying Truth Practically

As you approach your study of the Scriptures, either in your personal times with the Lord or during your times of ministry preparation, keep these following questions in mind:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a habit I need to break?
- Is there a promise I need to claim?
- Is there an attitude I must change?
- Is there a prayer I need to offer?
- Is there a challenge I need to face?
- Is there a sin I need to confess?
- Is there a person I need to forgive?
- Is there a command I need to obey?
- Is there a person from whom I need to seek forgiveness?





YOUR TURN IN THE KITCHEN

Now it's your turn to try your hand at application. Are you ready? The following exercises will help you hone the technique of *application*—answering the question, “What difference does it make?”

1. The apostle Paul gave specific instructions about Christian behavior to the church in Ephesus. Read Ephesians 4:17–32. Pray for the Holy Spirit to make these verses clear to you. Remembering Psalm 139, search your heart for any wayward attitude or action. Return to observation. Write down things you notice in these verses that stand out as significant.
2. Next, use your Bible tools (concordance, Bible dictionary, commentary) to help you correctly interpret Ephesians 4:17–32. What is the main point of Paul's words?
3. Now we're ready to look elsewhere (that's *correlation!*). Can you find other passages with similar commands that tie in with Ephesians 4:17–32? Check out 1 Corinthians 5. Are there cross references in the margins or notes section of your study Bible? Look up a few of those passages and compare the readings. It may be helpful to consider how they may apply to your church.



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, I'm so thankful for this lesson on the importance of application. I desire not only to hear Your Word, but also to apply what I'm learning from it. Thank you especially for Jesus, my Savior, who provides a living example of obedience and surrender to Your perfect will and Your powerful Word. In His great name I pray. Amen.



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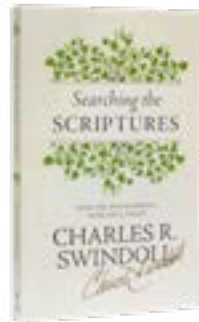
STUDY



More from the Cupboard



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When the book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* was written, the format for this STS study was developed by Charles R. Swindoll and Rhome van Dyck and published at the end of chapter seven under the title “Your Turn in the Kitchen.” For the 2016 broadcast, this STS study was expanded with additional material by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts.



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