



"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" - Hebrews 6:19

Welcome! We're glad you are here!

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How Do We Know What Applies to Us?

by Troy Spradlin

A child of God should always want to be pleasing to Him. What pleases God is keeping His commandments (1 John 3:22, 5:3; Matthew 7:21). But, how do we know exactly which commands to obey? How do we discern what applies to us today and what doesn't? After all, yours or my name is not written in the pages of Scripture. The answer is this, we must use our reasoning and logic in order to identify God's will for us. This is not difficult to do or understand. We simply must acknowledge three things: (1) Direct Commands, (2) New Testament Examples, (3) Necessary Inference. Let's look at what this means.

DIRECT COMMANDS. "Do that!" or "Stop in the name of the law!" are a direct commands. They are imperative statements, which means something one is obligated to obey, perform, or expected to execute. We can easily understand this concept because we use imperatives in everyday communication. The same applies to the Bible.

For example, read Acts 17:30. Who does God require to repent? Even though this passage does not mention our names specifically, you and I are included in the word "all". This means that this passage is a direct command for us today. Another example is found in Matthew 5:44. Again, we read the words in the imperative mood, which means it is a command. Although Jesus was speaking to a particular crowd, it is a universal command that applies to all disciples. If you are a follower of Jesus, then this is for you and all believers, everywhere.



NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES. So, what are we supposed to do if there is no direct command for something? If a direct command cannot be identified, then we must look for examples to guide us. The Bible has many to observe. For example, there is no commandment regarding the day in which we must meet to worship God, but we have examples. What day is mentioned in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2? These passages tell us what the first disciples did. We can deduce that what they did was right and pleasing to God, therefore if we imitate that example, it is an acceptable practice for us that will be pleasing to Him.

Now, we have added the words, "New Testament" to example. This is because we are living under the New Testament law, that is, the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Those are the only examples that apply directly to Christians. While the examples we have in the Old Testament may be educational and informative, they are not binding on us today. So, we do not employ the practices that they exhibit. (See our previous article on "Rightly Dividing the Word")

NECESSARY INFERENCE. Inference means, "a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning." We do this often, even on a daily basis. Here is an illustration of inference. Imagine that I have a coin. The coin is in my hand. I put my hand in my pocket. So, where is the coin now? Even though I did not say it directly, you were probably able to deduce that the coin is in my pocket because of the other information I gave you. We can do the same with the Bible.

For example, in Acts 8:35 we read where "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached _____" What does it say Phillip preached? Now, look at the very next verse. "As they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being _____?' (vs. 36). What can we infer, that is, logically deduce from the information given in this passage? We can conclude that baptism must have been a part of the preaching of Phillip. The subject of baptism is included in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ!

Here is another one, John 8:32 says you shall know what? And, it shall do what? The inference here is that truth can be known and it will do something for us. This means we can, absolutely, know the will of God. But to understand it, sometimes we must put together all of the passages that speak about a particular subject (Psalm 119:160).

These are good reference points for discerning what applies to us and what doesn't. It's important to know because according to 2 Peter 1:3, the Bible contains "all things that pertain to life and godliness". I believe what 1 Corinthians 14:33 says about God could also be applied to His Word. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the Bible! We must simply use it accurately, use our mental reasoning to draw sound conclusions, and consider all that Scripture says about a subject. *God bless! - TS*

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