

Applying the Bible

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22 (NIV)

Today we’re going to talk about how we can apply the Bible to our lives. There are several models out there, but let’s take one we can get from the Bible itself. Let’s look at Paul’s advice to Timothy on how to use the Bible:

2nd Timothy 3.16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

This verse gives us four categories that describe how the Bible can be useful to us: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. They are related, in fact, they can be grouped on a grid with two axes: belief and behavior, positive and negative

	Belief	Behavior
Positive	<i>Teaching</i> Is there something I should believe based on this passage?	<i>Training in Righteousness</i> Is there a habit I should cultivate based on this passage?
Negative	<i>Correcting</i> Is there a belief I should abandon based on this passage?	<i>Rebuking</i> Is there a behavior I should stop or change based on this passage?

Now Try It Out: Use this grid to learn from Acts 11.1-18 (New Living Translation)

¹Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. ²But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, some of the Jewish believers criticized him. ³“You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!” they said.

⁴Then Peter told them exactly what had happened. ⁵“One day in Joppa,” he said, “while I was praying, I went into a trance and saw a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners from the sky. And it came right down to me. ⁶When I looked inside the sheet, I saw all sorts of small animals, wild animals, reptiles, and birds that we are not allowed to eat. ⁷And I heard a voice say, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.’

⁸“‘Never, Lord,’ I replied. ‘I have never eaten anything forbidden by our Jewish laws.’

⁹“But the voice from heaven came again, ‘If God says something is acceptable, don’t say it isn’t.’

¹⁰“This happened three times before the sheet and all it contained was pulled back up to heaven. ¹¹Just then three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. ¹²The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry about their being Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon arrived at the home of the man who had sent for us. ¹³He told us how an angel had appeared to him in his home and had told him, ‘send messengers to Joppa to find Simon Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how you and all your household will be saved!’

¹⁵“Well, I began telling them the Good News, but just as I was getting started, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I thought of the Lord’s words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to argue?”

¹⁸When the others heard this, all their objections were answered and they began praising God. They said, “God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of turning from sin and receiving eternal life.”