

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 33

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	WORSHIP (20 minutes)	[CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD] GOD IS THE POTTER
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Meditation

Worship is to adore or praise God.

Theme: The God of the Bible is your Maker (the Potter).

Read the Bible passages.

Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:1-10; (Romans 9:20-21).

Read or explain the following in your own words.

1. A potter shapes pots as seems best to him.

Describe how potters shape pots in the past and today. One thing is clear: the clay does not determine how the potter shapes it!

2. The LORD is the Potter and we are the clay in his hands.

Emphasise three things.

- The LORD has a plan how he shapes each one of us. Remember his love for you (Isaiah 43:4) and his purpose for you (Jeremiah 29:11).
- When you have done evil but nevertheless repent, the LORD will relent (have remorse) and not inflict the disaster he originally intended.
- However, when you begin to do evil, the LORD will relent (have remorse) and reconsider the good he had intended to do for you.

3. How must we view the fact that the LORD "has remorse"?

Read Genesis 6:5-9. In some Bible passages it seems as if the LORD changes his mind and is therefore unpredictable. The LORD grieves, has remorse and relents concerning previous decisions he has made. For example, he relented that he had made man (Exodus 32:9-14). He relented that he had made Saul king (1 Samuel 15:11,35). He was grieved (relented) because of the calamity brought about by the Angel of the LORD (2 Samuel 24:15-16; 1 Chronicles 21:14-15). He will relent and not destroy a nation when it repents of its evil and he will relent and not build up a nation when it does evil (Isaiah 63:9-10; Jeremiah 18:7-10).

"God's remorse" does not say that God changed his mind and changed his plan, but rather that God changed the revelation and execution of that plan.

(1) With people remorse is unpredictable.

Sometimes human remorse is merely regret. People fear the evil consequences of their sins (shame and punishment, loss of possessions, loss of happiness, loss of fame and loss of power). Nevertheless, they do not have genuine remorse and they also do not turn away from their sins! Genuine remorse always leads to a determination to turn away from evil (2 Corinthians 7:8-11).

(2) With God remorse is predictable.

With God *remorse* is never like the remorse of people. God never changes like unpredictable people or like unpredictable "gods" of the other religions.

- God remains *forever the holy and righteous God* that punishes sin when people only have regret, but do not repent (Exodus 20:5). The remorse (relenting) of God is thus God's unchangeable holy and righteous response or reaction to the continuing or unrelenting sin and evil of people.
- God is also the *eternal merciful and gracious God* who forgives sin when people have genuine remorse and repent of their sin (Exodus 20:6). The remorse (relenting) of God is thus God's unchangeable merciful and gracious response or reaction to the genuine repentance and submission of people.
- God's election and eternal purpose included his eternal decision to take into account the attitude and response of people towards him. God's remorse (relenting) is God's sovereign and determined change with respect to the

execution of his eternal purpose within human history, because people had changed their attitude and response to God.

(3) God changes his threat.

On the one hand, in loving compassion God will change his decision and not carry out his threat to destroy if a nation (or people) genuinely repents of its sins (Jeremiah 18:7-8).

(4) God changes his promise.

But on the other hand, in holy indignation God will change his decision and not carry out his promise to build if a nation (or people) continues to disobey him and do evil (Jeremiah 18:9-10).

God always remains faithful, whether to his promise to reward the perseverance of Christians, or to his threat to punish their disowning (2 Timothy 2:13). God always remains faithful, whether to his promise to reward their acknowledgement of Him before people in the world, or to his threat to punish them when they disown him before the people in the world (Matthew 10:33).

The purpose of the change in the announcement (revelation) and execution of his eternal plan (in the Bible this is called “God’s remorse”) is to bring people to repentance and thereby to execute his eternal plan in a completely predictable manner.

Worship

Take turns to worship God as your Maker. Worship in small groups of three people each.

3	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] EXODUS 16:1 – 19:25
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Exodus 16:1 – 19:25).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

4	TEACHING (70 minutes) [OBEDIENCE] PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS
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Introduction. God has given the Bible to you, not only to enlarge your knowledge of the truth, but also to transform your life with this truth! Reading and studying the Bible will become a life-changing reality (experience) when you also believe and apply these truths to your life! In this study we will learn how to practically apply the truths of the Bible to your life.

A. APPLYING THE BIBLE IS BECOMING OBEDIENT TO GOD’S WORD

1. Definition: What is an application?

Teach. An application is dedicating yourself to do what God says in the Bible. It is therefore necessary that you believe the truth in the Bible and also believe that this truth can and will change your life! Without faith you cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Without faith the reading and studying of the Bible has no sense. And without obeying (applying) God’s Word, your reading and studying of the Bible will remain incomplete!

An “application” is a response that God desires, a reaction to his Word. This includes obedience to God’s Word. It is using God’s Word to grow and to change, and also to help other people to grow and to change. After you have finished reading or studying the Bible, you must ask yourself the following question, “What response does God desire?” “What response pleases God?” “What does God want me to do with what I have read?” The purpose of making applications from the truths in the Bible is to become more and more Christ like!

- An application is not simply *imagining something and then inventing something* as in the question: “What would Jesus do?”¹, but *biblical reality!*
- An application is the response to the question: “What did Jesus actually *teach*, actually *command*, actually *prohibit* and actually *do as an example*?” Our answers to these questions should not be based on our own imagination about what Jesus would do, but on God’s revelation in the Bible what Jesus would have us do!

2. Motivation. Why is obedience to God’s Word important?

The Bible shows that “obedience” is linked to some of the most important areas of the Christian life. Obedience to God’s Word is important for:

¹ (WWJD)

(1) Obedience is important for your salvation.

Read Matthew 7:21-22. Entering the kingdom of God in the Bible always means the same as being born again (John 3:3-8) or being saved (Mark 10:24-27). It does not mean that you are born again or saved by doing some good works (Ephesians 2:8-10) or even doing works related to special gifts as prophecy, driving out demons or performing miracles (Matthew 7:21). Only doing the will of God the Father will save you. And according to John 6:27-29, doing the will of God the Father is to believe in Jesus Christ and his work of salvation.

(2) Obedience is important for becoming a wise person.

Read Matthew 7:24-27. Knowledge without obedience is foolishness. Knowledge that is put into practice is wisdom. "Wisdom" is to know when you must do something and how you must do it! Obedience is thus concerned with the right time and the right manner.

(3) Obedience is important for the lordship of Christ in your life.

Read Luke 6:46. Obedience proves your allegiance to Jesus Christ. It proves that Jesus Christ is really your Lord and King! Obedience is the visible proof of a Spirit-filled life.

(4) Obedience is important for the development of stability and strength.

Read Luke 6:47-49. Obedience is important for building a firm foundation for your Christian life and ministry. Only when you put the words of Jesus Christ into practice, can your Christian life grow strong, can you endure the hardships of life and be victorious over sin.

(5) Obedience is important for a genuine faith.

Read James 2:17,22. Obedience proves that your faith is genuine. Obedience makes your faith alive and an effective influence in your life. Without obedience your faith is only "an intellectual faith" or "a dead faith".

(6) Obedience is important for the experience of love.

Read John 14:21,23. By obeying the commandments of Jesus Christ, you show that you really love him. Obedience is the way to personally experience God's love and presence.

(7) Obedience is important for receiving God's promises and rewards.

Read Hebrews 10:35-36. You will only receive what God has promised when you obey his will.

(8) Obedience is important for receiving answers to your prayers.

Read 1 John 3:22. When you obey God's commands and do what pleases him, you will receive answers to your prayers.

(9) Obedience is important for being a disciple.

Read Matthew 28:18-20. When you obey the commandments of Jesus Christ, you are a true disciple of him.

Summarise. God has given the Bible to you, not only to increase your knowledge of the truth, but also to transform your life through these truths. The purpose of making applications from the truths in the Bible is to become more and more Christ like!

B. HOW DO YOU MAKE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL TRUTHS?

1. Interpret the Bible correctly.

Teach. Before you make applications of biblical truths, you must first understand the biblical truth *as God intended it*. Interpret the Bible passage correctly. See manual 3 lesson 29. The following four rules of biblical interpretation are important for making applications.

(1) The Bible is infallible.

The revelation in the Bible is true forever (Matthew 24:35). Although the truths of the Bible are infallible, both our understanding and our applications of these truths are limited and sometimes fallible, because we are sinners and not perfect!

(2) The Bible has only one intended meaning.

God is truthful (Titus 1:2) and intends to reveal his purpose clearly. God's Word (the Bible) is the truth (John 17:17). Therefore any passage in the Bible does not have a double sense. The words in the Bible have only the meaning God himself intended them to have. When you read and study the Bible, it is important that you do not read "some meaning" into the words, but really grasp God's intention.

(3) The Bible does not contradict itself.

The Bible is a unity, one revelation. The Old Testament and the New Testament complement one another. The Old Testament is *a preparation* for the New Testament and the New Testament *is the fulfilment* of the Old Testament. There is progress in God's revelation in the Bible. Therefore you must always interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. And explain every passage in the Bible in the context of the whole Bible.

(4) The Bible is its own interpreter.

Figurative speech, parables, poetry and prophecy must each be explained according to their own rules. Often repeated teachings should be given a priority above expressions that only appear once in the Bible (1 Corinthians 15:29). Plain teachings (Matthew 10:37) help to explain obscure teachings (Luke 14:26). The teaching in the New Testament (Acts 15:14-19) unveil the meaning of the prophecies in the Old Testament (Amos 9:11-12).

2. Consider all the possible applications.

Teach. Before making *one* personal application, consider *all* the possible applications. “Brainstorm” with one another and compile a short list of possible applications of the truths in the Bible passage.

(1) One truth in the Bible may have several possible applications.

Remember that an application is a response that God desires. Although a particular truth in a Bible passage is only one truth, the application of that truth may be different for different people and for different situations. One truth may have several possible applications. However, none of these possible applications may contradict the truth of the Bible.

For example: “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15) is one truth, but has several possible applications, as:

- In a shopping centre, you may not steal goods that are for sale.
- At your working place, you may not embezzle money from the company.
- At home, the children may not steal cookies.
- In the area of mass media, you may not steal music or printed matters that have copyright.

Likewise, consider the various possible applications before you choose a specific personal application.

(2) Questions that help you to think of possible applications:

The following are questions that may help you to think about possible applications after you have read or studies a Bible passage.

<p>A. What does God intend me to <u>know</u>? → The applications are in the area of <i>knowledge</i>. Does God want me to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ know/remember a new truth/fact? ▪ realise a consequence? ▪ understand a doctrine? grasp a teaching? ▪ gain a new insight? ▪ memorise a truth? 	<p>B. What does God intend me to <u>believe</u>? → The applications are in the area of <i>faith</i>. Does God want me to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ believe a truth? ▪ trust him in a particular area? ▪ gain a new motivation? ▪ develop a conviction? ▪ claim a promise?
<p>C. What does God want me to <u>be</u>? → The applications are in the area of <i>character</i>. Does God want me to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop a virtue? ▪ to change an attitude? ▪ to control or express an emotion? ▪ to accept an encouragement? ▪ to accept advice? ▪ to practise a character trait? 	<p>D. What does God intend me to <u>do</u>? → The applications are in the area of <i>behaviour</i>. Does God want me to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ obey a command? ▪ apply a teaching? ▪ heed a warning? ▪ make a decision or choice? ▪ stop a bad habit ▪ learn a good habit? ▪ restore a relationship? ▪ avoid a sin? ▪ follow an example? ▪ share news? ▪ give an encouragement? ▪ praise or thank God for something?

(3) Different kinds of possible applications.

- Some applications stop a particular bad habit. For example, you stop smoking.
- Some applications start a new habit. For example, you begin to have a daily quiet time.
- Some applications increase or diminish a particular habit. For example, you spend more time with your spouse and children or spend less money on buying luxury goods.
- Some applications are executed quickly. You could phone someone immediately to make an appointment.
- Other applications are part of a long process of change. For example, you want to change a particular habit or character trait in your life. Changing a particular habit or character trait takes time. It may take months or years. Accept every defeat and believe that every victory makes you stronger. The process of change is adequately described in the following words:

When you sow **a thought**, you will reap **a deed**.
When you sow **a deed**, you will reap **a habit**.
When you sow **a habit**, you will reap **a character**.
When you sow **a character**, you will reap **a destiny**.

C. HOW DO YOU MAKE PERSONAL APPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL TRUTHS?

Teach. After you have made a short list of possible applications of truths in the Bible passage you are reading or studying, choose one possible application and make that your personal application that you want to practise during the following week.

1. Choose a personal application.

You make a personal application by asking the question:
“Which application does GOD want ME to make?” Or:
“What response does God want me to make to his Word?”
Prayerfully choose one of the possible applications from your short list.

2. Write your personal application down.

Write your personal application down in the following five steps:

(1) Bible reference.

“Where is this truth written in the Bible?”
Write down the Bible reference. For example. Exodus 20:15.

(2) The biblical truth.

“What does God intend to say in this Bible passage?”
Try to explain the passage as God intends it to be understood and write it down. For example, God forbids people to steal.

(3) My personal situation.

“What does God want to say to me in my present situation?”
Ask yourself questions like:

- How do I live different to what is written in the Bible?
- How does the Bible stimulate me to change?
- How does the Bible spur me on to make more progress in a particular area of my life?

Write down what God’s Word wants to establish in your life. For example. God showed me that I was stealing the time of my boss.

(4) My personal application.

“What does God want me to know, believe, be or do specifically?”
Write down a specific plan of action. How are you going to tackle (accomplish) this? Record it.
Keep your application simple, that is, understandable, realistic, applicable and measureable. If your application is in the area of developing an attitude, habit or character, set a period of time you want to deliberately and consciously work on this aspect. For example. I decided with God to start my job on time the coming month and not to leave my workplace before I have worked the amount of hours that I must work.

(5) My prayer.

“What is my prayer response to God?”
Write down shortly what you said to God or asked from him. For example. Dear Father in heaven. Forgive me that I have been stealing the time of my boss. Help me to be blameless and work the amount of hours that I must work.

3. Practise your personal application.

Stick to the time you planned, because a new habit is only developed when you practise it repeatedly.

4. Check your previous personal applications.

Find a way to make sure that you carry out your personal application. For example:

- You can share your application with a friend or spiritual mentor, who could check and encourage you, until you have accomplished it.
- You can write your applications on your prayer-list and pray over them regularly.
- You can keep a reminder of your application taped to your desk or mirror.
- Once in a while do some self-examination. Ask yourself how your personal applications have helped you.
- Of course, you don’t need to make a personal application at every meeting. Stay realistic!

5. Example of a personal application: Proverbs 3:1-10.

(1) What are the possible applications in this Bible passage?

Proverbs 3:1-2 → Possible applications:

- memorise the teaching or command.
- make notes while somebody is preaching or teaching.

Proverbs 3:3-4 → Possible applications:

- to show love to somebody, for example by making time to go to the park with my child
- to show faithfulness to somebody, for example by regularly praying for him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 → Possible applications:

- to stop being obstinate and independent and instead listen to wise and expert counsel.
- to pray every time before I act or make a decision.

Proverbs 3:7-8 → Possible applications:

- to avoid going to a wrong place or getting involved in a wrong habit
- to shun a particular evil person who tries to have bad influence on me or to end a wrong friendship
- to give up a particular harmful habit

Proverbs 3:9-10 → Possible applications:

- to give a certain amount of my income to God and the advance of his kingdom every month
- to make my home available for Christians to meet

(2) My personal application.

(one choice from the above mentioned possible applications)

Bible reference.

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Bible truth.

Instead of only *making a plan and carrying it out*, Christians should *pray before doing that!*

My need.

I am impulsive. I often do not pray and ask God for wisdom or power or love before I act. I would like to be more dependent on God.

My application.

My plan of action is to pray for every important activity or responsibility before I actually do them. I want to practise this for two weeks.

My prayer.

“Dear Father in heaven, help me to give up my independence and pray to you before I make a decision or before I talk to people or before I travel somewhere. Help me to acknowledge you in all my ways. In Jesus’ name. Amen!

6. Exercise to write possible applications and a personal application.

Divide the group into small groups of two persons each.

Read Romans 12:1-3.

Each pair makes a short list of possible applications.

Each pair chooses one possible application and writes a personal application.

Each pair read their possible and personal applications to the group.

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD
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Take turns in the group *to pray short* (in one or two sentences) to God in response to what you have learned today. Or divide the group into two’s or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples.

Preach, teach or study the teaching of “Practical applications” together with another person or group of people.

2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time out half a chapter of **Numbers 11:1 – 14:45** each day.

Make use of the questions method of quiet time. Make notes.

3. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. (5) **1 Peter 5:1-7**. Theme: The leadership of the Church.
Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the worship notes and teaching notes and this preparation.