

The Purpose of Applications

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" (Luke 22:19, ESV)

Why was it that Christ gave his disciples a method to remember him each Lord's Day? Christ could have simply said to say a prayer to God in thanks, but instead he instructed his disciples to perform a certain action, the taking of the bread and wine. As the greatest of teachers, Christ demonstrated the fact that when disciples do something in accordance with what they have been taught, the theoretical message or doctrine becomes practical and concrete with substance.

There are different types of sermons and studies we engage in: Some are certainly instructional, informational, taking the pure information of scripture and measuring it down into statements and summary conclusions. This is appropriate because the word disciple means "student." Some studies are certainly directed toward application. These studies allow us to test ourselves as we further strive to serve God through Christ. (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5) As the objective of the student is not just to learn but to eventually apply that knowledge, such is the objective of Christ's disciple.

Recall the last time you read an instruction manual. Was it to assemble a desk? To fix a home problem? To solve a puzzle? Consider that you had the instructions (the study) and the application (the hands-on work). What would have been the benefit if you had a friend-approved recipe for mouth-watering jambalaya but never picked up the ingredients to test-cook a batch? Why would someone read the manual to build a table if they did not sometime decide to construct one? The study of scripture should lead each of us to consider how we can take the raw data we have received from the Word and, where applicable, act upon it. As Jesus showed us in his great application of remembrance, when we do something in accordance to what we have learned, the message becomes practical and achievable.

Yet, let us realize that not all studies may benefit each of us so that we can act on them. As there are many members in the body of Christ, "But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose." (1 Cor. 12:18) Not everyone has the same opportunity or ability to perform certain applications. I may not be able to host the entire church at my apartment for a get-together, but perhaps I can invite one or two brethren to spend time together. It is a good thing to ask myself how I can apply the message from the study, but it is also a good to be patient and realize the message may be for another's benefit this time. Let us thank the Lord for teaching not just in theory, but in giving us examples so that we can minister with hands-on.