

FOLLOWING JESUS
A Disciple's Handbook

Lesson 4:
“Following Jesus in Studying and Applying”

Studying and Applying Introduction

Read Matthew 22:37-38 and Psalms 119:1-2

A disciple of Jesus is a life-long learner and doer of truth. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all of one's heart, soul, and *mind* (thinking, desiring, and understanding). God designed the mind for studying and applying. King Solomon said in Proverbs 25:2, “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” Psalms 111:2 says, “The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them.” In essence, these verses are saying Christianity is for students who learn, think, and apply.

No one in history exemplified this better than Jesus. From His youth, He was diligently studying and applying truth. During His ministry, the people of Israel were shocked by His understanding, teaching, and how He practically applied truth. He left an example that His apostles and early followers eagerly imitated. The Old and New Testaments leave us numerous commands to diligently study and thoroughly apply the truth of God's Word. What a joy to follow our Master as life-long learners and practitioners of truth!

Studying and Applying Defined

The word for *studying* in Psalms 111:2 has to do with frequently seeking and inquiring about something with the intent of finding what's being sought, and then readily applying it. It's like mining for jewels with a refusal to quit until you find what you're looking for, and then putting them to good use. This Psalm commands a steady study of the works of the LORD as we seek to thoroughly understand what God does, with the intent of doing the same. (Read Psalms 111:1-10.) And, not only do we seek to thoroughly understand what God does, but also who He is. (Read Proverbs 8:1-17.) As we read in Hebrews 11:6 it says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” The term *diligently seek* means to investigate, scrutinize, inquire about, and ardently crave something. This is what God wants us to do with Him! He's pleased with our faithful study of who He is, and He promises to reward us. With what? With great revelations of Him and the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding to obey Him and be like Him. As disciples of Jesus, our Master calls us to a lifelong study of who God is, what He's done, and what He plans to do. To study the Word of God is to study the God of the Word.

In the New Testament, we see that Jesus' disciples diligently studied His words and way of life. From studying Jesus, they had all the knowledge they needed. Yet, when it comes to studying and applying as disciples of Jesus, these next words from His mouth must remain central in our minds. He said in John 13:17, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." Through Spirit-empowered, Spirit-led study, we discover what the Word says and means, and what it requires. *Applying* means putting what the Word requires into action. Jesus explained to His disciples what to do with knowledge: apply it. It's only when information becomes application that it turns into revelation and transformation. Truly knowing God comes through diligent study and thorough application of the righteous requirements of God's Word.

Studying and Applying in the Life of Jesus

Jesus is history's greatest biblical scholar and practitioner. Even at the young age of twelve, Jesus was about His Father's business. He astonished the teachers of His day with His understating. (Read Luke 2:46-49.) He was hungry for the truth and how to apply it. As a twelve-year-old in Israel, He undoubtedly had studied the Ten Commandments. Luke 2:51-52 show us a young Jesus thoroughly applying the command to honor His father and mother, and God the Father blessing Him as a result. By the time Jesus was preaching and teaching at thirty-years-old, He had no formal educational background as the rabbi of His day would have had. Yet, the people were amazed at His knowledge and understanding of the Word. Jesus made it clear that His doctrine (His teachings and practices) were given to Him by a Heavenly Father whom Jesus had diligently sought. (Read John 7:15-18.) Jesus had large quantities of Scripture committed to memory. However, studying and memorizing the Word were not enough. Jesus diligently applied - even unto fulfilling - everything He studied. (Read Matthew 5:17.)

Studying and Applying in the Lives of Jesus' Followers

Jesus told His disciples that powerful signs and wonders would result from their faith in Him. His disciples immediately applied this truth by speaking the words and doing the works they had seen in their Master. (Read Mark 16:15-20.) Jesus had opened His disciples' understanding to comprehend what the Scriptures said concerning the Christ. His disciples boldly proclaimed and thoroughly taught what Jesus had taught them. (Read Luke 24:45; Acts 2:42; 5:42; 6:4.) If someone wanted any kind of significant leadership role in the early church, they had to know and be able to apply the Scriptures. When Christians were forced to leave Jerusalem due to persecution, they effortlessly preached the Word of God everywhere they went. (Read Acts 8:4.) Philip, Peter, and John preached the doctrine of Christ and the baptism with the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans. (Read Acts 8:5-17.) Philip was able to begin with a single verse in the book of Isaiah and thoroughly explain who Jesus was to an Ethiopian royal official. (Read Acts 8:35.) Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, and Apollos were all able to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and Son of God, using the Word of God. (Read Acts 17:2-3; 11-12; 18:24-28.) Mature believers in the early church were expected to know foundational teachings from the Word of God and be able to apply and teach what they had studied. (Read 1 Timothy 3:1; 4:6-13; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 6:1-3.)

Studying and Applying in Our Lives

Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul’s command to Timothy rings true for every disciple of Jesus. The term *rightly dividing* means to cut in a straight line. It invokes the imagery of a skilled butcher who can easily fillet an animal in order to expertly cook it and feed many people with it. It’s like a skilled carpenter who can make perfectly straight cuts in timber in order to build something people need. Disciples of the Living Word of God are called to rightly divide the written Word of God to feed and to edify others.

Should we study and apply by our own strength, with our own wisdom, and of our own direction? Not at all! We need the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God inspired the Word of God. (Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.) We need the Spirit to teach us all things and lead us into all truth (Read John 14:26; 16:13.) He will help us know what the Word says, what it means, how it transforms, and what it requires. What the Word of God requires, the Spirit of God supplies.

MEMORIZE: *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)*

KEY TRUTH: Disciples of Jesus follow His example of diligently studying and thoroughly applying the Word of God.

YOUR RESPONSE:

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- Ask Jesus to fill you with His Holy Spirit as you commit to be a life-long learner and doer of the Word of God.
- Use a daily reading guide to study through the entire Bible every year.
- Acknowledge the Holy Spirit every time you study the Word and ask Him to teach you all things and lead you into all truth.
- Find people who are mature in studying and applying God’s Word. Ask them questions. Imitate and emulate their practices. Adopt their study tools. Be accountable to them for your study and application of God’s Word.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Reinforcement

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This will reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. The word for _____ in Psalms 111:2 has to do with frequently _____ and _____ about something with the intent of _____ what’s being sought, and then readily _____ it.

2. _____ means putting what the _____ into _____.
3. Jesus diligently _____ - even unto fulfilling - everything He _____.
4. If someone wanted any kind of _____ role in the early church, they had to _____ and be able to _____.
5. _____ of the _____ of God are called to _____ the written Word of God to _____ and to _____ others.

WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?