

How to Understand and Apply the Bible

Michael Cranford

What is Scripture? 2 Pet 1:20-21

How does God speak to us through it? 1 Cor 2:9-16; John 16:13

Why does God speak through Scripture? Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Rom 15:4

Most important tool:

A good translation of the Bible.

Dynamic equivalence vs formal equivalence vs paraphrase.

Interpreting the Law

1. The law is a covenant between God and the nation of Israel.
 - A covenant is a binding contract between two parties.

2. God created the law for a specific purpose: the reconstituting of the people of Israel after the exodus from Egypt.
 - The end goal was to preserve Israel as a holy people until the arrival of the new covenant (Lev. 19:1-2; Jer. 31:33-34; Gal 3:24-25).
 - To this end, there are three categories of importance within the law:
 - a) Commandments that specified the relationship between people within the nation of Israel
 - b) Commandments that specified the relationship between Israel and God
 - c) Commandments that specified the relationship between Israel and outsiders

3. We are not one of the parties in the old covenant.
 - The law does not directly apply to us (Galatians 5:18); we are under the covenant of grace (Rom 6:14-15) and are directed by the Spirit in matters of moral obedience (Rom 7:6; 8:2).

4. The law doesn't cease to reveal the holiness and faithfulness of God, now that the new covenant has arrived. It pointed (and still points) to the promise. Matthew 5:17-19

Analogy: What can you learn from instructions I give my daughter on how to safely drive to Tampa?

5. Some parts of the law are included as part of the new covenant in Christ (e.g., Eph 6:1-3). This tells us that some things never change, which means the Spirit continues to speak through the law and point us to our need for Christ (under the new covenant).

Questions to ask ourselves as we read the law:

Q1: What does the passage teach us about God and his character (i.e., his holiness and faithfulness)?

Principle: God doesn't change.

Q2: What does the passage teach us about Israel's obedience and the need to maintain boundaries (personal holiness) in our relationships with other believers and in our dealings with those outside the faith?

Principle: We all live in a broken world and have the same struggles; we need to obey God and avoid sin as his holy people.

Applicational insight for ceremonial laws:

We begin with the literal command, realizing that, in these cases, it is a symbol that points to a habit or mindset that God wants for his people. Behind that, we discern God's intent, which is for their spiritual and physical well-being. **Analogy:**

Sample passage to look at:

¹ "If anyone sins because they do not speak up when they hear a public charge to testify regarding something they have seen or learned about, they will be held responsible.

² "If anyone becomes aware that they are guilty—if they unwittingly touch anything ceremonially unclean (whether the carcass of an unclean animal, wild or domestic, or of any unclean creature that moves along the ground) and they are unaware that they have become unclean, but then they come to realize their guilt; ³ or if they touch human uncleanness (anything that would make them unclean) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt; ⁴ or if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt— ⁵ when anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. ⁶ As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin. (Lev 5:1-6; NIV)

Law: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant

Boundaries and rules to promote holiness

Lev 19:1-2

- Between his people (Lev 19:11-18)
- Between God and his people (Deut 6:4-5; Exod 20:3-5)
- Between his people and the influence of outsiders (Lev 18:24-28; 20:23-25)

Principle: God's desire for Israel in this specific context is _____



Law

- Love each other and treat one another honestly.
 - Love God and put him above everything else.
 - Be a light to outsiders but maintain social and ethical boundaries; don't follow their behavior!
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- Specific command(s)

Law: Interpretation to application, step by step

Old Covenant

Boundaries and rules to promote holiness

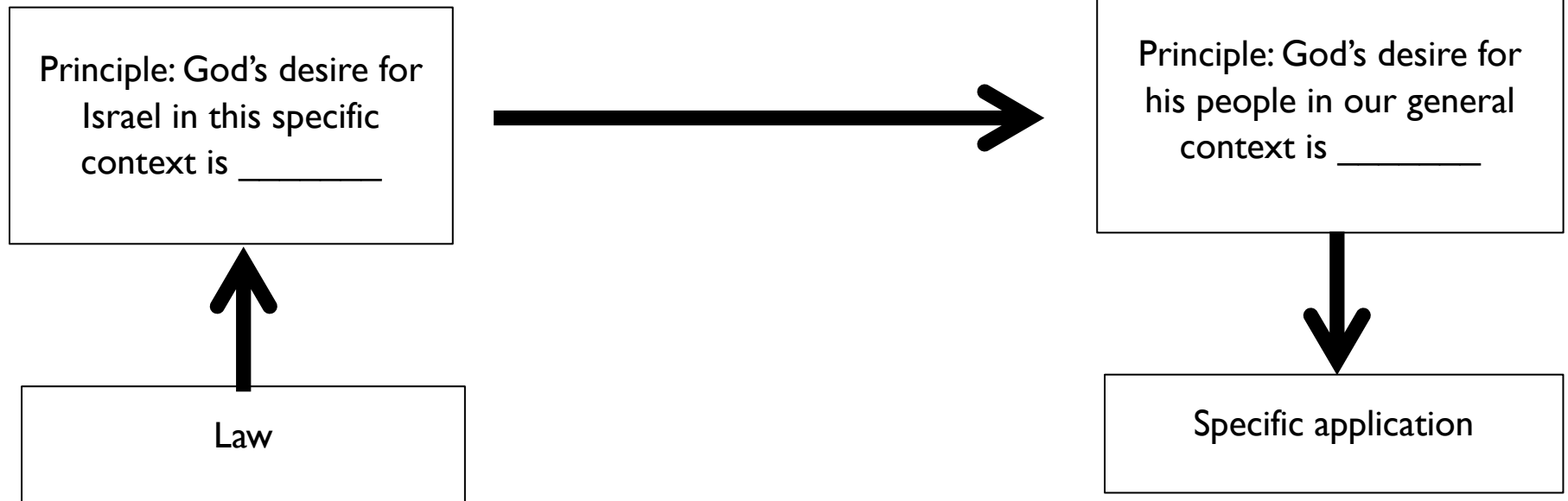
Lev 19:1-2

- Love and unity of the Spirit between believers (Phil 2:2)
- Worship God in Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)
- Be a witness to non-Christians but live according to the Spirit and not the flesh (Gal 5:19-24)

New Covenant

Transformation by the Spirit to promote holiness

2 Cor 3:18



Law: Interpretation to application, step by step

