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How to Apply the Bible to Your Life

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. It tells the story of God's dealings with humanity and God's directions for living. There are many different ways to apply the Bible to your life. Living out the Word of God is about being a person of conscience, character, and contribution, as well as learning about the God in whose image you have been created.

The Bible applies to your **conscience**; it speaks about what is right and what is wrong. It applies to your **character**; it speaks about the kind of person you should be. It applies to your **contribution**; it speaks specifically about how you are to help others. The Bible applies to your **knowledge of God**; it speaks about certain qualities of God.

Directions: Read these two Scripture passages and see if you can name the area or areas in which each applies to your life.

AT THAT TIME THE DISCIPLES CAME TO JESUS AND ASKED, "WHO IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?" HE CALLED A CHILD, WHOM HE PUT AMONG THEM, AND SAID, "TRULY I TELL YOU, UNLESS YOU CHANGE AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU WILL NEVER ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. WHOEVER BECOMES HUMBLE LIKE THIS CHILD IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. WHOEVER WELCOMES ONE SUCH CHILD IN MY NAME WELCOMES ME."

MATTHEW 18:1-5



AGAIN, YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID TO THOSE OF ANCIENT TIMES, 'YOU SHALL NOT SWEAR FALSELY, BUT CARRY OUT THE VOWS YOU HAVE MADE TO THE LORD.' BUT I SAY TO YOU, DO NOT SWEAR AT ALL, EITHER BY HEAVEN, FOR IT IS THE THRONE OF GOD, OR BY THE EARTH, FOR IT IS HIS FOOTSTOOL, OR BY JERUSALEM, FOR IT IS THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. AND DO NOT SWEAR BY YOUR HEAD, FOR YOU CANNOT MAKE ONE HAIR WHITE OR BLACK. LET YOUR WORD BE 'YES, YES' OR 'NO, NO'; ANYTHING MORE THAN THIS COMES FROM THE EVIL ONE."

MATTHEW 5:33-37

PRACTICE

Look up some of these passages from the New Testament and practice applying them to your life in any of the four areas of **conscience, character, contribution, or knowledge of God.**

MATTHEW 22:34-40

MATTHEW 25:31-46

MARK 9:42-49

MARK 10:13-16

MARK 10:17-22

LUKE 6:27-36

LUKE 6:37-42

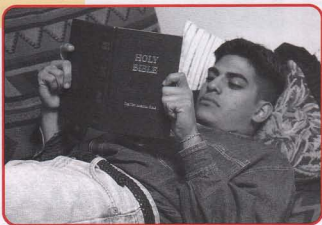
LUKE 6:43-45

LUKE 9:46-48

LUKE 10:25-37

LUKE 11:27-28

JOHN 3:1-21



ACTS 1:1-11

ROMANS 12:9-21

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

GALATIANS 6:1-10

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-13

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16

HEBREWS 13:1-6

JAMES 3:1-10

2 PETER 3:8-11

1 JOHN 4:7-12

REVELATION 5:1-4

PHOTOPOLL

How has your religion influenced you?



It has helped me to see the good in all people. Giving everyone a fair chance, no matter what the circumstances are. Knowing that when no one else cares, God is on my side.

MEGAN HARRIS, 18

Which commandment means the most to you?



I try to live my life according to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." I believe this is speaking not only of murder, but of our everyday actions. By being hateful and dishonest toward others, we are, in a way, killing a part of them. We are taking away their right to be happy. In the same way, when we are cruel and unjust to the environment, we are killing and destroying this gift from God. Thinking of this commandment allows me to treat others and this earth with the respect they deserve.

JANINE MINTON, 16

What is your favorite way to pray?



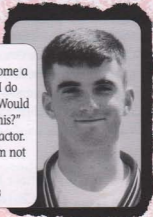
My favorite way to pray is to talk to God as though he is one of my friends sitting there beside me. God is a friend to anyone who will be his friend, so to me that is the best way to pray to him. One does not have to use extravagant prayers or flowery language; one can just talk to God as one would talk to his or her best friend.

CHRISTIE RANDOL, 18



It has influenced me greatly. Everything I do is influenced by God. I believe that God is always with me no matter what I do and he always will be. His guidance is what steers me the right way.

EVA BARLOW, 18



My religion has influenced me to become a better person. Before I do something, I think, "Would God want me to do this?" That is the deciding factor. Like everyone else, I'm not perfect.

ROB BRAUNER, 18



I guess the most important commandment to me is "Honor thy mother and thy father." I think that a person's mom and dad are the closest thing to a Godlike figure in a person's life. They are the people you can look to for guidance when you are not sure what God wants.

NICK ATZINGER, 16



I feel the first commandment, "Thou shall have no gods besides me," is the most important. God is the creator of everything and deserves to be recognized for creation. He is always there for us and we should always be ready to listen to him.

ASHLEY GOODMAN, 17



My favorite way to pray is by myself in complete silence. There are no distractions or interruptions and I feel closer to God by praying this way. It gives me a chance to communicate with God one-on-one.

KENIN LATHAM, 18

When I speak to God, I usually don't use formal prayer. I speak to God as a friend, as someone I know I can tell anything to and I know he will still love me.

TYLER BRONGER, 18



The Catholic Calendar

Do you think January 1 begins the New Year? Forget about it. We're talking the Catholic calendar here. Do you remember how much we Catholics use our religious imagination? We have our own dates and times, dance to our own music. Forget winter, spring, summer, and fall. We draw with our own colors and pray with our own

rhythms. Roman Catholics all over the globe pray this way. We're talking Africa. We're talking China. We're talking Canada. We're talking Iceland. We're talking West Coast, East Coast, Gulf Coast. We're talking Midwest, Southwest, Northwest. We're talking Great Plains, Mountain Time, Central Time. We are even talking Ordinary Time!

The Catholic liturgical calendar features the five seasons of **Advent**, **Christmas**, **Lent**, **Triduum**, and **Easter**, as well as **Ordinary Time**, which has two parts.

Advent begins our Catholic year. It begins on the fourth Sunday *before* Christmas. The first Sunday of Advent is our New Year's Day. Advent symbolizes "coming." Two things in particular are coming in Advent: the deepening darkness of winter and the coming of God among us. So in Advent we wait, and we light candles on our Advent wreaths as we pray. We use the color purple or violet to symbolize this season.

Christmas is the season that runs from Christmas Day to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Do you ever wonder why we keep the Christmas decorations up and sing Christmas hymns for nearly two weeks *after* Christmas Day? These are the original twelve days of Christmas, later popularized into a Christmas carol. This short season is packed with feast days. On December 26 we honor the first martyr, Saint Stephen, and then we honor Saint John the Apostle on the next day. On December 28 we celebrate the Feast of the Holy

Innocents; they were all infants killed by Herod as he tried to murder the infant Jesus. We usually celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on the Sunday right after Christmas. The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord symbolizes the "showing" (*epiphany* means "to show") that Jesus is the Savior of *all* people. The Baptism of the Lord is normally celebrated on the Sunday after the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Do you have any idea why we use the color white during this season?

Lent is a forty-day season of fasting and repentance. It is like a six-week retreat for all Catholics. Our forty days of fasting resemble the forty days Jesus fasted in the desert, Moses' forty days on Mount Sinai, the forty years in which Moses and the Israelites wandered in the desert, and even Elijah's forty days of fasting as he traveled to Mount Horeb. And do you remember how many days Noah and his family stayed in the ark during the Great Flood?

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, when our foreheads are marked with the ashes of the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday. The day

before Ash Wednesday—often called Mardi Gras—is called Shrove Tuesday, which comes from the tradition of going to confession in preparation for the season of Lent. Pretzels were invented as a Lenten food. In the Middle Ages, fat, eggs, and milk were forbidden during Lent, so people made a dough from flour, water, and salt and then shaped this dough to look like arms crossed in prayer. The English invented hot cross buns by putting icing in the shape of a cross on top of buns for Good Friday. Lent actually ends when the Mass of the Lord's Supper begins on Holy Thursday evening. Purple is the color of the season of Lent.

The Triduum is the heart of the Church's year.

The Triduum is the three intense days immediately before Easter Sunday, beginning with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper at sundown on Holy Thursday. Holy Thursday is the day on which we commemorate the historical event of the Last Supper and the establishment of the Holy Eucharist. We also include the ritual of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, which recalls what Jesus did for the Apostles, symbolic of our call to serve others. The altar is stripped in silence after the Holy Thursday liturgy. Many Catholics remain in church at night for an hour to symbolize staying awake with Jesus during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested. It is quite common for someone to be alone in the church at two o'clock in the morning, symbolically and prayerfully "waiting" with Jesus. A forty-hour devotion is practiced in some parishes, beginning at this time and lasting until the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening.

Good Friday marks Jesus' Death on the cross. There is no eucharistic celebration of the Mass on this one

day of the year. When we come to church on Good Friday, we focus on the Passion of Jesus. We listen to Scripture passages from both the Old and the New Testaments that speak of the suffering of Christ, the Messiah. Part of our Good Friday service is the Adoration of the Holy Cross, in which we come forward in procession to kneel in front of the cross, pray, or kiss the cross as a sign of our love and gratitude. We conclude with the receiving of Holy Communion.

The Easter Vigil is "the night of all nights" in the Church's year. Early Christians did not celebrate an Easter Sunday service. The Easter Vigil is made up of four parts: the Service of Light, the Liturgy of the Word (proclaiming Jesus' Resurrection and our eternal life), the Baptismal Liturgy (initiating new members into our Catholic faith), and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. If you have never been to an Easter Vigil, go and experience it with your own eyes. It is a strong gift for living our Catholic faith.

The Easter Season runs from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday. This season is called “a week of weeks” and lasts fifty days. Easter is a joyous time of new life—symbolized by the Risen Christ’s living with his disciples after he rose from the dead until he ascended into Heaven (which we celebrate on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord), and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Our season of Easter also coincides with the new life that we see in nature every spring. In A.D. 325 Emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicaea, which clarified the basic beliefs of our Church. This council also decided that Easter Sunday would always fall on the Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox. That is why Easter is on a different date every year. We use the color white here as well, except for Pentecost Sunday, when the color is red—as in red “tongues of fire,” symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

Ordinary Time has two different segments. The winter segment of Ordinary Time falls between Christmastime and Lent. The longer segment of Ordinary Time comes after the Easter Season and continues to Advent. This segment of Ordinary Time lasts about half of the entire year and spans the natural seasons of summer and fall. The purpose of Ordinary Time is to give us the simple and prayerful rhythm of Sunday worship and celebrating our life in Christ. The color green is used throughout Ordinary Time as a symbol of hope and life.

Several feasts that focus on Christ and are called the Solemnities of the Lord are celebrated during Ordinary Time. These feasts occasionally are celebrated on Sunday, but not always, so as not to distract from the flow of the Scripture readings. Some of these solemnities are:

- The Most Holy Trinity focuses on the mystery of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This solemnity always falls on the first Sunday after Pentecost.
- The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (also called Corpus Christi) is celebrated on the Sunday following the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. In the thirteenth century, a custom began in which Christians would have a procession outside the church—and sometimes through the neighborhood—and hold up the Blessed Sacrament for all to see.
- The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on the Friday after the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. This celebration focuses on the love Jesus has for humankind. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been popular with Catholics for many centuries.
- The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe ends the longer segment of Ordinary Time. It is celebrated on the Sunday before Advent. This Solemnity actually ends the Church’s year by reminding all of us that Christ will come back at the end of time as the King of Heaven and Earth.

The Church Year

Customize the timeline of the liturgical calendar by placing each of the Catholic celebrations and customs listed below in its proper place. Also add some of the dates for this upcoming Easter season and as many other feast days as you can.

Easter Vigil
Saint Stephen
Christ the King
Lent
Epiphany
Palm Sunday
Pentecost

Advent

Adoration of the Holy Cross

Holy Innocents

The color purple

Holy Thursday

Saint John

A week of weeks

Corpus Christi

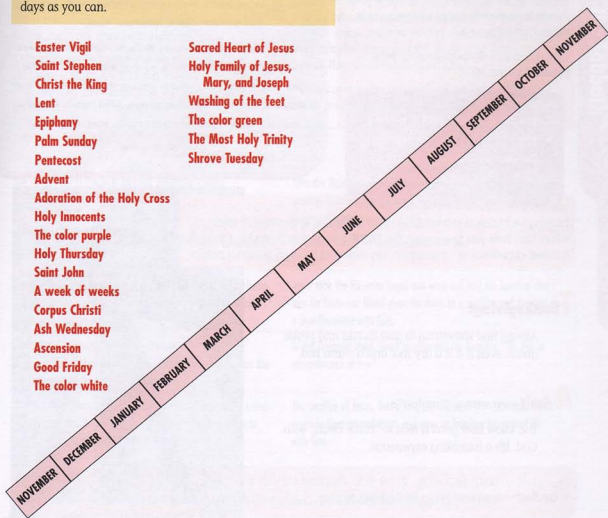
Ash Wednesday

Ascension

Good Friday

The color white

Sacred Heart of Jesus
Holy Family of Jesus,
Mary, and Joseph
Washing of the feet
The color green
The Most Holy Trinity
Shrove Tuesday



PRAYING

Learning how to “pray Catholic” through the liturgical season puts you in solidarity with the entire Catholic community throughout the world. It is a lifelong skill that can enrich your spirituality. But there are also many ways you can improve your personal prayer—the way you pray most naturally by yourself.

Take a moment and think about your personal prayer style:

How do you best pray? When?
Where? Do you use formal prayer?
Do you have a regular prayer routine? Is your prayer spontaneous?

Praying well takes a certain amount of discipline. Regardless of where, when, and how you pray, using the **TAPP** approach will provide you with a richer experience of communicating with God through personal prayer.

Thanksgiving:

Always find something to give thanks and praise about, even if it is a dry roof and a warm bed.

Admit your wrongs (“confess”):

You know how good it feels to “come clean” with God. It’s a humbling experience.

Ponder—long enough to let God talk to you:

Good prayer includes listening to the Spirit’s voice. Don’t be in a hurry. Learn to hear God’s voice.

Petition:

Bring your needs before God, and intercede for the needs of others. Have faith in God’s love and mercy (but remember that there is a difference between needs and wants).

“AND WHENEVER YOU PRAY, DO NOT BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES; FOR THEY LOVE TO STAND AND PRAY IN THE SYNAGOGUES AND AT THE STREET CORNERS, SO THAT THEY MAY BE SEEN BY OTHERS. TRULY I TELL YOU, THEY HAVE RECEIVED THEIR REWARD. BUT WHENEVER YOU PRAY, GO INTO YOUR ROOM AND SHUT THE DOOR AND PRAY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET; AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU.

“WHEN YOU ARE PRAYING, DO NOT HEAP UP EMPTY PHRASES AS THE GENTILES DO; FOR THEY THINK THAT THEY WILL BE HEARD BECAUSE OF THEIR MANY WORDS. DO NOT BE LIKE THEM, FOR YOUR FATHER KNOWS WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU ASK HIM.”

MATTHEW 6:5-8



When you TAPP into God’s presence, you don’t have to follow any particular order. Find an order that works best for you. As long as you include all four components you will love to pray. Besides, you can TAPP anytime you are asked to pray out loud—at a family gathering, at a meal, and so on.

Celebrating the Eucharist

Jesus and the Apostles were eating their last Passover meal when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. They were Jewish people about to celebrate their highest holy season. The Passover meal was a ritual meal that they had all grown up with and celebrated since they were children.

At this meal the Jewish people remember how God liberated them from the slavery of Egypt and how the angel of death took all firstborn children and animals of the Egyptians. During this terrible

plague, the angel of death “passed over” the Jewish homes of those who had eaten lamb and marked their doorposts with lamb’s blood. Every year the Jewish people commemorated this “Passover” by sharing this special meal.

It was at this Passover meal that Jesus told the Apostles that they were to celebrate a new Passover meal in memory of him. His Body and Blood became the new offering for the sins of the world. Jesus replaced the Passover lamb and saved humankind from eternal death. The Passover meal then became our Eucharist.

Think about this comparison and you will see how precisely it fits.

PASSOVER

The celebration of Passover involved sacrificing a lamb.

An unblemished male lamb (one without any bruises or markings) was used for the sacrifice.

The Jewish people ate the lamb with unleavened bread and herbs, and placed the lamb’s blood on the doorposts as a sign of God’s covenant with them.

God told the Jewish people to observe this as a perpetual ceremony with all future generations, telling their children that this ceremony recalls the Passover sacrifice to God.

This sacrifice of the unblemished male lamb and ritual meal saved the Jewish people from death and gave them freedom to go to their Promised Land.

EUCHARIST

John the Baptist spent his life telling everyone that the Messiah was coming. When he saw Jesus for the very first time, he told people, “Here is the Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

Jesus was a male without the blemish of sin.

Jesus took the Passover bread and wine and told the Apostles that it was his Body and Blood given for them as a sacrifice and the sign of a new Covenant with God.

At the Passover meal, Jesus commanded his Apostles, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

The sacrifice of Jesus, God’s Son, celebrated in the eucharistic meal, saves us from eternal death and gives us freedom for eternal life with God.

SOUL SEARCH: What can you do to enrich the way you celebrate the Eucharist and strengthen yourself spiritually?



“I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. YOUR ANCESTORS ATE THE MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS, AND THEY DIED. THIS IS THE BREAD THAT COMES DOWN FROM HEAVEN, SO THAT ONE MAY EAT OF IT AND NOT DIE. I AM THE LIVING BREAD THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. WHOEVER EATS OF THIS BREAD WILL LIVE FOREVER; AND THE BREAD THAT I WILL GIVE FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD IS MY FLESH.”

JOHN 6:48-51

Keeping the Sabbath

The Third Commandment does not mince words about keeping the Sabbath. The Christian Sabbath is Sunday, while the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday. Moses and the Jews observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath since it was on the seventh day that God rested after creating the universe. Christians celebrate a newly created Sabbath on Sunday because Christ rose from the dead the day after the Jewish Sabbath and gave humanity new life.

In our world today, the practice of keeping the Sabbath needs to be reclaimed. God's commandment to keep the Sabbath has two purposes: to worship and to rest. In the Bible, God tells us that keeping the Sabbath is a way of showing respect for the Creator. By resting on the Sabbath all of us can refocus on our spiritual health instead of continuing the stressful pace of trying to meet all our obligations.

There is no doubt that keeping the Sabbath becomes a habit of feeding your soul. Resting and praying at different times during the week is not the same as establishing the discipline of setting aside the Sabbath each week to think about where you are headed, where you have been, how you have been treating others, and how you are coping in your daily life.

Remember the time-honored way of recognizing God's presence: *truth, beauty, love*. Keeping the Sabbath can be done by intentionally finding ways to experience these signs of God's presence with us. Here are some suggestions for creating your own way of keeping the Sabbath.

Regarding Truth

1. Establish the practice of *Sunday conversations* by making a point of calling someone on Sunday and having a conversation about things that *really count*. Call either the same person or a different person each Sabbath. There are only two rules: Talk about things that really matter. Fearlessly seek the truth.
2. Establish the practice of *Sabbath Scripture* by setting aside some time (forty-five minutes) every Sabbath to read the Bible and let the truth of God's word speak to you. No phone calls.

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES: YOU YOURSELF ARE TO SPEAK TO THE ISRAELITES: "YOU SHALL KEEP MY SABBATHS, FOR THIS IS A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS, GIVEN IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT I, THE LORD, SANCTIFY YOU. YOU SHALL KEEP THE SABBATH, BECAUSE IT IS HOLY FOR YOU; EVERYONE WHO PROFANES IT SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH.

EXODUS 31:12-14

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, AND KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR WORK. BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS A SABBATH TO THE LORD YOUR GOD; YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK—YOU, YOUR SON OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MALE OR FEMALE SLAVE, YOUR LIVESTOCK, OR THE ALIEN RESIDENT IN YOUR TOWNS.

EXODUS 20:8-10

3. Devote time every Sabbath for *journal writing*. Get in touch with your spiritual side and write down some of the truth you experienced the past week. Light a candle before you start as a symbol of your desire to be aware of God's presence with you during your time of writing.

Regarding Beauty

1. Establish a *Sunday stroll* by making it a point to go for a walk or ride with the purpose of noticing some things of beauty. You'll be amazed at how skilled you will become at seeing beauty you never noticed. No radios or headphones.
2. Practice *Sabbath sounds* by devoting time to listening to music you consider to be beautiful. (Now you can use your radio, CDs, and headphones!) If you enjoy singing or playing a musical instrument, sing or play some beautiful music for your practice of *Sabbath sounds*.
3. Spend time each Sabbath in some *artistic endeavor*: working on a piece of art, taking a few unique photos, looking at beautiful artwork and photos, and so on.

Regarding Love

1. Write a *letter* every Sunday to someone you care about. It doesn't have to be a love letter, but it is a way of showing your love for a friend or family member. Pick a different person every Sunday. Think about it. A childhood friend who moved away? A grandparent? A cousin? A classmate? A former coach?
2. Establish a different kind of *Sunday service* by intentionally helping someone with a project. This sounds like work, which we are trying not to do on the Sabbath, but in this case we are talking about "helping" someone else. Help a little brother or sister with a science project, haul a neighbor's trash, walk for charity, help out at a soup kitchen, teach a friend how to use a new computer, run an errand for a parent—all secret Sabbath ways of showing your love.
3. Set aside time to *stay at home* and be with your family. Block out Sunday night or Sunday afternoon and just spend time with your loved ones. You have no idea how much the members of your family feel loved when you decide to stay around the house instead of running around. If you choose to make this your new Sabbath practice, there is only one rule: No fighting or arguing—even if you have to bite your tongue, sit on your hands, or walk away.