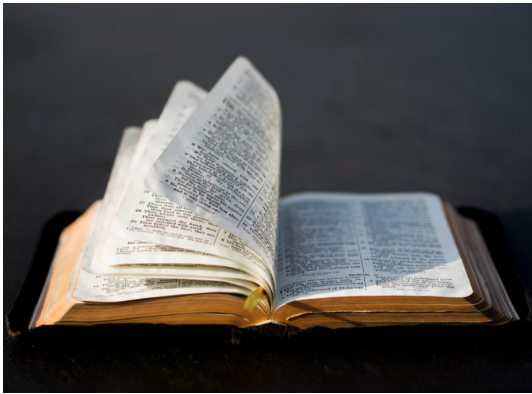


Applying the Bible is not, at root, a matter of learning and following rules. Yes, of course, the Bible has many helpful rules and principles to learn and follow. Learning and following those rules will improve your life immeasurably. The Ten Commandments are a great place to start. Jesus's Sermon on the Mount articulates those Commandments into dozens of extraordinarily practical statements. You can, if you wish, turn Jesus's words into hundreds of literal and practical do's and don'ts. Taking Jesus at his word, and then following his admonitions, will make your present life far better, not to mention gaining you eternal life. You will see things improve immediately and, over time, immensely.



Applying the Bible, though, is more than learning and following rules. The Bible has far more to offer than rules. The Bible is a grand narrative, *the* grand narrative. The Bible is God's story of his relationship with humankind. And nothing, *nothing*, is more practical than knowing your place in that grand story. Because what you need isn't rules. What you need is *hope*. What you need is *purpose*. What you need is some way to deal confidently and energetically with the chaos, complexity, obstacles, and challenges of life. And that *way, hope, purpose, energy, and power*, indeed that *source of all good*, is what the Bible offers. Rules are fine, as far as they go. But what you need is a reason to get out of bed in the morning and do your darnedest to make the world just a little better than it wants to be without your effort.

Because without knowing your place in God's grandest story, you just might give up. What hope does the world without God offer, but dust to dust, ashes to ashes, survival of the fittest, pursuit of pleasure, or some similarly fruitless stance? Anyone can raise their aim to a higher mark. What you need is a *reason to do so*. The Bible's grand narrative gives you that reason. You must work hard to wring those lessons from the Bible, which is an extraordinarily complex, even though majestic and profound, writing. But the Bible ultimately shows you that God created you out of a fierce desire, indeed out of a wholly sacrificial love, to know and embrace you intimately and eternally. God wants you to rule with him in a realm that offers you nothing but realized possibility--not pain, fear, and a certain demise, but instead his own glory, shared with you.

*That's* how you apply the Bible. Sure, learn and follow its rules. But better still, let the Bible set your soul afire with the good Lord's passion to know and embrace you eternally. And then, you'll have a good reason to get out of bed in the morning to give the day your all, whatever day the world puts before you.