

Bible Reading

Christians, do you read the Bible in your families every day? Do you read it in your closet every day? And do you read it not to quiet your conscience as a work of penance; but do you read it as a pleasure anxiously to be sought after? If you do, I need not tell you what utility, pleasure, and happiness is in the blessed employment. But if you do not, you may rest assured there is something greatly wrong, which, if it is not abandoned, subdued, or vanquished soon, will cause you sorrows, if not agonies, when you will be less able to conflict with them than at present. Resolve this moment, I pray you, that you will begin today to read the Bible, to enjoy God and Christ and the hope of immortality. "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart; so shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man." Then will you say with Solomon, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor: her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Begin today: 'tis madness to defer." The religious world -- I mean the great majority of all professors -- are Bible neglecters. Their ignorance, prejudice, and error show it. I beseech you, daily, habitually, constantly, prayerfully read the Bible in its proper connections, and you will grow in grace as you grow in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Lord will bless you, as he has said, in this deed. Read James 1:22-25, and may you prove it true!

- by Alexander Campbell

The Millennial Harbinger, January, 1839

A Bit of Methodist History Concerning Instrumental Music

In a book called: HYMN STUDIES - ANNOTATED METHODIST HYMNAL by Charles S. Nutter, published in 1884, there was hymn no. 27, "Praise The Lord." We give the first and fourth stanzas:

1. "Praise the Lord! his glories show, Saints within his courts below, Angels round his throne above, All that see and share his love.

4. Strings and voices, hands and hearts in the concert bear your parts; all that breathe, your Lord adore, Praise him, praise him evermore!"

What interested us particularly was the comment which followed the above hymn. Mr. Nutter, author of this Methodist Hymnal, said: "The fourth stanza would not have been admitted into any hymn book by the early Methodist. Instruments of music in the church, and especially those with strings were an abomination to them."

"Dr. Adam Clarke [noted Methodist commentator] said, 'Music as a science I admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor.'

"John Wesley ["founder" of Methodism] said, 'I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen.'"

Readers of church history are familiar with these "quotes" - but in a Methodist Hymnal??? Hummmmm!!

- by Robert F. Turner

The Danger of Cliques

We all understand that it's natural to feel closer to some people than to others. Personalities differ and interests vary. Shared experiences tend to draw us together. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. But in a local congregation, that natural tendency can quietly grow into something harmful — cliques.

A clique forms when a small group becomes so tightly bound that others feel excluded. It may not be intentional. No one means to hurt anyone. Still, the effect is the same: barriers go up, fellowship suffers, and the sense of family begins to weaken. This is not what God intended for

His people.

The church is described as a body: “For as the body is one, and hath many members... so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12). Paul goes on to stress that “the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee” (v. 21). Every member matters and every member belongs. When cliques form, the practical application of that truth is denied.

The early church provides a good example of both the problem and the solution. In Acts 6:1, a division arose because certain widows were being neglected. Whether intentional or not, a group was being overlooked. The apostles acted quickly to correct the issue, ensuring that all were cared for. The unity of the body had to be protected.

James warned strongly against showing partiality: “If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin” (James 2:9). While his context involved favoritism toward the wealthy, the principle applies more broadly. Anytime we treat some as “in” and others as “out,” we are failing to love as we should.

Jesus made it even clearer: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Not just love for a few. Love for all.

So what should we do? Be intentional. Speak to those you don’t naturally gravitate toward. Invite others to join with you and your friends. Look for the person standing alone. Make room. Show interest. Build connections.

In a physical family, we seek to include all members. The same must be true in God’s family. Let’s enjoy our close friendships — but never at the expense of the larger body. Let’s be a congregation where no one feels like an outsider, and everyone knows they belong.

- by Greg Gwin