

No Time for Bible Reading?

How much time does it take to read from Genesis to Revelation? If you would read the Bible at a standard pulpit speed (slow enough to be heard and understood), the reading time would be seventy-one (71) hours. If you would break that down into minutes and divide it into 365 days, you could read the entire Bible, cover to cover, in only 12 minutes a day. Is this too much time to spend reading about God?

- *selected*

Jesus Washed Feet, Should We?

In John 13, after Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper, we find that he washed his disciples' feet (vs. 4-16). Many times the question arises, "Since Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, should we not wash one another's feet?" Some in the denominational world have used this as justification to have a "foot washing service" as a part of the worship to God.

Washing feet is also mentioned in Luke 7 where a woman washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Then it is mentioned in 1 Timothy 5 as one of the deeds that would characterize some widows.

The usual mode of travel in Jesus' day was walking. The roads and pathways were usually dusty. One of the signs of hospitality in that time was to wash (or, have a servant to wash) the feet of a guest when they arrived in your house. This seems to be the thought in Luke 7 and seems to be given as a symbol of hospitality in 1 Timothy 5. It is certain that the lesson Jesus taught in John 13 was that of humility and service.

Saints still need to be humble in the sight of God (James 4:10) and in this humility be willing to do anything they can to relieve the distress of another - including washing their body (not just feet). We should show hospitality to those who visit us, but washing another's feet is not necessarily the only way to manifest this. And, we all (not just widows) should be active in doing good deeds.

To go through a ceremony of washing another's feet when they don't need washing is NOT a show of humility nor godliness. So far as I can see it is NOT something to be done in worship to God.

Let us leave it as the Bible does - a symbol of hospitality and good works. Let us manifest hospitality in other ways and do all good works expected by God - but let us not fall into a ritual of washing feet in applying the Scripture improperly.

- *by J. F. Dancer, Jr.*

God Hates Divorce

"I'm getting a divorce, but I don't plan to marry again" These words are being heard with increasing frequency. Usually the spokesman is thinking that God allows the right to divorce, but would disapprove remarriage. The truth is, however; divorce itself is sinful unless it is for the cause of fornication.

Consider Matthew 19:3-6. The question originally asked Jesus by the Pharisees was not concerning remarriage, but concerning divorce: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus' reply to that question: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." It was only after further questioning that Jesus discussed the problem of remarriage and adultery.

Consider Malachi 2:16. "For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." Even under the old covenant God did not approve of indiscriminate divorce. It is likely that the "tears" of verse 12 which "covered the altar" and caused the Lord to refuse their offering, were the tears of those who had been wrongfully put away.

Consider Matthew 5:32. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery." Observe the words, "causeth her" or "maketh her" (ASV). This writer understands this verse to say that if one divorces his wife he places her in a position of temptation to commit adultery, and shares the guilt when she does commit adultery.

On the other hand, if he puts her away for the cause of fornication, he has put her away legitimately, and shares no guilt in whatever adultery she may subsequently commit.

Consider 1 Corinthians 7:16: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband." Observe the word "command" or "charge" (ASV). The following verse (verse 11) does not negate or nullify this command, but simply recognizes that one might disobey the Lord's command (in which case he sins - 1 John 3:4), and states his options if he has disobeyed. Not only does the Lord command husband and wife to live together, but he commands them to meet one another's physical needs (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) and to love one another (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4-5)

If one companion in a marriage fails along these lines, the other must still be obedient to God, seeking to be what He would have him or her to be in the marriage relationship. Never should the thought of divorce or separation ever enter the mind unless fornication occurs. We are not suggesting that divorce itself is "adultery," but we are saying that divorce for any cause other than fornication is sin. Christians must not be influenced by the loose standards that prevail in the world in which they live.

- by Bill Hall

Correct Application of Matthew 18

It happens again and again. Some brother or sister becomes involved in a sinful activity and it quickly reaches the level of "common knowledge." Many people know about it, and some that lack a conscience about gossiping begin to have a "hay day" with this information. Finally, one or more concerned brethren learn of it and take steps toward correcting the sinful situation. For their efforts they are criticized and blamed for not following proper "procedure." Specifically, they are charged with having not followed the steps set forth in Matthew 18. Here is the text at issue:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (Matthew 18:15-17)

Please observe that the situation Jesus describes here involves a private matter -- known only by the brother who had been wronged and the one who had committed the wrong. Clearly, it was not a sin against a group of people, and it was not a sin that was publicly known. The scenario our Lord sets forth was very specific. In cases where these specifics are met, this method must be followed.

But, what about situations where a Christian sins a sin which is not directed towards any certain individual, and the sin immediately becomes publicly known. In such instances, Matthew 18 does not apply. Instead, we would be correct in following the pattern set by the apostle Paul in Galatians 2. When Peter was guilty of open hypocrisy, Paul said, "I withstood him to the face...I said unto Peter before them all..." (vs. 11-14). Public sins are a different matter -- Matthew 18 does not fit. Unfortunately that passage is often used to deflect criticism away from the true offender and towards the concerned brethren who are trying to do the right thing. Think!

- by Greg Gwin