

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Towel Ministry

That's right, TOWEL MINISTRY. It's not a new concept like a "Bus Ministry" or a "Television Ministry". This is straight from the Bible and Jesus is the one who started it. There have been many books written about Jesus, His life, His teaching, His preaching, His healings, and the ministry He did while He was in this world. This article is concerned about an obscure and often ignored ministry of our Lord. This is about the "TOWEL MINISTRY" that Jesus started and commanded **ALL OF US** to get involved in.

A few months ago I visited my hometown church. After being gone for thirty years many of the faces were new and only a few people there knew me. When the pastor came to the pulpit, he unfolded a towel and draped it over the pulpit where all could see the embroidered letters on the towel that read, "TOWEL MINISTRY". The pastor, Rick Lewis, read John 13:5 "After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him." This is a passage that I had heard preached and taught on several different occasions. I was expecting to hear a good sermon, but not anything original or innovative on this passage because I have heard dozens of sermons from some great preachers on this passage. To my delight I was wrong. I was privileged to hear one of the series of the "TOWEL MINISTRY" sermons that Pastor Rick Lewis delivered. I want to extend special thanks to Pastor Lewis for being gracious and letting me borrow this idea for this article.

As we examine this passage of scripture we see a splendid instance of the humility and servant-leadership of Jesus Christ. We look at this one act in time and we marvel at this example of the Master. We focus on the time, near the Passover around AD 29. We focus on the place, a room in Jerusalem. We focus on the activity, a meal shared with friends looking forward to the Passover. We focus on the people there, Jesus and His disciples. We focus on the action, the Master washing the feet of the disciples. We focus on the reaction of Peter, the refusal to let Jesus wash his feet and then the famous words of Peter when he starts to "get it", in verse 9 "not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." We marvel at the words of Jesus in verse 10. We read 12-17 and try to maintain focus on all that is being said and what is going to happen. With so much to focus on here, I believe that sometimes we may come away from this example of Jesus' with the one of the main points out of focus if not missed all together.

As you are probably aware, it was a custom for a servant to wash the feet of the master of the house, family members or any guests. This job was given to the least of the servants. There was no servant. No one volunteered. Jesus set the example. In this example, Jesus is not grilling a steak on his grill for the disciples. He is not refilling their glasses with Tea. He is performing the lowliest of tasks for them. Read verse 4. Jesus got up from the meal and started to do this. There was no servant here to do this, so what did Jesus do? (To put it in popular terminology, WWJD?) Jesus grabbed a towel!!! He did not wait, He set to the task immediately.

In verses 12-17, we see the impact that Jesus expects for this to have us. We see Him defining things for us and helping us to gain a proper perspective for our lives. We know we are to serve others. We know that we are not greater than Him. We will be blessed in doing this. This story of our Lord leaves me with a couple of questions? Have you picked up your towel? When did Jesus tell us it was all right to put down the towel?

When we are in a situation that we see something that needs to be done and no one else is doing it, isn't it time to pick up our towel? When there are others in need, pick up the towel! When someone is hurting, pick up the towel! When someone needs your prayers, pick up the towel! When a neighbor needs to hear about Jesus, pick up the towel! When you see a senior adult who needs something done around their home, pick up the towel! When that Sunday School class

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

needs a teacher, pick up the towel!

I believe that you see the pattern that is developing here. Pick up the towel! We are called to service for the Master. Pick up the towel! In Romans 12:1, we are told that we are to be a living sacrifice that is acceptable to God. That means we must pick up the towel!!! There is no complicated doctrinal formula here. There is no need for in-depth word studies and studying commentaries. Simply do what Jesus did. Pick up the towel.

Jesus said in verse 12 Jesus asked them, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" Can you see the significance of this? Here is the point that so many miss in this passage. This is nothing less than monumental and earth shaking! What Jesus did for us was to give us a pattern for success in life and in ministry. It has been said that if you set your sights to be a leader that your life will be full of disappointment, if you set your sights on being a servant your life will be a happy and fulfilled life that is pleasing to God. It is only as a servant that one can be taken to the upper limits of what God has in store for a believer. Some of the greatest leaders of the Bible are characterized by this quality of servant-leadership style. More important, this was what Jesus set for us as a model for our daily lives. It was so important that He did not leave it as an option for us. He graciously has commanded us all to join in as members of the towel ministry. In this example Jesus has freed us to grow in Him and to experience the joy and freedom that only comes from following him in picking up the towel. You need no musical talent, no PhD, no special credentials, no ordination, and no high and lofty position. You simply have to be willing to serve and to love.

As to the question of when can we lay the towel down? I will keep this answer brief and to the point. There is nowhere in scripture where it says that we are aloud to "throw in the towel". This article is not the usual for an apologetics web-based ministry. There are times when God plants something in your heart and mind that you must do. So I did the only thing that was open to me, I picked up the towel. Let us challenge you to pick up your towel and engage yourself in this ministry that was commanded by Jesus Christ. Pick up your towel, there is work to do!