

Discussion Questions

Old Testament

1. Deuteronomy 23:19-20 prohibits charging interest (usury) on loans to other Israelites (brothers), but permits it as to strangers (foreigners). What is the reason for this rule; and should we extend this rule to prohibit charging interest on a loan to a Christian brother?
2. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 sets out rules for divorce. Should we consider these rules to mean that God approves of divorce? Could a man divorce his wife for any trivial reason (or no reason at all)?

New Testament

1. Why did Jesus tell a potential follower to not take time to even bury his father?
2. Does Luke 12:29 mean we not should care at all about what we eat or our other physical needs, because God will take care of everything?

Notes and Commentary

Old Testament

Deuteronomy 23:19-20 prohibits charging interest (usury) on loans to other Israelites (brothers), but permits it as to strangers (foreigners). What is the reason for this rule; and should we extend this rule to prohibit charging interest on a loan to a Christian brother?

[19] You shall not lend on interest to your brother; interest of money, interest of food, interest of anything that is lent on interest. [20] You may lend on interest to a foreigner; but to your brother you shall not lend on interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you put your hand to, in the land where you go in to possess it.

Deuteronomy 23:19-20 (WEBME)

Usury has been a consistent historical grievance by antisemites against the Jews.¹
[1913 Webster]

¹For example, usury is one of the main arguments set forth by the National Socialists in their notorious 1940 propaganda film, *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), in support of

Usury : (Law) Interest in excess of a legal rate charged to a borrower for the use of money.

The practice of requiring in repayment of money lent anything more than the amount lent, was formerly thought to be a great moral wrong, and the greater, the more was taken. Now it is not deemed more wrong to take pay for the use of money than for the use of a house, or a horse, or any other property. But the lingering influence of the former opinion, together with the fact that the nature of money makes it easier for the lender to oppress the borrower, has caused nearly all Christian nations to fix by law the rate of compensation for the use of money. Of late years, however, the opinion that money should be borrowed and repaid, or bought and sold, upon whatever terms the parties should agree to, like any other property, has gained ground everywhere. –Am. Cyc.

Gill² argues that the prohibition against charging interest to fellow Israelites, was because they were engaged in the raising of cattle. They were generally not wealthy and did not need to borrow money except in times of great need. It was wrong to take advantage of a fellow Israelite by charging interest, and making his position worse, in his time of greatest difficulty. However, gentiles at this time were involved in trade and commerce. Charging for the privilege of using one's money in the course of commerce was an expected cost of business.

[Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary]³ The Israelites lived in a simple state of society, and hence they were encouraged to lend to each other in a friendly way without any hope of gain. But the case was different with foreigners, who, engaged in trade and commerce, borrowed to enlarge their capital, and might reasonably be expected to pay interest on their loans. Besides, the distinction was admirably conducive to keeping the Israelites separate from the rest of the world.

genocide of the Jews. This despicable film specifically refers to the prohibition of Jews charging interest to other Jews, while permitting usury to non-Jews, as originating in the "Fifth Book of Moses." Apparently, the name "Moses" was more readily identified as being Jewish, than Deuteronomy. Also note, William Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice* (circa 1596). Whether Shakespeare or his play are antisemitic is beyond the scope of this discussion. However the name of "Shylock the Jew" has been associated with usury in the centuries since his introduction in this play.

²The New John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

³Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (1871)

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 sets out rules for divorce. Should we consider these rules to mean that God approves of divorce? Could a man divorce his wife for any trivial reason (or no reason at all)?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (WEB). [1] When a man takes a wife and marries her, then it shall be, if she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house. [2] When she has departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. [3] If the latter husband hates her, and write her a bill of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; [4] her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Yahweh. You shall not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance.

This is the passage referred to by the Pharisees as they questioned Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:3-9. God does not approve of divorce:

Matthew 19:3-9 (WEB). [3] Pharisees came to him, testing him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?" [4] He answered, "Haven't you read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall join to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?' [6] So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, don't let man tear apart." [7] They asked him, "Why then did Moses command us to give her a bill of divorce, and divorce her?" [8] He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. [9] I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries her when she is divorced commits adultery."

[Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary] When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she

find no favour in his eyes—It appears that the practice of divorces was at this early period very prevalent amongst the Israelites, who had in all probability become familiar with it in Egypt [LANE]. The usage, being too deep-rooted to be soon or easily abolished, was tolerated by Moses (Mt 19:8). But it was accompanied under the law with two conditions, which were calculated greatly to prevent the evils incident to the permitted system; namely: (1) The act of divorcement was to be certified on a written document, the preparation of which, with legal formality, would afford time for reflection and repentance; and (2) In the event of the divorced wife being married to another husband, she could not, on the termination of that second marriage, be restored to her first husband, however desirous he might be to receive her.

[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible] This is that permission which the Pharisees erroneously referred to as a precept, Matt. xix. 7, Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement. It was not so; our Saviour told them that he only suffered it because of the hardness of their hearts, lest, if they had not had liberty to divorce their wives, they should have ruled them with rigour, and it may be, have been the death of them. It is probable that divorces were in use before (they are taken for granted, Lev. xxi. 14), and Moses thought it needful here to give some rules concerning them. That a man might not divorce his wife unless he found some uncleanness in her, It was not sufficient to say that he did not like her, or that he liked another better, but he must show cause for his dislike; something that made her disagreeable and unpleasant to him, though it might not make her so to another. This uncleanness must mean something less than adultery; for, for that, she was to die; and less than the suspicion of it, for in that case he might give her the waters of jealousy; but it means either a light carriage, or a cross froward disposition, or some loathsome sore or disease; nay, some of the Jewish writers suppose that an offensive breath might be a just ground for divorce. Whatever is meant by it, doubtless it was something considerable; so that their modern doctors erred who allowed divorce for every cause, though ever so trivial, Matt. xix. 3.

The “*unseemly thing*” referred to in Deuteronomy 24:1 must have been less serious than adultery, which was punishable by death. But some grounds were apparently required, although the severity of the cause is uncertain.

[The New John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible] [the wife's offense was something the husband] disliked, and was disagreeable to him, and which made their **continuance together in the marriage state very uncomfortable**; which led him on to be very ill-natured, severe, and cruel to her; so that **her life was exposed to danger, or at least become very uneasy**; in which case a divorce was permitted, both for the badness of the man's heart, and in favour of the woman, that she might be freed from such rigorous usage. This word "**uncleanness**" **does not signify adultery**, or any of the uncleannesses forbidden in Le 18:6-19; because that was punishable with death, when it could be proved; and where there was only a suspicion of it, the husband might make use of the bitter water: though the house of Shammai seem to take it in this sense; for they say a man might not divorce his wife unless he found her in some unclean thing, something **dishonest and wicked**, and which they ground upon these words; but the house of Hillel say, if she **burnt his food**, or spoiled it by over salting, or over roasting it; and Akiba says, **even if he found another woman more beautiful** than her or more agreeable to him. But neither his sense, nor that of the house of Shammai, are approved of by the Jews in general, but that of the house of Hillel; and they suppose a man might divorce his wife for any ill qualities of mind in her, or for **any ill or impudent behaviour** of hers; as if her husband saw her go abroad with her head uncovered, and spinning in the streets, and so showing her naked arms to men; or having her garments slit on both sides; or washing in a bath with men, or where men use to wash, and talking with every man, and **joking with young men**; or **her voice is sonorous and noisy**; or any disease of body, as the leprosy, and the like; or any blemishes, as warts, are upon her; or any disagreeable smell that might arise from any parts of the body, from sweat, or a stinking breath

New Testament

Why did Jesus tell a potential follower to not take time to even bury his father?

Luke 9:57-62 (WEB). [57] As they went on the way, a certain man said to him, "I want to follow you wherever you go, Lord." [58] Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." [59] He said to another, "Follow me!"

But he said, "Lord, allow me first to go and bury my father." [60] But Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but you go and announce the Kingdom of God." [61] Another also said, "I want to follow you, Lord, but first allow me to say good-bye to those who are at my house." [62] But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

[Family Bible Notes]⁴ The claims of Jesus Christ to immediate and unreserved obedience are supreme; and no earthly connections or engagements can justify any in delaying to give him the homage of their hearts and the service of their lives.

Does Luke 12:29 mean we not should care at all about what we eat or our other physical needs, because God will take care of everything?

Certainly, we must take reasonable steps to provide for the sustenance of ourselves and our families. Christ refers here it to irrational or excessive worrying about ones physical needs.

[Adam Clarke's 1810/1825 commentary and critical notes on the Bible] The meaning [here] is, to have the mind agitated with useless thoughts, and vain imaginations concerning food, raiment, and riches, accompanied with perpetual uncertainty.

[Kretzmann Popular Commentary] What foolishness, therefore, to be concerned about eating and drinking; to be full of hesitation and doubt, to look anxiously for help, like the mariner in a tempest-tossed vessel! These all are things which the people of the world, the heathen, make their prime concern; but as for

⁴Family Bible Notes from the Nazrene Users Group

you, the Father knows that ye need these things. Only one thing there is which should be the object of anxious search, that is the kingdom of God. To be a member of this kingdom, to have and keep true faith in the heart, through which such membership is insured, that is the one fact which should give every Christian his chief concern, on account of which he daily prays the Second Petition. All the other things that are necessary for the sustaining of life are added without worry or care, by the providence of God.

Random Quotes

The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one. — *Kin Hubbard (1868 – 1930)*

The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers. — *Sydney J. Harris*

Those who believe in telekinetics, raise my hand — *Kurt Vonnegut (1922 – 2007)*

Notes:

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