

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Foot Washing

"What is your understanding of feet washing as it was practiced in the Bible? Some people still practice it in church. What do you think?"

This question deals with feet washing, not merely for sanitary purposes, but as a religious act allegedly done in worship to God. Please read John 13:1-18:

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And

Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant

is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'" (John 13:1-18)

During the final week Jesus lived on earth he spent His time equipping them to continue after he ascended. John 13 describes the last Passover feast Jesus observed. It was after this feast that he instituted the memorial feast known in the New Testament as the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20).

To demonstrate his true humility, Jesus washed their feet. There was competition among his disciples. Which of them would occupy the most prominent place in the coming kingdom? The mother of James and John, made a direct appeal to Jesus for an exalted position for her sons (Matthew 20:20-21). Notice how the Lord responded. "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant" (verse 24-27).

As Jesus stooped to wash their feet, Peter asked, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" He recognized instantly that something was out of place. He should have been washing Jesus' feet. Jesus put into practice what he had just told His disciples. Those who look for a position of

great respect must humble themselves in service to others.

Was Jesus instituting a religious act to be practiced by the disciples after the church was established? Hardly. After it was all over, Jesus said, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him" (verses 15-16). The disciples knew how to wash feet but didn't know true humility. The example of the Master serving the student was to show them true humility.

Foot washing was a common act of hospitality, generally performed by a servant for a guest. Read Genesis 18:4 where Abraham offered hospitality and kindness to three strangers, messengers from Jehovah. When those messengers came to Lot's house they were offered the same cordial service (Genesis 19:2). Foot washing was a custom of many generations among the Eastern cultures. People who wore sandals and walked on hot dusty roads and paths found it refreshing to have their feet bathed in cool, clean water. A similar thing occurs now when a weary traveler arrives at a friend's house. The host will say, "Would you like to refresh yourself?" Customs change and that is all foot washing was ever intended to be.

Foot washing is not an act of worship and service to be included in the church today. The absence of any instruction relative to it as a so-called "church ordinance" shows clearly that God did not intend it to be an act of worship. There is one reference to it in I Timothy 5:10 and there it is included as a domestic duty, not a church obligation.

One has no more right to

bind washing feet as a religious act than to bind washing hands as a religious act: Mark tells us that the Jews would not eat prior to washing their hands - not for sanitary but religious reasons. Jesus called their worship "vain" because they taught the doctrines of men. "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition" (Read Mark 7:1-9 below). The same thing applies to washing feet – when done as an act of religion.

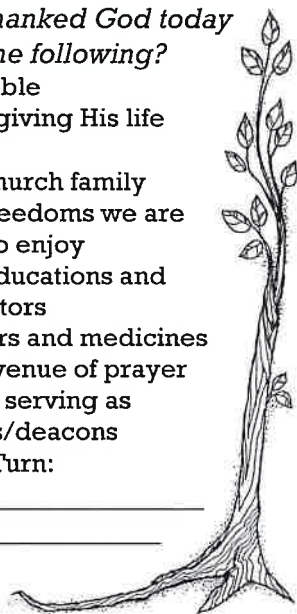
"Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition." (Mark 7:1-9)

Dudley Ross Spears

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) CREATE A PROSPECTIVE CHRISTIAN LIST

Mark 16:15 "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"

Write down names of anyone you think might be open to contact and hand it to the elders, and provide contact information (e-mail, address, phone number, etc.), if available. Some of these interested people might be:

- a) church members' spouses who may not belong to our church
- b) people who have visited in the last 18 months
- c) people who have demonstrated any interest in our congregation
- d) parents of children who attend Sunday School
- e) people you work with or go to school with
- f) people at businesses you deal with on a day-to-day basis
- g) someone new to the neighborhood/new to work or school
- h) teammates
- i) people with similar hobbies as you
- j) members of other congregations (you would be surprised here, especially write down those who talk about God freely and proudly)
- k) anyone and everyone else you can think of

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Mark 9:33-37

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" **34** But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. **35** And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." **36** And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, **37** "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."