

Lessons from Jesus Washing the Disciples' Feet

John 13.1-20

As the Passover meal begins, Jesus washes the disciples' feet – a job for a servant, not the Master! Jesus was teaching them a lesson on humility, but Peter's refusal to let Jesus wash his feet gave Him an opportunity to show how having eternal life and being in fellowship with God differ.

An Unexpected Scene: The Rabbi washes His Disciples' feet!

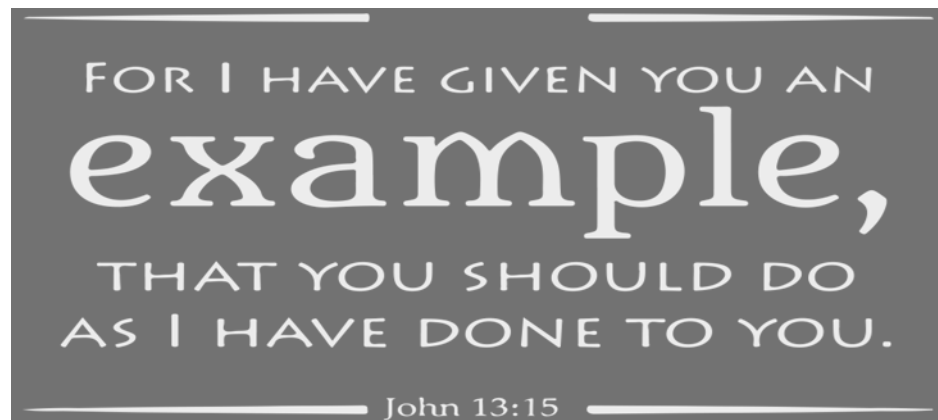
- Not just for show: Foot-washing in ancient culture
- Jesus washing His disciples' feet would be startling
- We are reminded throughout that Judas is there! (2, 10b-11, 18)

The Dialogue: A foot-washing is not a bath! (6-11)

- Peter always said what others were thinking!
- A spiritual "bath" gives eternal life and heaven
- Spiritual "foot washing" is daily cleansing for fellowship

The Discourse: Follow My example! (12-20)

- Jesus is Rabbi and Lord, but He served them (cf. 15.12-13)
- Jesus was sent by the Father, and served Him.
- We have been sent out to give our lives in service for Christ



1. Foot washing is not part of western cultural practice, so it may seem almost bizarre to us (although if you've ever had your feet washed before a pedicure, you know how wonderful it can feel!). Have you ever seen a foot washing ceremony at a conference or church? How did it make you feel? Did it motivate you spiritually in any way?
2. Foot washing was a necessary practice in ancient times, especially when you were gathering for a formal dinner. When you consider the combination of dust, sweat, and whatever animals left behind, a person's feet were well and truly the dirtiest part of him! The way guests reclined on low benches or even on the ground to eat meant the feet of the person next to you weren't that far from you! A host of a meal often provided a servant to perform this demeaning task. Now imagine Jesus, the disciple's Lord and Rabbi (v13), doing this for them? Can you imagine how they felt?
3. Peter's objection to Jesus washing his feet provides our Lord with an opportunity to emphasize His spiritual focus. Their dialogue is often misunderstood. The Greek terms are key: To "wash" (*νίπτω, niptō*) refers to washing *part of the body* – like the feet. To "bathe" (*λούω, louō*) refers to washing *your whole body*. What does a "bath" refer to spiritually? What does "washing" refer to spiritually? Do people who believe in Jesus need to be "washed"? Why? What does this do for them? How does 1 John 1.9 fit with this?
4. Jesus washed the disciples' feet to graphically demonstrate to them a heart attitude they needed to apply to their lives as His followers. It wasn't so they would wash each other's feet – or make foot washing into a religious tradition! Notice the two verses in which Jesus talks about being "sent" (vv16, 20): Jesus was *sent* to do the will of His Father, which included giving His life (and the presence of Judas reminds us of this coming event!). Jesus would soon return to His Father, and *send* out His disciples. What attitude should those who follow Him have? We have received eternal life: Is anything less than giving our lives for Him a worthy response? Compare John 13.15 with John 15.12-13. What will you give for Jesus this year?