

THE WASHING OF THE SAINTS' FEET

STUDY QUESTIONS

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Chapter One

“Introductory Reflections on Feet Washing”

1. Name some Christian denominations that practice feet washing. Were you surprised that so many do?
2. Is the practice of feet washing of recent origin among Free Will Baptists? Is it limited to certain regions of the United States? What are the implications of this for our current practice?
3. Discuss the meaning of the word *prerogative* and its application to the washing of the saints' feet.
4. What are some practices in your church that an unchurched person might think of as strange or odd?
5. What do you think are some of the main reasons people are reluctant to practice feet washing in church?
6. What role do you think embarrassment plays in some people's reluctance to practice the washing of feet? If you were convinced that Jesus commanded the literal washing of feet, would you be embarrassed by it?
7. Have you ever experienced anything that at first seemed odd to you but that you later became accustomed to?

Chapter Two

“What Is an Ordinance?”

1. What is the main difference between sacraments and ordinances?
2. Do Free Will Baptists believe in ordinances or sacraments? Why?
3. What is the difference between something's (a) *memorializing* or *symbolizing* Christ and His gospel and (b) *conveying* or *transmitting* divine grace?
4. Which group influenced our Free Will Baptist forefathers, the English General Baptists, in their view of ordinances: Mennonites or Lutherans?
5. Contemplate how you have defined *ordinance* in the past. How does it compare to these historical views?
6. Does the Bible explicitly define *ordinance*? If so, in what passages?
7. Must something symbolize Christ's death to be an ordinance? Why or why not?
8. Do you think some Christians too quickly dismiss feet washing as an ordinance because it does not measure up to an arbitrary definition of *ordinance*?

Chapter Three

“Appointed by Christ for Literal Perpetuation”

1. Re-read John 13:2-17. What might suggest to the reader that Jesus is not merely observing ordinary social custom—not just washing the disciples’ feet to get them clean?
2. What do you think might be the significance of the painstaking, ceremonious way that Jesus moves through this act?
3. What does the word *ought* mean in John 13:14? How does this usage relate to our modern usage of the word?
4. Re-read Matthew 26:26, 27; 28:19, 20; Mark 14:22; 16:16; Luke 22:19; John 13:7, 12, 14, 15, 17. Do these passages indicate a clearer, more direct command for baptism and the Lord’s Supper than they do for feet washing? If so, how?
5. What is the Quaker argument regarding baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and feet washing, and how does it relate to the main point of this chapter?
6. Do you think the literal practice of feet washing is easier to dismiss if humility is the *only* thing the gospel account symbolizes?
7. If the washing of the saints’ feet symbolized the incarnation of Christ and our sanctification, do you think it could be observed by mere daily humble acts?

Chapter Four

“The Symbolism of Feet Washing”

1. Must feet washing “typify Christ” to qualify as an ordinance? Why or why not?
2. In what way is the washing of the saints’ feet a “two-pronged” ordinance?
3. Re-read Matthew 22:37-39. How does feet washing symbolize Jesus’ thoughts in this passage?
4. Does modern individualism encourage the practice of feet washing?
5. How do Howard Dorgan’s story and Michael Card’s song illustrate feet washing as it relates to interpersonal reconciliation?
6. Have you ever had—or ever heard of—experiences of reconciliation and emotional or spiritual healing that were tied to the experience of feet washing?
7. Re-read Philippians 2:6-8. Does the washing of the saints’ feet remind you of the truths of this passage? How?
8. How does feet washing symbolize daily cleansing from sin? How does John 13:10-11 help us understand this?

Chapter Five

“Feet Washing Outside the Gospels”

1. Discuss some commands or practices in the New Testament that are not mentioned outside of the Gospels.
2. What is the context of Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians, and how is this relevant to the idea that something must be mentioned in the epistles to qualify as an ordinance?
3. What are the main reasons the widows' "washing the saints' feet" in 1 Timothy 5:9-10 is *not* a mere description of hospitality?
4. What did the church father Ambrose of Milan say about the church at Rome with regard to the washing of feet?
5. Re-read the quotations from Ambrose. Does he tie feet washing to cleansing from sin or sanctification? What else does he suggest it symbolizes?
6. Re-read the passages from Augustine. Does he think it is better to wash feet "with the hand" or "in heart"?
7. What is the significance of these thoughts of the church fathers for the practice of feet washing?

Chapter Six

“Why the Lord’s Supper and Feet Washing Go Together”

1. What does this chapter describe as three types of “ritual ordinances”?
2. What does baptism symbolize?
3. How does the Lord’s Supper relate to Christ’s death and our death to sin? How does it relate to justification?
4. How does feet washing relate to Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection to newness of life? How does it relate to sanctification?
5. Study the table on p. 86 and discuss it. How do the concepts of objective/subjective and vertical/horizontal relate to the washing of the saints’ feet?