

Clean Feet, Clean Heart

John 13:3-15

John 13:3-15 (NASB)

³“*Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?”

⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.”

⁸ Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”

⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of *you*.”

¹¹ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason, He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹² So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”

¹³ “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am.”

¹⁴ “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”

¹⁵ “For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

Israel can be a dusty place, and sandaled feet get filthy walking to and fro. In ancient times, a person entering a home removed his sandals and cleaned his feet. Or if the homeowners were wealthy, servants would do the washing. This distasteful but necessary task fell to the worker of lowest position in the household.

Imagine the disciples' surprise when the Son of God put Himself in the role of a lowly servant and knelt to wash their feet. The need for such a service was great, as they had been traveling for some time. But not one of them offered to do it.

Jesus did more than fill a need; He offered an object lesson. As He explained, “**I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you**” ([John 13:15 NASB](#)). Some churches have incorrectly interpreted this as a command to make foot washing an ordinance. But it's possible to perform a ritual without contemplating the significance of Christ's actions.

In fact, the washing isn't the main point—it's the attitude that counts, not the act. Jesus desires that we be willing to humble ourselves to serve others. He is looking for men and women who will ignore pride, position, and power in order to do whatever must be done, wherever it needs doing, and for whoever requires assistance.

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Jesus performed His greatest and most humble acts of service within 24 hours of each other. He washed dirty feet by using hands that would then be pierced by nails. The message here is that every task God gives us is important to His kingdom.