

where I belonged. I understand now that it was through Lord Jesus' love and mercy that I was chosen. I know that I never want to leave His side again, and that I never want to do anything to hurt Him. I don't think I will ever be worthy of the love and mercy God has given me. But I do know that His love and mercy has no boundaries. In life or death, Jesus Christ will be my Lord and Shepherd."

Pass out sheets of blank paper. Using 5 minutes, let students brainstorm ways in which they have intentionally or unintentionally hurt Jesus Christ. Ask students to share some of the things they have written while the teacher writes them on the poster/board. Discuss some things they can do to stop hurting Jesus Christ. As a conclusion, ask each student to write a short paragraph on how they can make their lives more worthy to partake the Holy Communion.

## R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



*Hebrews 6:6 tells us that Christians who do not repent and continue to sin "crucify again for themselves the Son of God." This means that every time we let a dirty word slip, every time we deliberately sin, every time we do something we know is wrong, we cause our Lord Jesus to suffer all over again. Once was enough for our Lord and Savior. Let us try to make the determination to keep ourselves pure and holy in order to repay His love.*

## Lesson 12

# The Doctrine of Footwashing

### Listed Scriptures

Jn 13

### Lesson Aim

- 1) To emphasize the importance of footwashing as a sacrament
- 2) To review the teachings behind the sacrament of footwashing

### Memory Verse

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:14)

### Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

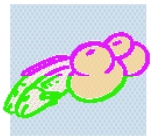
1 Corinthians 13-16

**Note to teachers:** This quarter's lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

## W A R M U P



If footwashing is so important, why is it recorded in only one of the four gospels? Why does our church place such great emphasis on footwashing when other denominations merely see it as a symbolic act?



## The Doctrine of Footwashing

### A. Why Footwashing is a Sacrament

- a. It is an example set by Jesus Christ
- Footwashing (pedilavium) is more than a ritual. It is a sacrament. A sacrament is an example set by Jesus Christ and something that we must do in order to take part in Christ. According to Jewish custom, servants washed their masters' feet or the feet of guests (Gen 18:4). Because guests wore sandals and walked on dusty roads, the servant or host's wife would perform footwashing for them as an act of hospitality. However, as a teacher and host, Jesus Christ "rose from supper, laid aside His garments, and girded himself with a towel. He then poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded" (Jn 13:4-5). By breaking tradition and washing His student's feet, Jesus Christ set a new example for us to follow.
- b. It is Jesus Christ's command to His disciples
- After Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet, He commanded them, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" and "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (Jn 13:15, 17). The fact that this command came with a blessing shows how important it is.

### B. The Spiritual Significance of Footwashing

- a. Taking part with Christ
- At first, Peter refused to let Jesus Christ wash his feet. But when the Lord Jesus replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me," Peter changed his mind, asking Jesus Christ to also wash his head and hands. From Peter's reaction, we can see how important it is to take part with Christ. To take part with Christ also means to have a share in God's grace, His promises and His heavenly inheritance. Thus, those who are baptized must also receive the Lord's footwashing in order to take part with Christ.
- b. Daily sanctification
- Footwashing reminds us of our human inadequacies and our need for constant

spiritual cultivation. Even after baptizing into the Lord Jesus' name, we continue to commit sin in our daily lives. The only way we can be holy is to often wash ourselves with "water by the word" (Eph 5:26).

### C. The Teachings Behind Footwashing

- a. Love and forgiveness
- By bending down to wash the feet of His students, Jesus Christ demonstrated how much He "loved his own who were in the world" and "loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). Today, we are also loved as disciples of Christ. Therefore, as recipients of God's love, we should serve and love one another (Jn 13:34). Jesus Christ tells us, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).

Jesus Christ demonstrated forgiveness by washing the feet of Judas. Although Lord Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, He continued to serve Judas and wash his feet, giving him a chance to repent. In the same way, we should learn to love our enemies, to "do good to those who hate you" and "pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt 5:44).

- b. Humility and servitude
- Jesus Christ had a clear sense of mission when He came to earth. He knew that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). He understood that He was one "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:6-8).

Through footwashing, Jesus Christ not only reminded the disciples of His mission, but taught them to follow His example of servitude and humility. He said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:14). In the same way, we should follow Jesus Christ's example and serve those around us with love and humility.

### D. Criteria For Footwashing

- a. Recipients of footwashing:
1. must be properly baptized according to the Bible.

2. may receive a ceremonial footwashing only once.
3. must be determined to follow the teachings related to footwashing. For example, the person must be resolute in maintaining holiness and living a life of humility.

b. Those who wash the feet of others:

1. must perform footwashing in the name of Jesus Christ.
2. represent the Lord Jesus Christ during the footwashing. Therefore, the foot-washer must have a sense of humility as he pours water into a basin, washes the believers' feet and wipes the feet with a towel.
3. should try to wash the feet of only those who are of the same gender (for holiness).

## E. After the Footwashing

After our feet are cleaned, we need to make a conscious effort to separate ourselves from our old ways and make the determination to keep our feet as clean as possible.

One way to keep our feet clean is to choose the right path or lifestyle. In order to do this, we need to have a good flashlight. Since the road of life is often foggy and unclear, we need a proper light to help us find the right way. The Bible tells us that God's word is "a lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path" (Ps 119:105). If we understand God's word and choose our path according to it, we'll be able to avoid the bad roads and stick to the narrow path to heaven.

Another way to keep our feet clean is to keep them in church, where we can have fellowship with other believers. Sometimes, when our feet are tired or unsteady, it is easy for us to lose focus and wander off onto dangerous or unnecessary detours. When this happens, our brothers and sisters in Christ may be able to send out a flare to get us back on track. As the Bible says, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas 5:16).

Lastly, we can keep our feet clean by walking in Christ's love. Walking in Christ's love is like walking in a pair of sensible shoes. Just as good shoes shield our feet from dirt and pebbles, Christ's love keeps our feet from filth and danger. It also helps us love others by helping those in need, praying for those who are weak, and sharing the gospel with those who have not yet received it. By walking in God's love, we can leave imprints that clearly show the glorious mark of our Creator!

## F. Additional References

Footwashing is not exclusive to the True Jesus Church. Maundy Thursday, or the Thursday of the Holy Week before Easter, first appeared in the Spanish liturgy (rite) of the 7th century. On this day, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church would remember the humility and selfless love of Christ by performing the act of footwashing. As a result, many European royals would give gifts to the poor and wash their feet on Maundy Thursday. This ceremony was performed in England until 1754, when the Church of England was formed. Today, Maundy Thursday is still practiced in the Roman Catholic Church.

Although Maundy Thursday may not give footwashing its due spiritual significance, we can still learn from its teaching of humility and servitude. It reminds us to serve those who are weaker or less fortunate than us. Jesus Christ tells us, "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Mt 10:42). For those of us in J2, "giving a cup of water" may mean helping younger brothers or sisters clean their classroom, assisting an elderly member to a seat, or volunteering to do the dishes after service. There are many ways that we can serve others in humility. The key is to be sensitive to the needy and love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

### C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



**1** Where is the commandment of footwashing recorded in the Bible?

**2**

What is the spiritual significance of footwashing?

**3**

Why should footwashing be seen as an important doctrine, even though it's only recorded in one gospel?

**4**

What are the criteria for those who perform and receive footwashing?



### ***Award Ceremony in Heaven***

Ask a volunteer to read the introduction.

#### **Introduction:**

Imagine that we have walked the walk of faith and made it to the door of heaven. An angel is standing at the door with a checklist. "Baptism?" Check. "Holy Spirit?" Check. "Love the Lord your God with all your soul and all your heart and all your mind and all your strength?" Check. "Love your neighbor as yourself?" Check. We enter the gates of heaven and wait to see the Lord. He is preparing to give us our reward. We are filled with inexpressible joy and nervousness. With a kind voice, the Lord reads aloud what is on the glowing piece of parchment...

Pass out blank awards certificates (can be purchased at most office supply stores) and ask the students to write down what they would like to hear from God. Ask them to share what they have written. Flip to the backside of the awards certificate and ask the students to write down what they would hear if they saw God today.

Pass out blank sheets of paper. Ask the students to draw two footprints on the paper. In the footprints, write out resolutions that would help them move from the back of the awards certificate to the front of the awards certificate. Give students 2 minutes each to share the things they have written.



*"Dear Lord, thank You for humbling yourself to take the form of a man for the sake of our salvation. Thank You for setting an example of humility and servitude. As we leave this classroom and walk out into the real world of school, work and activities, let us remember Your teachings. Keep us away from the dark, muddy roads of temptation and let us not stray from your voice. Let us serve one another and love as You love us. Dear Lord, preserve your sheep! Help us stay on the path toward heaven so we may see you face to face one day. Amen."*