

Loving Others to Restoration



David Wilkerson (1931-2011) December 12, 2019

"[Jesus] 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" (John 13:4-5). Some devout Christians follow this example and make a custom of "foot washing" services. While this is certainly commendable, there is a deeper meaning to be learned from this practice. In fact, after Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he asked them, "Do you know what I've just done to you?" (13:12).

Jesus was giving us an example of what he most desires of us — "taking up the towel." There are several hidden lessons we can learn from our Lord as we look at this phrase. The Word tells us: "Through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). And, "[Submit] to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21). We often gloss over certain truths in the Bible because we don't understand their meaning and in doing so, we miss their power. How many of us really know what it means to serve one another in love? And how are we supposed to submit to one another in the fear of God? As we better understand what Jesus did in washing his disciples' feet, we will understand these concepts of service and submission. You see, this means much more than merely taking orders from or being accountable to a higher authority. Rather, these glorious truths are unlocked only in the context of "taking up the towel."

Another lesson Jesus taught when he washed the disciples' feet was how to obtain unity of fellowship in the body of Christ. When Peter drew back from having Jesus wash his feet, the Lord said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8). Jesus was showing his mercy and love through washing away Peter's feelings of worthlessness, anguish and despair.

In washing the dirt off the disciples' feet, Jesus was also teaching the comfort of transgressions removed. Many Christians today are in the same condition as Peter, after being overtaken by a sin. If you want to be merciful — to take up the towel to restore a brother or sister — you don't need to know the details of their sin. Jesus did not ask any of his disciples how they got dirty, he wanted only to accomplish their cleansing. His love for them was unconditional, just as it is for you. And just as it should be for those we encounter with his love.

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