

Volume III

The Essentials



Ordinance of Church

We'd like to welcome you to the educational series "The Essentials". These series of study books are designed to equip the believers of Christ with the essentials to live the life the scripture say we should have. This series will also help us to understand and embrace our anointed call to change our view about ourselves and give ourselves to become ambassadors of change in world around us.

To properly understand the calling of Christ it is mandatory that we give ourselves to grasping some clarity related to His call. The central resource to discover what Christ has called us to is the Bible. In the pages of the bible, we will discover that we have been made for a purpose. As a matter of fact, "we have been made for this time and this time is made for us". Since so much of who we are and who we are to be is held within the sacred scripture, we must develop a new mind-set in seeking to learn about our Lord's plan for us.

We must embrace this reality: “Our assured purpose is rooted in the word of God. To understand our assignment and the father’s destined will for us, it is imperative that we engage the searching of the scriptures as a lifetime journey”. 1 John 3:2 ...it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him...

There are principle fundamentals that God has laid out for our benefit that will help us to understand that “there is nothing that has happened to us that God is not aware of and has made to work for us”. We discover these truths as we study our God and His ways.

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ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this lesson is to help give the new believer an understanding of the Christian ordinances we observe at Church of God Worship Center: Baptism, Communion and Foot Washing.

We call these three practices ordinances because Jesus commanded His disciples; therefore, all believers are to perform them. We will look into the reasons why we practice them, and what the benefits are to us who make up the Church.

I. WATER BAPTISM: (Matthew 28:19-20)

A. What Is It?

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. It usually occurs at the beginning of a Communion service.

B. Why Do We Do It?

We believe that it sets forth in picture the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and shows forth the believers union with Christ through their obedience to Him, giving evidence of their salvation, being dead to sin and that they will now walk in newness of life.

C. What Are The Benefits?

It gives us an opportunity to publicly show obedience to God. Jesus commanded that all believers be baptized. Our obedience to Him is an outward show of our love for Him, and Jesus will show His love for us. (John 14:21)

It provides a way for us to tell others that we have entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We do it publicly to show we are not ashamed to be associated with Jesus and our other brothers and sisters in the Lord. (Acts 16:13-15)

REVIEW:

a) Christian water baptism is the _____ of a believer, in _____, in the

name of the

_____.

b) What are the two benefits of water baptism?

II. HOLY COMMUNION: (Matthew 26:26-18)

A. What Is It?

Our Communion Service, also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, is usually held on the fourth Sunday of every month. Communion itself is served at the end of the service and is open to all who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. At the direction of the Pastor, those appointed to assist with Communion assemble at the front of the sanctuary to help serve the elements (bread and grape juice) to the congregation. After everyone has been served, the Pastor

leads the congregation in the partaking of the elements.

B. Why Do We Do It?

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the Lord's death to be observed until He comes again, that the elements--the bread and the juice--are symbols of His broken body and shed blood, and that our observance is a pictorial testimony of the believer's fellowship with the Savior who was crucified for them. We believe the Lord's Supper is for those believers in Christ who have been redeemed and are walking in obedience to Him.

(Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 10:16- 21, 11:17-34)

C. What Are The Benefits?

When we receive Communion, we are obeying the command of Jesus to "do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

Our benefits lie in remembering what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do:

Past: It is a reminder of Christ's death for us that brought about the promise of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God.

Present: A reminder of our present fellowship with Christ and of His presence with us. Jesus continues to be the source of our spiritual life, without Him we cannot live the Christian life.

Future: Sharing together in the Lord's Supper not only reminds us of what Christ has done for us, but it helps us to anticipate our future with Jesus when all our enemies (sin, Satan, the world, and death) are put under His feet, and we live with Him eternally.

REVIEW:

a) Another name for the Communion service is _____.

b) The Lord's Supper is for those _____ in Christ who have been baptized and are walking in _____ to Him.

c) Name one of the benefits of participating in the Communion: _____

III. FOOT WASHING: (John 13:12-15)

A. What Is It?

Foot washing is observed during our Maundy Thursday service, which is the Thursday prior to Easter. After a time of prayer, the men and women separate and go to areas in the church where basins, water and towels have been prepared. Hymns are sung as the Saints follow Christ's example and take turns washing and drying each other's feet. Soap and extra basins are available for washing the hands afterwards.

B. Why Do We Do It?

Jesus washed His disciples' feet to teach them a lesson about the importance of humbling themselves to serve others. Jesus demonstrated that it was not beneath Him to kneel and wash the disciples' feet. Therefore, it should not be beneath us to humbly serve

others for the sake of the Gospel. That same lesson is taught every time we partake in the ceremonial foot washing.

C. What Are The Benefits?

We learn to be like Jesus and to serve one another with humility; we are reminded not to seek our own place, and we receive the blessing of God through obedience to Christ's mandate to serve.

D. What Does Washing The Feet Signify?

From the Greek text, we see that two Greek words are used for washing. John 13:10 makes that clear in the NASB and NIV, but the KJR translated both as wash. One word means to bathe (louw) and the other means to wash (niptw).

By way of correlation, there are two spiritual washings. The first is the bath of regeneration. This happens when we are saved. When we come to the recognition that we are sinners with no hope of ever earning God's approval, and we then trust in Christ's death and resurrection. We are then welcomed into the family of God. Then, we

become Christians. The second spiritual washing is performed when we confess our sins like in 1 John 1:9. This is what the foot washing symbolizes. That is why Christ says the one who has bathed (is saved) needs only to wash his feet (confess his sins).

Notice in John 13:10 that He also says, "And you are clean, but not all of you."

John explains this in Verse 11. Judas had never had a bath. He did not believe in Christ. Christ then sits down and explains what He has just done. Read John 13:12-17.

E. How Does This Relate To Us?

The most obvious application is that we are to serve others. John 13:13-15 plainly says that Christ did it as an example for us to follow. I think this also shows us how we are to relate to our world. In spite of our personal problems, in spite of the evil around us and the evil that has been done to us, we still have the responsibility to act correctly and minister to others. Too often we react wrongly--we have anger and/or bitterness at those who have wronged us. We try to

manipulate those around us so that we don't get hurt again.

F. The Keys To Effective Counseling

We need to confess our wrong reactions, and then take the right course of action. Over the past few months, I have learned that this is one of the keys to effective counseling. The first step is helping a person uncover the past so they can see how they were mistreated-- not so they can be mad at the one who mistreated them, but so they can do the second step. The second step is helping the person understand how they reacted wrongly to the mistreatment or abuse. The third step is bringing the person to the point where they can confess their wrong reaction. With a clean slate, the person can move on with their life and learn how to correctly handle these bad memories and how to cope with life.

This is why confession is so important. To confess our sins means to say the same thing about our condition that God does. We must

agree with God that it is wrong and that there is no way for self-justification. We must believe that there is no sin too big for God to forgive. Erwin Lutzer says, "We may even believe that it is a mark of humility to think that our sins are greater than God's grace, but if we doubt God's ability to forgive, that's pride and unbelief, not humility." Whenever we think we have sinned too greatly to be forgiven, we doubt the foresight of God. We are assuming that He did not consider the particularly scandalous sins that we would commit. We must believe that God is faithful and will keep His promise to forgive.

G. What Is The Purpose Of Cleansing?

The primary purpose of cleansing is to fellowship with God. John 13:8 shows that without confession we have no fellowship with God. Without God, we are left to our own resources. Jeremiah 2:13 says, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken

cisterns that cannot hold water." Those broken cisterns are our own methods of handling life--being shy or outgoing, an alcoholic or addict, etc. But, the cisterns are broken. We cannot make it on our own.

H. Reasons Why Christians Don't Confess
Some of the reasons why Christians don't confess and consequently live out of fellowship with Christ are: Immaturity-- They have the "I'm going to mess up anyway" attitude, so they let the sins pile up. Some don't realize the need to confess regularly. Some call it "keeping short accounts with God." Don't wait until you have a whole bunch of sins saved up; Unbelief--They don't believe God will really forgive and forget. This person might say, "I've committed the same sin so many times that I feel embarrassed to keep going to God about the same matter; Ignorance--"I'll get back in fellowship when I'm sure I will be able to hold out." God is the one who removes the sin. We just keep confessing and keep trying;

Deception--"I want to enjoy the world first before I settle down to serious commitment to Christ." Haven't we all said these things to ourselves at one time or another? Deception is a strong word, but it fits. When we think like this, we have swallowed the lie of Satan that says life will be better without God.

How hard is it to be cleansed?

It is very hard, but not hard for God. It is hard for us because it takes humility.

In Romans 6-8 we see something that sheds some light on the subject. After discussing in chapter 5 how we are justified by faith because of Christ's work on the cross, Paul asks in chapter 6 if we should sin that grace might increase. The obvious answer is no. In chapter 7 he tells us how he struggles to do the right thing and not sin, but he can't control himself. Notice that the most predominant word in chapter 7, especially Romans 7:15-25, is the word "I." This tells me that Paul couldn't do it on his own. He could not control his old nature. Notice the topic of chapter 8, and the most

predominant word in chapter 8. The primary topic is power over sin and victorious living. The word "I" is only found once in verse 18 where Paul says that he considers the suffering of this world nothing in comparison to the glory to be revealed, but the word "Spirit" appears a number of times. What we see is "I" can't do it in chapter 7, but the "Spirit" can do it in chapter 8. So, don't wait to confess when you think *you* will be able to overcome the sin.

Let's go back to the foot washing example. Some may be wondering if we are supposed to wash each other's feet in our day. I don't think so. That was a cultural thing and was necessary before you reclined at the table and stuck your dirty feet under someone else's nose. I think the point of John 13:15 is that we are to serve others, but some people do believe we are supposed to do this in the church today and so they hold foot washing ceremonies in the church a few times a year. But, do you know what they do?

Before the ceremony everyone does just like you and I would--they wash their own feet, trim and clean their toenails. Why? It is humiliating to have someone wash your dirty feet! We can carry this analogy a little further and correlate it to our spiritual washing: It is humiliating to come to God and confess our sins. It is a blow to our pride. We have a tendency to want to clean up our act before we ever come to Him and confess as if He will be more apt to forgive us and accept us if we are working on the problem ourselves. This is why Christians try to live life on their own without God's help. They are too proud.

In John 13:16 Jesus says, "A slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him." Jesus seems to needlessly state the obvious, but the disciples were in fact acting like they were the important ones. Verse 17 reminds us that it is not enough to know these facts--we must put our knowledge into practice.

REVIEW

a) Our observance of foot washing takes place during our _____ service, which is just before Easter.

b) Why did Jesus wash His disciples' feet?

c) Name one benefit of foot washing.

REFLECTION:

What does partaking of Communion mean to you?

b) How has being baptized changed your life?

c) How do you think it will make you feel to participate in our Foot Washing service?