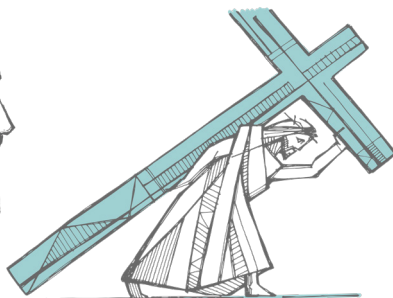


HEAD, HANDS AND FEET

WHAT PETER AND JESUS DID NEXT

ROBERT STREET



HEAD, HANDS AND FEET

WHAT PETER AND JESUS DID NEXT

TEN REFLECTIONS FOR USE
IN LENT OR HOLY WEEK
WITH ROBERT STREET

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The General of The Salvation Army

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Head, Hands and Feet may be used for personal reading and reflection. It can also be used for group study, with those participating sharing their thoughts on the discussion topics.

The subjects have been selected to stimulate thought about the depth of love found in Jesus Christ and how he deals with our inadequacies.

By contrasting the actions of Peter and the disciples with those of Jesus, we can see more clearly how Jesus refused to be distracted from doing his Father's will and how we can learn from his total commitment to us and our salvation.

There is also a post-Resurrection study to follow through Peter's spiritual renewal and reconciliation with Jesus.

You may find it useful to write down your responses to the discussion points.



1. HEAD, HANDS AND FEET – A REQUEST

DID Peter have any idea of the implications of asking Jesus to wash his hands and head as well as his feet? Was his spontaneous outburst of total identification with Jesus matched by an equally strong understanding of what his request implied? It seems unlikely.

Peter had always had trouble in accepting uncomfortable truths about Jesus. He followed him and believed in him. He knew authenticity when he saw it and realised Jesus was no fake messiah. Whatever the Kingdom was that Jesus had come to announce, Peter could tell it was no figment of Jesus' imagination. The values Jesus taught, the way he lived, and his unequalled understanding of human nature, indicated that he was utterly genuine and worthy of his devotion. Whatever Jesus was trying to achieve, Peter wanted to be part of it.

He had witnessed the beginning of Jesus' healing ministry, watching as Jesus restored

his sick mother-in-law to robust health (Mark 1:29-31). When Jesus began to gain in popularity Peter could hardly contain his excitement, so much so that he interrupted Jesus' early-morning prayer time to tell him that 'everyone is looking for you!' (v 37). Not only did he believe in Jesus, he wanted everyone else to believe in him as well.

But when, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus confirmed the concept of a sacrificial pathway for himself, Peter wasn't so sure this fitted in with his own ideas of who Jesus was and what he should become. Jesus was so good, so worthy of adulation, so outstanding, that any move to undermine, deride or hurt him was unthinkable. Peter protested – forcibly. Mark's Gospel tells us that 'Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him' (8:32). When Jesus responded with even greater firmness, his words spoke directly to the heart of Peter's problem. 'You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men' (v 33). Peter was excited

'Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"' (John 13:8-9).

by the glamour of being in the inner circle of 'the Christ' and all that might mean, but he wasn't so keen on being identified with a loser, someone who had given in to the idea of being killed by corrupt authority figures (v 31).

So it isn't surprising that when, at the Last Supper, on the evening prior to the Crucifixion, Jesus knelt to wash Peter's dusty feet, Peter protested again. For him, everything about the action was wrong – Jesus kneeling, Peter sitting, the Lord serving, the disciple being served. Peter's view of the Kingdom of God didn't stretch to the King doing the work!

Peter's reaction may not have been spontaneous this time. He had been given time to think about it while he observed the other disciples having their feet washed (John 13:2-5). He wanted to talk about it. 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' (v 6). Jesus understood his confusion and took time to reassure him: 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand' (v 7). Tellingly, this wasn't enough to quell Peter's concerns and out came embarrassing defiance: 'No, you shall never wash my feet' (v 8). Peter had taken his stand!

The reply Jesus gave, in effect, gave Peter an ultimatum, because it meant he could no longer avoid uncomfortable truths about the nature of Jesus and his Kingdom. 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me'. It was a case of all or nothing. If Peter wanted to belong to Jesus, to be part of him and all he stood for, he would need to become like him. He would have to surrender his thoughts and dreams of glory, and embrace the loving, serving nature of his Master.

Peter asked for an even fuller washing – head, hands and feet – but had he understood the lesson?

KEY BIBLE READING

John 13:1-9

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Mark 1:16-20, 29-39

Mark 8:31-37

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the implications of total identity with someone else? What does it involve? What are the implications of promising total identification with Jesus?
2. How difficult is it to come to terms with the fact that following Jesus doesn't guarantee special favours or an easy path through life?
3. Why might such expectations be inappropriate or misguided?
4. Could there be some aspects of discipleship about which you are in denial?
5. How well do you manage to identify and separate 'the things of God' and the 'things of men'? (Mark 8:33)
6. Try to imagine Peter's thought patterns and inner battles alongside his hopes for Jesus and himself.
7. What can we learn from Jesus about the way he dealt with Peter?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

More than all else I would become
The servant of my servant-Lord;
My highest glory his reproach,
To do his will my best reward.

Edward Henry Joy

The Song Book of The Salvation Army (SASB) 617 v 4

NOTES





2

○ HEAD, HANDS AND FEET – AT THE MEAL

DURING the days leading up to the Last Supper, not everyone was against Jesus. The jubilation of Palm Sunday, with the celebratory ride into Jerusalem, showed that Jesus was popular. And although opposition to him hardened through the week, mainly from religious leaders, John's Gospel tells us that 'many even among the leaders believed in him' (12:42). But they were too frightened to say so in case they were excommunicated from the synagogue.

After another day of teaching, and intrigue and reactions to their Master, the disciples gathered for their evening meal. More than likely they were unsettled, unsure and looking for reassurance from Jesus. John's Gospel shows that Jesus was ready to give it.

Their feet would have been tired and dirty when they were served at table. Their feet also remained where they were. No one got up to offer any foot washing. This

seems to have been a natural response (or non-response) after a tiring day. No one felt like volunteering or making the extra effort needed. Perhaps there was a vague thought that someone else would take the initiative, but nothing happened. Their feet didn't move.

Their hands were busily engaged in ensuring the food was enjoyed and their hands may also have been used to emphasise strong points being made in their conversation. Luke's Gospel tells us that at the Passover meal 'a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest' (22:24). They weren't too tired to argue, or perhaps they argued because they were tired – and worried. Whatever the case, Jesus and his needs – with all that was going on in his life – wasn't occupying their thoughts. They were concerned for themselves.

'Jesus ... got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist' (John 13:4).

How Jesus dealt with their poor behaviour was remarkable. They needed to be taught a lesson, but he taught it with a graciousness they didn't deserve. While they panicked and argued, Jesus remained calm and in control. John explains where the confidence came from. 'Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God' (13:3). Jesus knew who he was and where he was going – whatever would happen next.

Unlike the disciples, his feet didn't stay where they were. He 'got up' from the meal and moved among them (v 4). His hands were busy too. He 'took off' his outer clothing, wrapped a towel round his waist, poured water into a basin and washed their feet, also drying them with the towel (vv 4-5). With no outer garments and a towel round his waist, kneeling at their feet, he did not look like an authority figure – of any kind. Yet this was the real Jesus – the Servant Lord.

Once the washing was over, Jesus put on his garments, assumed his place again, and asked, 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' (v 12). No one is recorded as answering. When Jesus continued, it was

to re-emphasise that he was indeed their 'Teacher' and 'Lord' (v 13). Nothing had changed. What needed to change was their perception of what that meant and who he was.

It would be revealing to have seen the disciples' faces as he told them that what he had done for them, they were to do for one another. They must do away with arguing who was the greatest, or wondering who the best disciple was, and concentrate on serving one another. The implications for this small band of rivals were staggering and, if they would take note and obey, also life-changing.

Jesus concluded the lesson with: 'Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them' (v 17). It is the same for us.

KEY BIBLE READING

John 13:1-17

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Luke 22:24-28

John 12:42-46

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What kind of situations find us not voicing our faith in Jesus for fear of the consequences?
2. How might the disciples' vague thoughts that someone else may take the initiative be reflected in our own attitudes to service?
3. Compare the gracious way in which a possibly disappointed Jesus taught the disciples a lesson they needed to learn, with your reactions to those who disappoint you.
4. Picture Jesus with no outer garments and a towel around his waist kneeling at your feet. Reflect on what effect this action may have on you.
5. How important was it that Jesus reminded the disciples of his Lordship when explaining the meaning of what he had just done? (v 13)
6. Jesus had full confidence in his Father. How does our confidence in God, or lack of it, affect the way we relate to others?
7. How blessed are you when you serve other people in Jesus' name?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

Great God, in Christ you call our name
And then receive us as your own,
Not through some merit, right or claim,
But by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy seat
And find you kneeling at our feet.

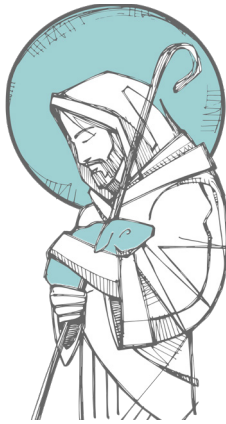
Brian Wren

SASB 335 v 3

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NOTES





3

○ JUDAS – HEAD, HANDS AND FEET

JUDAS had his feet washed – by Jesus. What was he thinking? As Jesus knelt at his feet, half dressed and as a servant, was Judas now looking down on him in his heart as well as literally? Was this generous act of love interpreted as weakness, not befitting of a leader of men or someone who had ambitions to change the world? Could it have been the final twist in Judas's relationship with Jesus, helping him conclude that either Jesus would never realise his hopes, or that he needed stronger, more decisive action to achieve them? We can't be sure. What we do know is that he was already in collusion with the religious authorities to force an outcome – one way or another. The head, hands and feet of Judas were going to prove significant over the following hours.

When Jesus announced at the meal that 'one of you' is going to betray me (v 21), there was genuine shock among the disciples. John tells us they were 'at

a loss' to know what to think (v 22). John was sitting close to Jesus and asked who it was. After letting John know that it was the person to whom he would give some bread, Jesus duly gave bread to Judas. He was the betrayer, and after receiving the bread in his hand, his washed feet took him out of the building and towards the chief priests and temple guards with whom he made final arrangements to lead them to Jesus.

Although Jesus knew of the planned betrayal, mentioning that it would 'fulfil Scripture', and had set the operation in motion by handing Judas the bread with a message to get this done quickly (v 27), it shouldn't be assumed that God forced Judas to sin. Such an action would have been out of keeping with the divine nature (Romans 6:1-2). Jesus allowed it to happen. God does not force any of us into wrong. What Judas did he did out of choice and bad decision making.

'I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me' (John 13:21).

Later, in the evening, Judas's feet brought him to the Garden of Gethsemane. He had earlier told the guards that he would kiss Jesus on arrival, so Jesus could be identified in the darkness. But as he moved to do so, Jesus had some words for him. 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Luke 22:48). Whatever thoughts were in Judas's head earlier in the evening about Jesus, he now had something else to think about. Jesus was calm, assured and direct with his question. It wasn't long before Judas would regret what he had done. Events were to take over and produce a different outcome from the one Judas had imagined. Perhaps it was on hearing Jesus' question that misgivings first entered his head.

Judas had made the mistake of thinking that he knew better than Jesus, of not waiting for God's timing, of not trusting in what God had planned for him and every other living person.

Later that night, when the authorities wouldn't take back the 'blood money' payment for the betrayal, Judas's misery was complete. Having confessed his sin at betraying innocent blood, Judas was dismissed by the priests with a

callous, 'What is that to us? That's your responsibility' (Matthew 27:4). Their lack of concern showed their lack of integrity, and Matthew's Gospel continues: 'Then he (Judas) went away and hanged himself' (v 5).

His remorse was total. He had no one to turn to and died not knowing that the world's salvation was about to become a glorious, eternal reality.

KEY BIBLE READING

John 13:18-30

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Luke 22:47-48

Matthew 27:1-5

FOR DISCUSSION

1. As God gives us free will, he does not force any of us to sin. Why do you think he has chosen to do things this way? (See Romans 6:1-2.)
2. By giving us free will, God doesn't force any of us to love or serve him. Consider the reasons why. (See Revelation 3:20.)
3. Are there times when our prayers might appear to be trying to force God's hand or change his mind? Why is this a foolish approach to prayer?
4. Somewhere along the road of following Jesus, Judas lost his way. What went wrong and what dangers might we need to guard against in our discipleship?
5. Think of situations in which we may be prone to think we know better than God, or perhaps unthinkingly act as if we do.
6. Sometimes when speaking of God's timing we give the impression that we are expecting him to naturally do what pleases us, but in his own good time. What dangers might there be with such an assumption?
7. Discuss the place of repentance and what it can achieve.

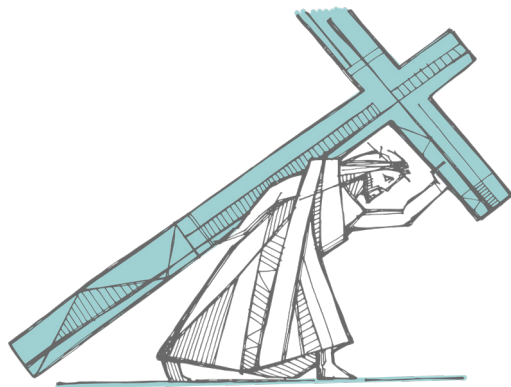
A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

Hold thou my feet, let there be no returning
Along the path which thou hast bid me tread;
Train thou my mind, I would be ever learning
The better way thy fame to spread;
Keep thou my heart ablaze with holy burning
That love for souls may ne'er be dead.

Arch Wiggins
SASB 628 v 2

NOTES





4

○ HEAD, HANDS AND FEET IN CONFUSION

IF the revelation that there was a traitor in the camp wasn't shocking enough, Jesus now confirmed the disciples' worst fears. The time had arrived for him to leave them. Jesus was going to die at the hands of those who saw him as an enemy. He had tried to prepare them for this moment with earlier warnings, but the confirmation still came as a massive, unwelcome blow. They were confused and worried.

Peter protested and wanted to talk things through. 'Lord, where are you going?' (John 13:36). Once again Jesus tried some reassurance. 'Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.' The promise wasn't enough. Peter wanted a different solution.

It was hardly surprising. Peter had readily accepted Jesus' call of 'follow me' and had given firm allegiance for nearly three years. His feet had covered hundreds of miles – perhaps thousands – as they followed the

path set out by Jesus. But now the path had come to a stop. Jesus was leaving them. They couldn't go with him – he said so. So was their following suddenly not wanted? Where is the fairness in that? Surely, Jesus wouldn't abandon them? Yet there was no doubt that Jesus was leaving them – and at the most crucial of times. The future was now bleak and uncertain.

Peter wanted to know 'why?' and said so, adding, 'I will lay down my life for you' (v 37). His loyalty was still solid, despite all the fearful, negative feelings flowing through him. Even so, it was a promise Peter wouldn't manage to keep that night and Jesus told him so (v 38).

The scene was now set for a night of horrors, misjudgement and failure. Peter's loyalty was seemingly not wanted – at least for now. What was he supposed to do? The certainties and security that had come with following Jesus had vanished.

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come”
(John 13:33).

His wholehearted embracing of the washing Jesus had given him seemed a distant, irrelevant memory. What was the point?

In retrospect, it seems likely that Peter – with the other disciples – was the first among countless followers through the centuries to have their clear, uncomplicated dedication to Jesus challenged by a sudden turn of events. He hadn’t read the signs, nor dared to embrace them, when Jesus had taught the realities of discipleship and the nature of his Lordship. History shows that Peter isn’t the only follower to make the mistake of closing his eyes to the servant nature of Jesus, or to the same pathway for his followers.

For now, the feet that set off on a journey of discipleship from the shores of Galilee (Matthew 4:18-22) seemed not to be needed and the vow that hands that would fight to the death for him was dismissed by Jesus. Peter’s head was in turmoil, to say nothing of his heart. The challenges of the next few hours were beyond Peter’s resources and understanding. But they would help him see himself in a truer, fuller light. A subsequent post-Resurrection

meeting with Jesus would give opportunity for honest assessment and a thorough recalculation of who he was. Placed in context, the unwelcome events of that terrible night can be seen to have played a crucial part in making him the wise, caring, strong leader he eventually became.

KEY BIBLE READING

John 13:33-38

RELATED BIBLE READING

Matthew 4:18-22

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How total was your commitment to Jesus when you first accepted his invitation to 'follow me'?
2. To what extent do you think you understood the challenges that might face you as a disciple?
3. Imagine Peter's confusion when Jesus told him that he couldn't follow – for now. Try to recall instances when your own pathway may have become confused or perplexing. What have these instances taught you?
4. Do we have a tendency to make promises to God that he doesn't require? If so, what might they be like?
5. How best can we help others who may be troubled by doubts and uncertainty? What kind of things would it be unwise or unhelpful to suggest?
6. To what extent should we expect 'fairness' in life?
7. When Jesus had taught the realities of discipleship and the nature of his Lordship, Peter and the disciples found them difficult to understand or accept. Might we have similar problems?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

There are shadows on the earthly pathway
Where, at times uncertainly, we tread;
In perplexity we halt and linger
Till our faith again is upward led.
For the heights of truth are ever calling,
And celestial radiance from afar
On our pilgrim way is gently falling
For our comfort where the shadows are.

Lily Kells Sampson

SASB 531 v 2

NOTES





5

◦ HEAD, HANDS AND FEET IN GETHSEMANE (1)

WE don't know whether anyone washed Jesus' feet that evening. What we are told is that the disciples' recently washed feet walked with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane by crossing the Kidron Valley. These feet would now get dirty again and they were still tired, as were their heads. Despite Jesus urging them to stay awake and pray with him, the disciples fell asleep (Luke 22:45).

Going to Gethsemane served two main purposes. Firstly, it was where Jesus would pray to gain strength from his Father for what was to come that night. Secondly, it was where Jesus would finally be arrested or 'captured' to face trial.

As Jesus prayed, he still had questions in his head for his Father. The prospect of capture, being whipped, beaten and mocked, in addition to being crucified, was horrifying. Jesus wanted to know if there was another way, so he prayed: 'My Father,

if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me' (Matthew 26:39). He added: 'Yet not as I will, but as you will.' Horrendous though his ordeal would be, Jesus nevertheless put his Father's will before his own – which, in effect, was putting our salvation before any consideration for himself. This is why after giving encouragement to the disciples to pray too, he returned having prayed a more resigned prayer: 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done' (v 42).

Mark's Gospel shows that Jesus had begun his prayer time with his Father by acknowledging that 'everything is possible for you' (14:36). However, what he also acknowledged was that even though some things are possible they are not desirable. Avoiding the pain of Calvary may have been possible, but there was a greater work to be done than the preaching and healing if salvation was to be achieved. If ever

'When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley' (John 18:1).

we are tempted to use the text 'with God all things are possible' (Matthew 19:26) as a 'cure-all' for our desires, we should remember that even God's Son received – and accepted – the answer 'No'. In all our prayers God's will must be supreme if we are to seek and learn from him what is for our ultimate and lasting good.

Jesus' calm and composure under extreme duress were evident throughout the Gethsemane experience, as was his never-tiring concern for others. As we know, his urging of the disciples to support him in prayer failed to gain a worthy response. They fell asleep – not just once but, according to Mark, three times (14:41). Had they not noticed that his prayers were draining every ounce of energy from him? Luke tells us: 'And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground' (22:44). Where was their thinking, their faith, their support?

Jesus' response to their failure was to affirm them as people! 'The spirit is willing, but the body is weak,' he told them (Mark 14:38). Beyond their shame he could see their true hearts – the spirit was willing, and he told them so. The importance of this

affirmation would have been prominent in their minds in the days that followed. Next time we are let down and disappointed by those on whose trusted support we rely, we have a precious, inspiring example to remember – and to put into practice.

KEY BIBLE READING

Luke 22:39-46

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Mark 14:32-42

Matthew 26:36-46

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how strength for living and life's trials may be gained through prayer.
2. Consider how we might not notice or be alive to the needs of others who would welcome our support.
3. Jesus acknowledged in his prayer that everything was possible to God, yet he didn't demand that his human desire to avoid the pain of crucifixion should be granted. What does this tell us about the way in which to approach God with our requests?
4. On making your requests to God, how fully do you pray that his will is done above all and how well do you trust God with the answer?
5. Discuss how answers to prayer must be seen in the context of God allowing mankind to have free will.
6. Imagine how you would have felt had your most trusted friends let you down in your hour of need. What does Jesus' positive response to the disciples tell us about him and what does it tell us about how we should react to being let down?
7. Reflect on the fact that Jesus continued to attend to the needs of those around him even when he was under the most intense pressure himself.

VERSES TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

There in the garden of tears,
My heavy load he chose to bear;
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.

Graham Kendrick

SASB 165 v 2 and chorus

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NOTES



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.



6

○ HEAD, HANDS AND FEET IN GETHSEMANE (2)

AFTER Jesus had finished praying in Gethsemane, many more feet arrived – marching. They belonged to Roman soldiers and the Temple guard, accompanying some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. Carrying torches, lanterns and weapons, they would have made a formidable, even threatening, sight in the darkness of the garden.

Yet it was these newcomers who were the most startled. On their arrival, Jesus took the initiative and asked who they wanted. When they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth', he wasted no time in providing the information. His 'I am he' (John 18:4-6) left them in no doubt as to his true identity. They recoiled, drew back and even 'fell to the ground'. Jesus was, in effect, inviting them to approach him. This wasn't what they had been expecting. They panicked.

Taken at face value, this seems to have been a massive overreaction. Did they hold

Jesus in awe? Had they seen him in action in the city and been impressed? Were they uncomfortable about their orders? Were they there only because their employment depended on their obedience, while inwardly they were fighting to suppress their fears or misgivings?

Jesus remained in control of his own arrest, arranging for the release of his disciples who, according to Mark (14:50), 'deserted him and fled' once he was seized. The feet that had been lovingly washed, were running away – as fast as they could – from the one who washed them.

Prior to the mass exodus, Peter had intervened along the lines he had earlier promised. In an unwanted and vain attempt to defend Jesus, he struck out at the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear (John 18:10). The hands that Peter had asked to be washed, that he had promised to fight with and defend Jesus

'Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear' (John 18:10).

to the death, had merely complicated the issue. Once more Peter received a rebuke from Jesus. The command came to 'put your sword away!', with a reminder that Jesus was going to give his life whatever Peter and others might think. The futility of a mere human thinking God needed his protection hadn't yet registered with Peter. Jesus used his hands to repair the situation and bring healing to the servant (Luke 22:51).

Peter was yet to experience further painful moments in the courtyard, but even at this point he was needing to embrace truths about himself, especially in relation to his influence and importance. However deeply Peter wanted to share in what Jesus was doing, only Jesus had the authority, credentials and power to do it. Only Jesus – Son of God, the true personification of love – could bring salvation to the world. Only he could reconcile mankind with God. It was not within Peter's gift, qualifications or strength to achieve this.

When Jesus had told him earlier, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' (John 13:33), he was simply telling him a fact. There was no way in which Peter could battle evil and win, surrender his life, conquer death and rise to eternal life, having achieved

what only God in Christ could achieve. Whenever we are tempted to trust in our own goodness, we can thank Peter for reminding us not only of our inadequacies, but also of the power, love and grace of God extended through Jesus for us all.

KEY BIBLE READING

John 18:1-11

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Mark 14:48-52

1 John 4:7-16

FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Roman soldiers and the Temple guard seem to have been in awe of Jesus, yet they didn't appear able to see him for who he really was. How does this relate to people's understanding of and reactions to Jesus today?
2. The soldiers and guards may have been uncomfortable about their orders to arrest Jesus, yet they carried them out because that is what they were paid to do. Discuss the difficulties of being required to act in one way by your employers or group to which you belong, and the dictates of your conscience.
3. Discuss reasons why Jesus didn't resist arrest.
4. Peter's intervention by cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant merely complicated matters. Give thought to ways in which we may intervene on God's behalf when he doesn't require us to do so. Does God need defending?
5. Peter learned hard truths about himself on the night of the Crucifixion, but not willingly. How reluctant are we to listen to or pursue truths about ourselves that would improve us if we knew them?
6. Reflect on the fact that not only was no one other than Jesus good enough to bring salvation, but also that we are all the reason why Jesus was killed at Calvary.
7. John's letters tell us that God is love (1 John 4:8). Jesus was the personification of that love. If we want to show him to his world today, what needs to happen to us first (v 12)?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of Heaven and let us in.

Cecil Frances Alexander
SASB 203 v 4

NOTES





7

TALKING HEADS

PETER'S head was still in turmoil as he walked to the high priest's courtyard, where he gained entrance only because John was known and accepted there (John 18:15-16). Unfortunately for Peter, he was recognised by a girl on duty at the door (v 17), but he swiftly denied being a disciple. Nevertheless, he remained, making use of the fire to keep warm. As he made the first denial, it would have been difficult to forget Jesus' prediction that he would deny him three times that night – before the rooster crowed (John 13:38).

It wasn't long before Peter was challenged again. Denial number two took place, but it was when one of the high priest's servants – crucially, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off – made the third challenge (v 26), that Peter made his strongest rebuff: 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' (Luke 22:60). At that moment the rooster crowed, signifying not only

that it was now early morning, but also that Peter had behaved just as Jesus had predicted. Luke's Gospel tells us that just after Peter had made the third denial, Jesus turned and looked straight at him (22:61). Peter didn't know where to put himself. He left the courtyard and wept 'bitterly' (v 62). The head that had asked to be washed, that had promised to die with Jesus and had now denied ever knowing him, was sobbing uncontrollably.

While Peter was denying Jesus, Jesus was facing questions of his own. There are a number of accounts of Jesus' interrogations, but they all demonstrate his resolve not to fall into the traps set for him, combined with total commitment to ensure that his accusers heard the truth about him. He also displayed great calm and even silence when mocked, beaten, taunted and misrepresented. When he chose to speak, he simply stated the truth.

'As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of the disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not"' (John 18:25).

Facing ludicrous and far-reaching accusations from many false witnesses, Jesus opted not to reply (Matthew 26:63), but when Caiaphas, the high priest, charged him on oath – 'by the living God' – to say whether he was the Christ, the Son of God (v 63), Jesus gave an unequivocal 'yes' (v 64). If he was to be crucified that day, the world needed to know what was being done, and so did his accusers.

Sandwiched between two appearances before Pilate, Jesus was sent to Herod, the king. Emboldened by Jesus' plight, Herod treated the whole thing as a joke, asking Jesus to perform miracles, eventually sending him back to Pilate dressed in an elegant robe to add to the verbal mocking he engaged in and encouraged (Luke 23:8-11). Once again, Jesus remained silent and in control.

His encounters with Pilate make fascinating reading for those with an interest in politics, expediency and truth. Pilate saw the trial of Jesus as a Jewish matter. It didn't concern him. If Jesus had different views from Jewish religious orthodox leaders, it wasn't his problem. But he did want to get to the truth, or at least he may have thought he did, until

Jesus told him that he was himself the embodiment of truth (John 18:37). Pilate's dismissive 'What is truth?' response (v 38) indicated a man who hadn't found life's values. Had he truly been searching, the answer was standing right in front of him – willing to talk.

KEY BIBLE READINGS

Matthew 26:57-67

Luke 22:54-62

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

Luke 23:6-12

John 18:28-38

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Compare the different ways Peter and Jesus dealt with questions about their identity.
2. Contrast Peter's wanting to be near Jesus with his firm denial of ever knowing him. What does this say about his state of mind? Might we face similar conflicts of loyalty?
3. Why do you think Jesus remained silent when accusations were being made? Is this something from which we can learn?
4. Consider how Caiaphas, a religious leader, could look Jesus in the eye and be so wrong in his assessment of him? Is it possible that Christians today also make poor judgements regarding the nature and character of Jesus?
5. Herod seemed amused by Jesus in a superior kind of way. People today sometimes give the impression they are 'above' taking Jesus seriously. What might be the reasons?
6. How might Pilate's 'What is truth?' be typical of modern relaxed attitudes to truth and moral law?
7. What temptations might political and religious leaders face today in relation to truth, expediency and public expectations? How might we help or hinder them?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

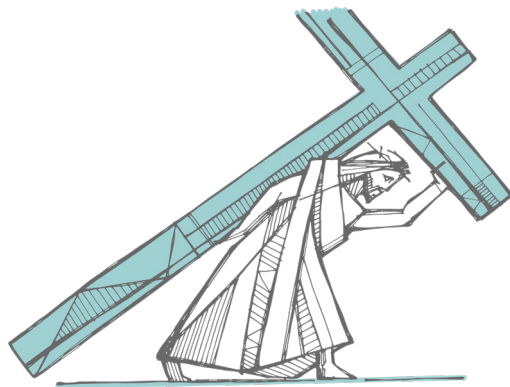
Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on thee call;
To them that seek thee thou art good,
To them that find thee, all in all.

attr Bernard of Clairvaux

SASB 340 v 2

NOTES





8

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE

HAD Caiaphas realised he was speaking to God's Son, he would not only have been more careful with his charge to Jesus 'under oath by the living God' (Matthew 26:63), but also ready to listen. Had Herod wanted to understand who Jesus actually was, he would have taken the opportunity of meeting Jesus more seriously. Had Pilate cared more for truth than his job, he would have listened to his wife's warnings and acted accordingly (Matthew 27:19). But in the same way that truth is said to be 'the first casualty of war', so truth was sacrificed by all the protagonists involved in Jesus' crucifixion – including 'the people'.

While Pilate was hesitating about a death sentence for Jesus, the chief priests and rulers put more pressure on him. They played politics by suggesting that Jesus was a threat to the peace of the nation. If there was disorder and rioting – chaotic social breakdown – because Pilate hadn't sorted out this problem, Caesar would

not be pleased (John 19:12). Although he saw no reason to have Jesus crucified, Pilate was weakening. His head, so cool when questioning Jesus, was in something of a whirl, but he had one last chance to absolve himself of the problem. He could throw open the verdict to the people.

Every year at the Feast, the Governor could release one prisoner at the request of the people. He offered them Jesus. His idea may have worked, except for one thing – the determination of the chief priests and elders to get their man. They 'persuaded' the people to ask for Barabbas – a criminal who was in prison for insurrection in the city and murder (Luke 23:19). At least he was a Roman hater!

The sound of the large crowd chanting for the death of Jesus must have been chilling. Pilate's ploy had gone wrong. Barabbas won. Jesus lost – but so did Pilate. His ceremonial washing of his hands, declaring

“Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” (John 19:14-15).

that he was ‘innocent’ of Jesus’ blood, has never absolved him of the guilt (Matthew 27:24). And ‘the people’, who so readily shouted that they would take the blame, could never have imagined the centuries of unwarranted persecution this would bring to Jewish people everywhere (Matthew 27:25). But that night, that day, truth was sidelined for expediency, self-interest, lack of thought and stark wickedness.

In the midst of it all, Jesus stood, silent and surrendered to his sacrifice. The people had made their judgement. Religious, political, royal, gullible, unthinking, conniving, rich and poor – all played their part. The will to see justice done was absent. It has been absent throughout all the years since, in all kinds of situations and places. We have all played our part. Our heads, hands and feet are not guiltless. Self-centred thoughts, wrong actions and wayward paths – they are known to us all.

The wonder is that God still grants us the blessing of using them – head, hands and feet – in his service, as well as the free will to abuse these and other gifts and skills in any number of ungrateful, unthinking, dubious and hurtful ways. He didn’t give up on us at Calvary. He doesn’t give up on

us today. Love never gives up. That night, and on the cross, the head, hands and feet of Jesus, spoke louder than all the words of hate thrown at him – and they speak forever to the hearts of all who dare to look at him.

KEY BIBLE READING

Matthew 27:11-26

RELATED BIBLE READING

John 19:1-16

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate were in a position to listen to Jesus, yet they all failed to get to the truth. Each was more concerned for his own interests. Consider how easy it might be to miss the truth because we look at situations through the eyes of our own interests.
2. The people seem to have been easily influenced by corrupt leaders. In effect, they were led astray. How awake are we to the possible hidden aims and motives of those who may influence our lives? How can we guard against such influences without becoming cynical?
3. Try to imagine the people of your community chanting for your death without knowledge or caring about the consequences. Discuss your likely feelings and inward reactions, then compare them to Jesus' quiet dignity.
4. Through the centuries Jews have been blamed and persecuted for the death of Jesus, yet unless we each acknowledge our part in creating a need for Jesus' act of salvation, we avoid the truth about ourselves. How deeply do we accept our contribution to Jesus' death?
5. How does your life show that you care about injustice, seen or unseen?
6. Head, hands and feet of those involved in Jesus' pain and crucifixion were used against him or, at best, not for him. Consider how God nevertheless continues to allow us the gift of our faculties, even though he knows we will abuse them.
7. Consider also how Jesus restored people to health – mouth, eyes, ears, hands, feet – knowing that they may well be used in dishonourable ways in the future.

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

What is divine about my creed
If I am blind to human need?
For you have said they serve you best
Who serve the helpless and oppressed.

Malcolm Bale
SASB 1003 v 2

NOTES





9

○ JESUS – HEAD, HANDS AND FEET

THE head that had so impressed the teachers in the temple courts with its wisdom when 12 years old, and had recently castigated the temple authorities for abusing the same courts for financial gain, was now beaten repeatedly with the staff Jesus had been given for his mock coronation by the soldiers (Matthew 27:30). The head that gave sinners back their dignity was now spat upon. The head that revealed truth from God now listened to lie after lie from all sides. The situation was bizarre – ridiculous. But it was real, happening, and leading to its inevitable consequence of murder, on a cross.

The hands that had washed the disciples' feet were bound on Jesus' arrest. Their last free action had been to heal the ear of the high priest's servant. This was nothing new – they had healed and blessed countless people. Now they were fastened (John 18:12). The authorities wanted them out of action. Of what were they afraid?

The feet that had travelled the length and breadth of the nation with a message of love and hope from God the Father, were now marched from one building of authority to another. In each they stood before someone who presumed himself better than the prisoner Jesus. These feet didn't attempt to run away. They didn't kick out. They stood – awaiting the outcome.

On the way to the Crucifixion, the feet stumbled, the hands couldn't hold the cross and the battered head, bowed with exhaustion and pain, wore a crown of thorns. When the Crucifixion took place the hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Their task was completed – except for enduring the excruciating pain that comes with crucifixion. But the head still had more to say – powerful, life-changing, never-to-be-forgotten, eternal words of grace.

'When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"' (Luke 23:33-34).

The dying thief discovered that if all you can do at the end of a 'failed' life is ask God to remember you for his Kingdom, he will (Luke 23:43). The crowd who mocked and jeered and goaded Jesus to 'come down' or 'save himself' witnessed no anger, no counter argument. They simply heard words of forgiveness (v 34). They saw the head that was thirsty refuse a drink to dull its senses, and heard Jesus charge John to take care of his heartbroken mother.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

SASB 208 v 3

For those tempted to dismiss the Crucifixion as fake or staged, they could hear (and we still can hear) the horrifying torment of Jesus expressing his utter forsakenness from God as he took the sins of the world on his shoulders (Matthew 27:46). This was pain, grief and sorrow beyond our comprehension. And before his dying cry, announcing 'It is finished', the greatest act of faith ever known took place – 'Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit' (Luke 23:46). None of us comes close to understanding what our salvation cost Jesus, but Isaac Watts took Jesus' head, hands and feet to help us as we try.

KEY BIBLE READING

Matthew 27:27-50

RELATED BIBLE READING

Luke 23:32-49

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider the irony in binding and suppressing the hands of Jesus and then give thought to the many people who are unable to use their talents or faculties in the service of Jesus because of their circumstances – illness, imprisonment, civil war, oppression and other debilitating factors.
2. Why do some people enjoy mocking, goading and hurting other people when they are in a weakened position? How can we guard against doing this?
3. On the night of his execution, Jesus stood before his accusers, stumbled to Calvary and finally had his feet nailed to a cross of wood. Reflect on the contrast between what happened to Jesus' feet and those of the disciples. Include the foot washing and the running away.
4. Jesus promised the dying thief that he would be with him in Paradise. The thief offered no goodness or good works. He simply turned to Jesus, throwing himself on God's grace. He wasn't disappointed. What lessons are there here for us regarding any thought that we might earn our way to Heaven? (See the second verse of 'When I survey' below.)
5. The love of Christ was evident right up to his dying cry. It was total and all-embracing. How well do we witness to and preach it?
6. Consider the greatest act of faith ever shown, in which Jesus felt utterly forsaken by God the Father, yet dared to commit his Spirit into his care as he died (Luke 23:46). How can this help us when we feel at our weakest or most forgotten or rejected?
7. Read again through the words of the verse 'See from his head, his hands, his feet...', examining each line and, if possible, discussing with others what the writer wanted us to realise.

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

Isaac Watts
SASB 208 v 2

NOTES



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, spanning the width of the page.



10

○ FOLLOW ME – AGAIN!

THERE was a special message for Peter when the resurrection of Jesus was announced. It was given to the women who had come to the tomb expecting to anoint the body. No one else was singled out, although all the disciples were included in the message, which was that Jesus would meet them at Galilee – just as he had previously told them (Mark 16:7).

The last mention of Peter in the Gospels before the Resurrection is of him weeping bitterly when Jesus turned and looked at him, seconds after Peter had denied ever knowing him. Left like that it would be an unhappy, tragic ending. The picture of Jesus looking him in the eye must have been impossible to get out of Peter's head, but now there was hope with this message – 'There you will see him'. That haunting look from Jesus needn't be the last.

The Gospels record various Resurrection appearances of Jesus prior to the meeting

in Galilee, but there is no reference to any like the 'one to one' Peter was to have with the Lord he had abandoned and denied so shamefully. This meeting was necessary. There were things that needed to be said, acknowledged, healed – and promised again.

The first thing to note is that Jesus called Peter by his pre-disciple name, 'Simon son of John' (John 21:15). He was taking him back to the beginning. He also asked the most fundamental of questions. Peter had frequently heard Jesus emphasise that the greatest commandment was to love God (Luke 10:27-28). Now he asked Peter directly – 'Do you love me?'. Peter was sure Jesus knew this already. Three times he was asked. Three times he affirmed his love (John 21:17). Peter was hurt at the repeated questioning. In an effort to end the matter, Peter pleaded, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you'.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” (Mark 16:6-7).

If that was true, and it was, then Peter’s love wasn’t in question. What about his resolve, his reliability, his commitment? Before asking Peter again to follow him, Jesus informed him that the opportunity to keep the brave and bold promises he had made before the Crucifixion was still there. In tender, open, challenging moments, Jesus signified to Peter that if he accepted the new call, he would endure a martyr’s death (John 21:18-19). His hands would be ‘stretched out’ and his feet led to where he didn’t want to go. We can only try to imagine how Peter felt on hearing this. The news was immediately followed by ‘Follow me!’

The book of the Acts of the Apostles shows that Peter accepted the challenge with great courage, but his initial reaction was to ask if John would suffer a similar fate (John 21:21). Jesus’ reply was, in effect, to tell Peter that everyone’s discipleship is different (v 22). No two paths are the same. The call is to follow without knowing in advance the challenges, blessings or consequences. It is not to compare our own path or challenges with those of someone else. In the end, Peter’s meeting with Jesus brought healing and fresh resolve – not so much because God required them, but for

Peter’s own peace of mind, his wholeness. At last Peter knew he truly belonged to his Lord; not just head, hands and feet – but heart and soul as well!

KEY BIBLE READING

John 21:15-23

RELATED BIBLE READINGS

John 21:1-14

Mark 16:1-7

FOR DISCUSSION

1. After the Resurrection everything changed for Peter. There was even an invitation for him to meet Jesus in Galilee (Mark 16:7). Note how keen Peter was to meet Jesus to put things right (John 21:7). We too can be reconciled to God whenever we stray. How keen are we to take the opportunity?
2. In their meeting, Jesus gave Peter his pre-discipleship name and asked three times if he truly loved him – as many times as Peter had denied him. This then was a fresh calling, not to be cluttered with the mistakes of the past. How would this have helped Peter?
3. Peter pledged love for Jesus, but had previously shown lack of resilience. Compare the difference between love and resilience.
4. Jesus wanted to ensure Peter understood the cost of discipleship before saying 'Follow me'. Peter took time to think through his reply by first asking a question. He didn't give an impulsive promise. How would you describe the cost of your discipleship?
5. Peter seemed to imply that if he was to die a martyr's death then so should John (John 21:21). Why is it a mistake to compare our discipleship with that of someone else?
6. Peter had earlier promised (and failed) to physically die with Jesus. In time, he would die for Jesus. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus was not talking about physical death when he told his disciples that 'whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it' (Mark 8:35). What do you think he meant?
7. Throughout their relationship, Jesus shows that his concern is for Peter's wholeness rather than being centred on his own importance. It is the same with us. How well do you understand this – and live by it?

A VERSE TO REFLECT ON AND USE IN PRAYER

Lord, you know that we love you!
Help that love to be true;
Fill our lives with your Spirit's power,
Lord of love, make us strong!
We who to Christ belong.

Howard Davies
SASB 506 chorus

NOTES



REFLECTIONS IN VERSE

BY ROBERT STREET

THE PEOPLE'S WILL

The people's will is sacrosanct,
It's there to be obeyed,
It speaks for all the people,
Decisions we have made.

The people's will is variable
According to the day,
It's fickle, biased, sometimes mixed,
Can change in any way.

The people's will can be a gift
If it agrees with mine,
Can help me with my own sweet will,
Enhance my own design.

The people's will: does it exist?
Who measures strength of view?
Perhaps its aims are suspect,
Unless they work for you?

The people's will, the good Lord said,
Is secondary to God's.
'Thy will be done' found in his prayer,
Puts him and us at odds.

The people's will, requested
By Pilate when unsure,
Was made in haste, encouraged by
Ill will, deceit and more.

The people's will, so vocal,
Was crucify God's Son.
As nails pierced his hands and feet,
The people's will was done!

GOADING

What's the point of goading?
It's meant to cause offence.
Designed to hurt and ridicule,
Provoke, upset, incense.

It doesn't heal divisions,
It doesn't make for peace,
It doesn't lead to harmony
Or help the anger cease.

Reacting to the goading,
Not caring what we say,
Inflames the situation,
We need a better way.

An ugly scene at Calvary,
God's Son, a cross, a hill,
The ultimate in goading,
'Come down! You can't? You will?'

No mocking scorn would triumph,
He gave so we could live,
With love beyond our knowing,
He simply prayed, 'Forgive'.

NOT JUST MY FEET

Not just my feet, but hands and head,
It's all or nothing, Peter said.
Wash me, Lord, and make me clean,
Cleaner than I've ever been.

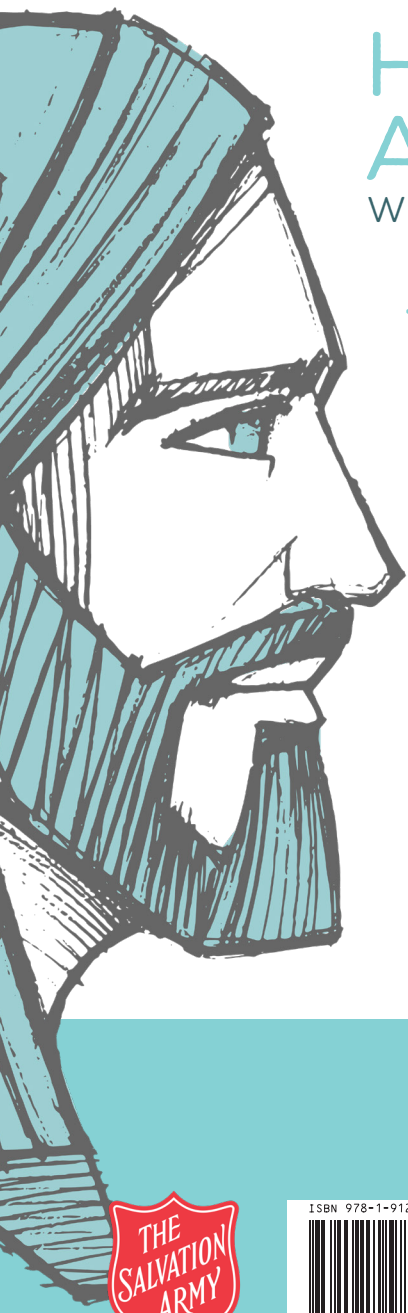
Did Jesus wash head, hands and feet?
Did Peter now feel whole, complete?
Of Jesus did he feel a part
And had he found a servant's heart?

He'd learn from Jesus, do his will,
He'd even climb the holy hill.
He'd live for Jesus, live or die,
On him the Master could rely.

Yet there was nothing to admire
As hands were warmed by courtyard fire,
His nervous feet would run away,
'I know him not!' his head would say.

His Master's hands with cords were bound,
His feet then stumbled on the ground,
His beaten body writhed and bled
While crown of thorns stabbed in his head.

O Peter, see the nails go in
As Jesus pays the price of sin.
And then rejoice that he who died
Accomplished all that you denied.



HEAD, HANDS AND FEET

WHAT PETER AND JESUS DID NEXT

TEN REFLECTIONS FOR USE
IN LENT OR HOLY WEEK
WITH ROBERT STREET

When Peter spontaneously asked Jesus to wash his head and hands as well as his feet, he could hardly have imagined what his head, hands and feet would do in the next few hours. Even less would he have realised what a contrast the head, hands and feet of Jesus would make with his own actions.

This study looks at events of the night before Jesus died and compares the actions of the disciples with the calm, controlled and caring way in which Jesus did what needed to be done.

HEAD, HANDS AND FEET WHAT PETER AND JESUS DID NEXT

ROBERT STREET

