

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet (Jn 13:1-17)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Key Point: Fitness for duty in Jesus eyes is humbly serving in love.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking: Pick a conversation starter for your group.

- What is the dirtiest thing you ever cleaned? What is your favorite thing to clean or what is your favorite cleaning tool?

Steps of faith: Brainstorm about your upcoming walk with Christ.

- Spend some time brainstorming how your group might be able to "wash feet" in our community or our church. Consider setting a goal to determine specifically when your group will strive to do this together.

Start thinking:

- Prior to this episode in the upper room the disciples have been disputing who among them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (See Lk 9:46-48, Lk 22:24-27, Mt 18:1-5, Mt 20:20-28 on page 2). Observe what Jesus teaches them on these occasions.
- Read John 13:1-17 as a group. What are your observations from this passage?
- Jesus models humble service in love as He washes the feet of the disciples. Do you think this modeling or His teaching would be more impactful to the disciples?
- Jn 13:8 Peter says, "No – you shall never wash my feet" to Jesus. Why does Peter say no? If you have ever said no to being served, why did you refuse?
- Jn 13:10 Jesus says we are totally clean and do not need to bathe but only wash our feet. What does He mean by this?
- Jn 13:12 Jesus asks, "Do you understand what I have done for you?". How do you think you would respond to this question?

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Start sharing:

- Jesus says if you don't let Him wash you then you have no share with Him. In what ways do we still try to spiritually cleanse ourselves or look for spiritual cleansing in the wrong places?
- Jesus, knowing He had all power rose from the meal and removed His outer garments taking on the appearance of a slave and washed the disciples' feet. Have you ever used your power or position like this or experienced someone else humble themselves to serve you?
- When we say no to a brother or sister's attempt to serve us, what might we be denying them?
- In this example provided by Jesus we see how easy His "Fitness for Duty Test" is. Why do you think we are hesitant or feel unable to serve others as Christ served us?

Start doing: Jesus provides a wonderful example of humbly serving in love by washing the feet of His disciples. He tells us we should do as He has done for us. Since you are qualified for this duty try out practical ways this week you could "wash the feet" of those around you.

Prayer Requests: Spend time praying together about what you shared tonight. It may be helpful to pray the scriptures back to God.

Luke 9:46–48

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest."

Luke 22:24–27

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

Matthew 18:1–5

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

Matthew 20:20–28

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 21 "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." 22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. 23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." 24 When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. 25 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."