

Lesson 2: Heart of a Servant

JOHN PROFILE



Genre: Gospel

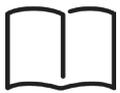
Author: John

Passage: John 13:1-17

Where Is It: The fourth book of the New Testament: Mark, Luke, **John**

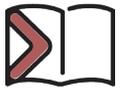
Key Characters: Jesus, his disciples

Main Plot: Jesus washes his disciples' feet as an act of humility and as a model for how his followers should live faithfully as a Messianic community.



THE WORD

John 13:1-17



ENGAGE THE WORD

Lesson Overview: Relational Dimension

In this lesson your students will be challenged to look at what it means to adopt the heart of a servant in their relationships with others. This concept of servanthood does not come naturally to many people. Our society often teaches and encourages us to be bigger and better than those around us.

Throughout the Gospels the disciples argue about which one of them is better than the others. However, Jesus reminds them that whoever is the least among them is the greatest. Jesus says, "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). In today's Gospel passage, we will see Jesus show the full extent of his love by washing the disciples' feet.

Biblical Commentary

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus shows the disciples the full extent of his love by washing their feet. Even after listening and learning from Jesus over the last three years, they could not have predicted that Jesus would perform a lowly act like this. Here, John also notes that Jesus is aware of what is to come. His betrayal, arrest, and death do not blindsides him. Instead, Jesus willingly continues on his journey to the cross and prepares the disciples for how they are to live following his death and resurrection.

Passover was one of the most anticipated celebrations on the Jewish calendar. It was an important holiday spent preparing special foods, telling the story of the Exodus, and playing traditional games with family. As Christmas is in our culture, it was a high point in the year that required extensive preparation. People traveled great distances to take part in the festivities in Jerusalem.

While others prepared for the celebration, Jesus had more than Passover on His mind. John 13:1 indicates that Jesus knew what was coming. While others would have panicked and gone into hiding, Jesus set his sights on Jerusalem and pressed on toward the work he had come to accomplish.



THE MAIN IDEA

JESUS REVEALS TO HIS DISCIPLES THAT THOSE WHO SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM ARE THE ONES WHO STEP DOWN TO BE SERVANTS.

According to John, Jesus knew that he would soon return to the Father. However, he also knew that he would leave this world only after he had finished the work that only he could do. He knew he had to prepare his disciples for the upheaval that was to come.

In this story, the washing of the disciples' feet is an act of voluntary humiliation that rebukes the disciples' inner pride. Surely none of them can imagine having to wash the feet of the others because doing so suggests they hold a lower position. In Luke 22:24, we see that the disciples have recently argued about which of them will be considered the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Peter's rebuke of Jesus shows his feelings toward the responsibility of foot washing along with his high regard for Jesus. Jesus shows Peter that his feet must be washed not only to make him socially acceptable but also to convey that his heart needs to be cleansed for the kingdom of God. Jesus tells the disciples that he has set an example for them and that they are to go and do likewise. He is not commissioning them to start a worldwide foot-washing business. Instead, he is calling them to go forth with the same servant-like heart that he has demonstrated to them, and if they are faithful in this call to serve like Jesus has, they will be blessed. This same call and blessing apply to us today.

REFLECT ON THESE THEMES:

Do you strive to have the same servant-like heart and attitude that Christ demonstrates for us in today's Gospel passage?

What evidence do you see that your life is marked by either humility or pride?

REFLECT ON YOUR STUDENTS:

Do your students look for opportunities to serve others?

Do your students embody servant-like hearts and attitudes in their relationships with others?



Bible Background

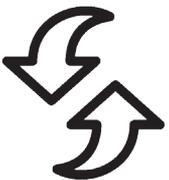
John's Gospel is the only one that records Jesus washing his disciples' feet. John also alludes to the Last Supper taking place just before Jesus washes his disciples' feet. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each have accounts of Jesus sharing the cup and bread with his disciples, even Judas.

HUMILITY

Freedom from pride or arrogance; the quality or state of being humble

MARK 10:45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."



DISCUSSION GUIDE

LESSON OUTLINE



Main Idea: Jesus reveals to his disciples that those who seek God's kingdom are the ones who step down to be servants.

Resources: Bibles, copies of handout, a generous meal for your students, poster board or whiteboard, markers, materials for foot washing

Connect to My Experience:

Welcome and Prayer

A Generous Meal

Being a Servant Discussion

Connect to the Word: Read and Reflect on John 13:1-17

Connect to My Life and the World: You Got Served

Closing: Affirmation and Prayer



CONNECT TO MY EXPERIENCE

Student Goal: Youth will share a meal served by their youth leaders and discuss what servanthood means to them.

Welcome your students and allow them to share highlights from their week. Also give them the opportunity to share some praises and prayer requests. Open in prayer.

A GENEROUS MEAL

Depending on when your group meets, prepare a generous meal for your students that goes above and beyond a normal meal you might share together during your group time. Serve the food to your students. Once all students have their food and have started to eat, tell your students that you prepared the meal for them because you wanted to bless them by serving them.

BEING A SERVANT DISCUSSION

Invite students to tell about a time when they were surprised by an extraordinarily high level of service. After several have shared, discuss the following:

ASK: What does it mean to be a servant?

When you think of the word *servant*, do you think of it as a good thing or a bad thing?

What are some characteristics that come to mind when you think of a servant?

Who is someone in your life who models what it means to be a Christlike servant?

SAY: Today, we will see how Jesus created the pattern for our service. By choosing to do something no one else wanted to do, Christ demonstrated his love for his disciples. He also loved to serve and is an example of the power that comes from service.

MATTHEW 25:21

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’”



CONNECT TO THE WORD

Student Goal: Youth will explore the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet and learn the implications for us as his disciples.

Read through John 13:1-17 as a group. You may want to read the passage twice using different translations to help the students hear and become familiar with the passage. You are welcome to have students volunteer to read. Take a few moments to set the context for students before reading the passage.

SAY: The passage we are about to read is the beginning of what is called the "Farewell Discourse." It's called the Farewell Discourse because Jesus knows his mission will come to an end soon. As the chief priests and Pharisees plot to arrest and kill Jesus, Jesus turns his attention to preparing his disciples to become the messianic community. Jesus cleanses the disciples both literally and symbolically through foot washing.

Distribute this week's student handout. If you have time, ask the students to spend some time reflecting on the lesson. Give them five to ten minutes to fill in their answers. Discuss as a group.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus takes the time to wash the disciples' feet? What do you believe he is trying to teach them—and us?

Do you think it is difficult for Jesus to wash Peter's feet, considering that Peter will soon deny even knowing Jesus?

How difficult do you think it is for Jesus to wash Judas Iscariot's feet? If you were Jesus, could you have washed Judas' feet if you knew he was going to betray you?

In verse 15 Jesus says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." What do you believe Jesus is asking the disciples to do?

How can serving others reveal Jesus to people?

SAY: By taking the role of a servant, Jesus modeled the level of humility that he expected from his followers. Jesus' shocking service helped prepare his followers for his ultimate act of selflessness on the cross.

ASK: How does sharing faith in Christ and humbly serving each other affect the way believers relate to one another?

How might humility and service build unity?



Facilitator Note:

You can empower your leaders to each bring a dish to help make up the generous meal. It's also an opportunity for leaders to be an example of service to their students.

JOHN 13:14-15

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."



Facilitator Note:

If you have time, consider asking your other leaders to join you in washing your students' feet as an act of humility.

Jesus' act of selfless service would later help his followers understand why he did not resist taking his place on the cross.



CONNECT TO MY LIFE AND THE WORLD

Student Goal: Youth will learn how to live out Jesus' instructions to go and be servants in the world.

YOU GOT SERVED

SAY: Let's think about Jesus' words in John 13:1-17. While most people would give you strange looks if you went around washing others' feet, we can still find creative ways to love and serve the people we interact with regularly. We are going to take the next few minutes to brainstorm how we can do this.

Using a whiteboard or poster board, give students the opportunity to come up with ways they can love and serve others. Have students think of people from different categories: family members, friends, classmates, teammates, and so on. Depending on your group's size, it may be best to break off into smaller groups and have an adult leader facilitate the discussion.

If the students broke off into groups, have them come back together. Ask two students from each group to present their group's ideas. After all groups have presented, challenge your students to each pick one or two of these ideas and try them out in the next week or so. Check back next week to hear about students' experiences. If you used a poster board, hang it up on the wall for the next several weeks so students can be reminded of their call to be servants.



CLOSING

Reaffirm the following truths to your students:

1. Jesus served his disciples by washing their feet.
2. We are called to be servants to those around us.
3. More than trying to be better or greater than those around us, let us try to love others with the servant love of Jesus.

SAY: Jesus our humble Servant-King did not put himself down or say he was worthless. He identified himself as teacher and Lord; yet, he was willing to do the lowest duty.

Silently consider:

What does Jesus' example of humble service mean to you?

What will you do to follow Jesus' example?

Close your group time in prayer.

You are welcome to use this simple prayer.

Lord, help me to walk humbly with you

Help me to walk humbly at home

Help me to walk humbly at school

Help me to walk humbly in my neighborhood

Help me to walk humbly wherever you may lead me

Lord, help me to walk humbly

so I can let your love be known in the world.

Amen.



Facilitator Note:

When you encounter a friend, family member, a store clerk, or another runner at the park, think about how God created that person in God's image and likeness. Say this phrase in your head as you think about how you can serve them: "We are all image-bearers." This mantra can help you focus on how to serve them and why you are called to serve them.