

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

1st Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 25

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will look at the humility and service of Jesus washing His disciples' feet as an example for us to imitate.

Key Verses

John 13:1-17—Main Teaching Passage
Luke 22:24-27

Memory Verse - John 13:14

"If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, Mark 12:30.

Ask the class if they have ever met anyone famous (accept pretty much any answer they give). Ask them what it was like to meet that person. Then ask, "Did he/she wash your dishes? Do your laundry? Did he wash your dirty, stinky socks?"

Famous people don't typically do humble tasks like this. They usually have someone who does jobs like this for them. In today's story, though, the greatest Man in history is going to show great humility in doing an unpleasant job for others.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Our story today takes place on the final night before Christ's crucifixion. Jesus and His disciples were celebrating the Passover meal, when all of a sudden, Jesus stood up and got a towel and basin of water. He then proceeded to wash the feet of each disciple. The task of washing feet in Jesus' day was regarded as the lowest task someone could do and was typically delegated to the lowest servant. The fact that Jesus would do it Himself was astonishing.

When He got to Peter, Peter asked why He would do something like this and declared that Jesus would never wash his feet. Jesus responded that if He did not wash Peter's feet, Peter did not have a share with Him. Then Peter asked Jesus to wash not just his feet, but all of him. Jesus answered that all he needed was for his feet to be cleaned.

After He was done washing their feet, Jesus stood up and explained what He had just done. When they called Him "Lord" and "Teacher," they were rightly recognizing that He is greater than them. If Jesus was willing to show humility and wash His disciples' feet even though He was greater than them, they also should wash one another's feet. Jesus had done this powerful act of humility and service as an example for us to follow. If our Lord and Master was willing to wash His disciples' feet, how much more willing should we be to humble ourselves and serve one another?

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

To understand how big a deal this story is, you must understand how degrading foot-washing was in Jesus' time. Back then, they would walk around the dusty roads in sandals. Their feet would be dirty and nasty, and culturally feet were regarded as the dirtiest part of the body. It was shameful to wash someone's feet but was necessary to do, so often the lowest servant would perform the task.

In Luke 22:24-27, we discover that on this same night, the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest. Jesus said that in the world, greatness is measured by authority and power. Great people don't have to do hard work because they have servants to do it for them. However, in God's kingdom, things are different. The greatest are not those with the most power and money, but those who serve the most. Heavenly greatness is found in humility. Jesus did not simply preach this message, He actually lived it out here in this story. Jesus gave us an example of service so that we could imitate it.

LOOK (Continued)

In His conversation with Peter, we see that this foot-washing might be more than just an example of humble service. Jesus seems to imply that this washing is symbolic of forgiveness. Jesus' ultimate humble service was going to happen the next day, when He died on the cross to pay for man's sins. We cannot be like Peter and be too prideful or ashamed to accept Christ's forgiveness. However, we also do not need to worry about losing our forgiveness every time we sin. Instead, we just need to repent of that sin and ask Jesus for forgiveness.

The message that Jesus told His disciples after the foot-washing applies very much to us today. We may not have been the beneficiaries of a literal foot-washing, but we certainly have received the blessings of His ultimate washing if we are in Christ. If Jesus was willing to humble Himself and serve us in this way, how much more should we be serving one another? This first requires a humble mindset. It will be impossible to serve others if we think we are better than them. Then we need to go out and serve. This can take place at home, school, church, and anywhere else. Finally, we should forgive others. Just as Christ's ultimate act of humility was to forgive sinners, we can show humility by forgiving others, even if they wronged you on purpose or did not apologize.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize John 13:14.

Think of ways you can humbly serve at home and at school. Come up with tasks that most people don't like to do. Look for ways to serve others this week.

Pray: Thank Jesus for coming to earth humbly to forgive our sins. Ask Him to help us serve others.

Parent Question: Read Luke 22:24-27. How is man's definition of greatness different from God's definition?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on John 13:1-20 by David Guzik

Jesus, the Loving Servant

A. Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

1. ([John 13:1](#)) Jesus and His disciples at a last meeting before His arrest.

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

a. **Now before the feast of the Passover:** This gives us a time reference. Jesus is about to share a meal with His disciples, and scholars warmly debate if this meal was actually on the Passover, or if it was the Passover meal, but held a day before.

i. The chronology is an issue because in some passages, it seems that Jesus was crucified *on* the day of Passover. In other passages, it seems that Jesus was crucified the day *after* Passover. There are scores of potential solutions to the problem, but it's hard to say which one is the final answer.

ii. "The verbs for 'reclining' [[John 13:23](#)]... suggest that, although this meal fell 'before the (official) festival of the Passover' ([verse 1](#)) it was nevertheless treated by the participants as a Passover meal." (Bruce)

b. **Jesus knew that His hour had come:** Jesus lived His life in anticipation of this **hour**. He knew when it had not yet come ([John 2:4](#)). Up to this point, Jesus enjoyed a unique protection because His hour had not yet come ([John 7:30](#), [8:20](#)). Now, **Jesus knew that His hour had come**. He spoke of this awareness in [John 12:23-27](#) and even said that *for this purpose I came to this hour*.

i. Indeed, **His hour had come**. Jesus' public ministry is over. In close to 24 hours, Jesus will hang on the cross. This is the beginning of the end, and Jesus will use these last precious hours to minister to His disciples.

c. **That He should depart this world to the Father:** The cross is not *specifically* mentioned in [John 13:1](#), but casts a shadow over almost every word. We see the shadow of the cross over **His hour had come**. We see the shadow of the cross over **loved them to the end**. But we also see the shadow of the cross over **depart this world**. It is phrased softly, but there is an iron-hard reality underneath the soft cover. Jesus would only **depart this world** through the cross.

d. **Having loved:** Surely, Jesus had **loved** His disciples. He led them, taught them, cared for them, protected them. What Jesus had given them already was more than any other teacher or leader could give his followers.

e. **Having loved His own:** There is a love Jesus has for all people, and then there is a love for **His own**. It isn't so much that Jesus' *love* is different, but the dynamic of the love relationship is different. The love of Jesus for **His own** is greater, because it has a response, and love answers to love.

i. Jesus has done *some* things for *all* men. He has also done *all* things for *some* men - **His own who were in the world**.

f. **He loved them to the end:** Jesus had **loved His own**. But He hadn't finished loving them. He would love **them to the end**. The idea behind the phrase **to the end** is "to the fullest extent, to the uttermost."

i. **To the end** means *to the end of Jesus' earthly life*. Though the disciples gave up on Him, He never gave up on them. Though they stopped thinking about Jesus, and were only thinking of themselves, He never stopped thinking of them. Whose problems were worse - Jesus' or the disciples'? Who was concerned more for the other? He loved them **to the end**.

ii. **To the end** means a *love that will never end*. Jesus will never stop loving **His own**. It isn't a love that comes and goes, that is here today and gone tomorrow.

iii. **To the end** means a *love that reaches to the fullest extent*. Some translations have "He loved them to the uttermost." Jesus poured out the cup of His love to the bottom for us.

2. ([Jhn 13:2-5](#)) Jesus washes the disciples' feet.

And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, 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 with which He was girded.

a. **Supper being ended:** Some ancient manuscripts have "supper was now in progress" instead of **supper being ended**. This probably makes more sense, and the difference is of one letter in the ancient Greek language.

i. "'Supper was now in progress' is a preferable reading to the variant 'Supper having ended,' chiefly because the sequel ([verses 12-30](#)) makes it plain that supper had not ended. The point is that supper had already begun when Jesus rose from the table and began to wash the disciples' feet." (Bruce)

b. **The devil having already put it into the heart of Judas:** Judas was led by the devil. Before this chapter is finished, John will show us the extent of Judas' depravity. [Luke 22:3](#) describes how *Satan entered Judas* shortly before this.

i. It may well be that a better translation is *the devil had already made up his mind that Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, should betray him*. Satan was looking for a man to betray Jesus, and had probably been "cultivating" Judas for a long time. But now the choice was made. Judas was his man.

c. **Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands:** This wasn't something that Jesus came to know just at this hour. Several years before in His ministry, Jesus said *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand*. ([John 3:35](#)) But this means that at this particular time, and in this particular circumstance, it was *important* that Jesus knew **the Father had given all things into His hands**.

i. It was important because of the *hour*. Jesus is about to face the agony of crucifixion and the terror of standing in the place of guilty sinners before the righteous wrath of God the Father. At the same time, Jesus went into this situation as a *victor*, not as a *victim*. He could have backed out any time He wanted to, because **the Father had given all things into His hands**.

ii. It was important because of the *circumstance*. Jesus is about to lower Himself, literally stooping in humble service to His disciples. But as He serves in this humble way, He does not do it from *weakness*. He does it from a position of *all authority*, because **the Father had given all things into His hands**.

d. **And that He had come from God and was going to God:** Jesus didn't only know His *authority*, He also

knew His *relationship* with God. He knew His identity, as one who **had come from God**, and as one who **was going to God**. Knowing His past with God the Father, and His future with God the Father, what else could He do but glorify Him in the present?

e. **Began to wash the disciples' feet:** At this moment of deep meaning, Jesus did something that must have almost seemed crazy. He began to do the job of the lowest servant in the household. He **began to wash the disciples' feet**.

i. At this critical moment, at this evening before the torture of the cross, Jesus doesn't think of Himself. He thinks about His disciples. Truly, this is *loving them to the end*. After all, Jesus' disciples treated Him badly - and were about to treat Him even worse, forsaking Him completely - yet He loved them.

ii. Jesus *completely* gave Himself to washing their feet. Look at how thorough He was in this work. First, He **rose from supper**. Then Jesus **laid aside His garments**, which had to remind Him of what waited in just a few hours, when He would be stripped of **His garments** and be crucified. Jesus then **took a towel and girded Himself**. Finally Jesus **poured water into a basin**. If Jesus wanted to just display the *image* of a servant, He would have had a servant or one of the disciples do all this preparation work. He then would have quickly wiped a damp cloth on a few dirty feet and consider the job done. That would give the *image* of servanthood and loving leadership, but Jesus gave Himself *completely* to this work.

iii. This was an *extreme* act of servanthood. According to the Jewish laws and traditions regarding the relationship between a teacher and his disciples, a teacher had no right to demand or expect that his disciples would wash his feet. How much more unthinkable was it that the Master would wash His disciple's feet?

iv. "He disrobed himself, though angels longed to cast the imperial purple about his shoulders. With all things in his hand, he yet took a towel and wiped the disciples' feet." (Spurgeon)

f. **And to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded:** As Jesus went around the table, washing and drying the feet of His disciples, it was a dramatic scene. [Luke 22:23](#) says that the disciples entered the room debating who was greatest. By what He did, Jesus illustrates true greatness.

i. It was customary that the lowest servant of the house would wash the feet of the guests as they came into the house, especially for a formal meal like this. For some reason, this didn't happen when Jesus and the disciples came into the room. So they ate their meal with dirty feet.

ii. This was more awkward than we might think. First, because of the sandals they wore and the roads they walked on, the feet would be dirty. Second, the disciples would eat a formal meal like this at a table known as a *triclinium*. This was a low (coffee-table height), U-shaped table. The guests would sit, and their status at the meal was reflected by how close they were seated to the host or leader of the meal. Because the table was low, they didn't sit on chairs. They leaned on pillows, with their feet behind them. This meant that dirty feet could be unpleasantly close to the table during the meal. So the unwashed feet were conspicuous.

iii. So why didn't any of the disciples do this first? Any of the disciples would have gladly washed Jesus' feet. But they could not wash *His* without having to be available to wash the others' feet, and that would have been an intolerable admission of inferiority among their fellow competitors for the top positions in the disciples' hierarchy. So no one's feet got washed!

g. In all of this, Jesus essentially acted out a parable for the disciples. Jesus knew better that actions speak louder than words. So when He wanted to teach the proud, arguing disciples about true humility, He didn't just *say* it - He *showed* it. And He showed it in a way that illustrated His whole work on behalf of *His own*.

- Jesus **rose from supper**, a place of rest and comfort

- Jesus rose from His throne in heaven, a place of rest and comfort
- Jesus **laid aside His garments**, taking off His covering
- Jesus laid aside His glory, taking off His heavenly covering
- Jesus **took a towel and girded Himself**, being ready to work
- Jesus took the form of a servant, and came ready to work
- Jesus **poured water into a basin**, ready to clean
- Jesus poured out His blood to cleanse us from the guilt and penalty of sin
- Jesus *sat down again* ([John 13:12](#)) after washing their feet
- Jesus sat down at the right hand of God the Father after cleansing us

i. We know this whole lesson did "stick" powerfully. Decades later, when Peter wrote to Christians about humility, he put it like this: *Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility* ([1 Peter 5:5](#)). More literally, Peter wrote: "wrap the apron of humility around yourself." Surely, what Jesus did here stuck in his mind, and in his heart.

3. ([Jhn 13:6-11](#)) Jesus overcomes Peter's objections and washes his feet.

Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

a. **You shall never wash my feet!** Knowing the layout of a typical table and Passover meal, we have reason to believe Peter was seated at the far end of the U-shaped table from Jesus. Probably, Jesus came to Peter last of all. Perhaps Peter thought, "All these guys missed the point by letting Jesus wash their feet. He wants us to protest, and proclaim that He is too great, and we are too unworthy, to have Him wash our feet!" So, Peter makes this dramatic statement.

i. At the same time, Peter clearly felt uncomfortable with having Jesus perform such a humble act of service for him. This example of the servant's heart of Jesus made Peter and the others look pretty proud by comparison.

b. **If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me:** If we do not accept the humble service of Jesus to cleanse us, we have no part with Him. Jesus does not wash our feet literally, as He did for the disciples. But He did humbly die on the cross to cleanse us, and we must receive it.

i. This foot washing is a powerful lesson in humility. But it is more than that. The deeper meaning here is that there is Jesus has no fellowship with those who have not been cleansed by Him.

c. **Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!** Peter, in his request to be fully washed, is still reluctant to let Jesus do as He wants. Peter wants to tell Jesus what to do. Jesus - though the servant of all - is still God's appointed leader. He won't allow Peter to monopolize this situation, and set things on a wrong course.

i. Sometimes we show a servant's heart by accepting the service of others for us. If we only serve, and refuse to be served, it can be a sign of deeply rooted and well-hidden pride. "Man's humility does not begin with the giving of service; it begins with the readiness to receive it. For there can be much pride and condescension in our giving of service." (Temple)

4. ([Jhn 13:12-17](#)) Jesus explains what He did, and calls His disciples to follow His example.

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

a. **You also ought to wash one another's feet:** Jesus plainly and powerfully says that this is the attitude that must mark His followers, especially the leadership of the church.

i. **You also ought to wash one another's feet:** Some try to fulfill this with foot washing ceremonies. Surely, if it is done with the right heart it can be a blessing, but Jesus wasn't talking about a ceremony here. "Every year they hold a theatrical feet-washing, and when they have discharged this empty and bare ceremony they think they have done their duty finely and are then free to despise their brethren. But more, when they have washed twelve men's feet they cruelly torture all Christ's members and thus spit in the face of Christ Himself. This ceremonial comedy is nothing but a shameful mockery of Christ. At any rate, Christ does not enjoin an annual ceremony here, but tells us to be ready all through our life to wash the feet of our brethren." (Calvin, cited by Morris)

ii. If we are going to wash one another's feet, we should be careful of the temperature of the water. Sometimes we try to wash someone with our water too *hot* - we are too fervent and zealous. Sometimes our water is too *cold* - we are cold and distant in heart to them. The temperature needs to be in the middle. We should also remember that we can't *dry-clean* someone else's feet. Jesus washed us *with the washing of water by the word* ([Ephesians 5:26](#)), we should use the same "water" in ministering to others.

b. **Wash one another's feet:** We, like the disciples, would gladly wash the feet of Jesus. But He tells us to wash **one another's** feet. Anything we do for each another that washes away the grime of the world and the dust of defeat and discouragement is foot washing.

i. "In the world they criticize: this is the business of the public press, and it is very much the business of private circles. Hear how gossips say, 'Do you see that spot? What a terrible walk that man must have had this morning: look at his feet! He has been very much in the mire you can see, for there are the traces upon him.' That is the world's way. Christ's way is very different. He says nothing, but takes the basin and begins to wash away the stain. Do not judge and condemn, but seek the restoration and the improvement of the erring."
(Spurgeon)

c. **If you know these things, happy are you if you do them:** The *theory* of being a servant isn't worth very much. But the *practice* of being a servant pleases God and fulfills our calling.

i. "If there is a position in the church where the worker will have to toil hard and get no thanks for it, take it, and be pleased with it. If you can perform a service, which few will ever seek to do themselves, or appreciate when performed by others, yet occupy it with holy delight. Covet humble work, and when you get it be content to continue in it. There is no great rush after the lowest places, you will rob no one by seeking them."
(Spurgeon)