

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Pickup
Your Towel

INTRODUCTION

John 13:1-20

“Religion is focused on what I’ve done, what I do, and what I have the capacity to do in the future. When that’s the case, every action I make is judged on the basis of what it does for me. Even my works of mercy and compassion will be attempts to balance my ledger sheet. The motivation stems from my desire to be a better person or my hope to remain in God’s favor.

Jesus shows us a different approach. We are not the focus; in order to love and serve others selflessly, we need to look beyond our own lives. What he does, that Confucius or Gandhi cannot, goes beyond teaching what we should do and how we should live and actually gives us the power to live differently. Religion says ‘Look inside yourself, and you will find the strength to live a life of service to others.’ Jesus says, ‘Look to me. I will show you the path to serving others, and I will give you the strength to live selflessly.’

The Gospel of John calls us to follow Jesus. Following him is not a path to human greatness or man’s acclaim. Following Jesus means we will put down the respect and riches of this world and pick up a wet, dirt-stained towel and use it to clean someone’s muddy feet. The way to follow Jesus is to serve others humbly.”¹

OPEN IT

1. What is your least favorite chore to do around the house and why?

¹ Matt Carter, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in John* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), 261.

READ IT

John 13:1-20

EXPLORE IT

2. Who led Judas to betray Jesus? (verse 2)
3. What three things did Jesus know about His mission? (verse 3)
4. Why does Jesus insist that He has to wash Peter's feet? What was Peter's reaction? (verses 8-9)
5. What two words does Jesus use to describe Himself? (verses 13-14)
6. What was the reason that Jesus washed His disciple's feet? (verses 12-15)

APPLY IT

"The footwashing is anchored in two things that Jesus "knew" in verse 3: he had power and authority from God over everything; and he was soon to return to God in heaven. For this reason there was no question how the battle against the powers of darkness would turn out, for he is Lord of all. The cross is not just an isolated skirmish but the central event in the greatest cosmic drama this world will ever know. The outcome was already settled, and God's plan of salvation would work itself out. God was in control, not Satan, and his Son had absolute authority over all the players in the drama. Jesus was soon to ascend back to his heavenly home, so his purpose now was to prepare the disciples for their part in the cosmic war."²

7. In this passage we see that Satan was at work in Judas' heart even before he betrayed Jesus. How does the reminder of Satan's activity in the world change how you see evil in the world around you?

² Grant R. Osborne, *John: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer et al., Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 315–316.

8. How does it strengthen your faith to know that God’s plan from the beginning was for Jesus to be victorious over Satan?

“When Jesus laid aside his outer garment, handled Himself like a slave, and bowed low to wash His disciples’ feet, He taught His men several important lessons about humility, not the least of which is that humility is an action, not simply an attitude. One does not feel humble or think humble thoughts. In fact a person of genuine humility has no thought of self at all. Humility is a behavior, and in its purest form, involves little emotion, except perhaps affection.”³

9. What are some new specific ways you can show a servant’s heart to others in our church?

10. What are some new specific ways you can show a servant’s heart to friends or family?

³ Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Swindoll’s New Testament Insights (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 227.

11. What are some new specific ways you can show a servant's heart to someone you find hard to serve?

12. How can we find ways to avoid feeling like serving is something we have to do instead of something we want to do?

Peter protests against Jesus' attempt to wash his feet. "Peter objects to anything that might humiliate Jesus or undermine his dignity. He wants Jesus to be lifted up, not brought down to washing people's feet."⁴

13. Why is it hard for us to accept Jesus washing us? Are there things you feel Jesus can't wash away from your past or present life?

⁴ Moody, Josh. *John 13-21 For You: Revealing the Way of True Glory (God's Word For You)* (p. 11). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

14. How does Jesus washing His disciples' feet not contradict His role as Lord or Master?

This passage teaches us an important lesson: “No one is below being served. In this chapter we are reminded repeatedly about the upcoming betrayal of Judas. How many pairs of feet did Jesus wash? Twelve. Jesus even washed the feet of Judas, knowing full well what he was going to do. Judas is in league with Satan at this point, but Jesus still stoops before him as a humble servant and slowly washes the caked dirt and grime off his feet.”⁵

15. Are there some people in your life that you find hard to serve? What are some of the reasons you give for not wanting to serve them?

16. How does humility in acts of service show non-Christians who Jesus is?

⁵ Carter, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in John*, 262.