FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 4-6

Day 3: Jesus Shows Me How to Love

Serve Like Jesus! | Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

Bible story	Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27)
Memory verse (NKJV)	"For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15)
Takeaway	Following Jesus means loving and serving others the way He loved and served us.
Daily call	Leader: "Serve" Kids: "Like Jesus!"

Objectives

- Find and read the key passages (John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27).
- Explain the big idea: Following Jesus means loving and serving others the way He loved and served us.
- Say John 13:15 from memory.
- Choose one specific way to serve others this week.

Materials

- Bible (NKJV) for the teacher and for each student
- Prop for the attention getter: a towel, a basin (bowl), and a pitcher of water
- Copies of today's student lesson and activity sheets (one per child)
- Crayons, pencils, and name tags
- Craft supplies: Small washcloths or paper towels; Fabric markers or regular markers; Ribbon

Teacher preparation

- Read John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27 in your own Bible at least twice this week.
- Read the matching "31 Days with Jesus" devotionals at The Preacher's Pen: Day 25: The Lord's Supper (Remembering Jesus); Day 30: "Do You Love Me?" (Renewed Love and Calling); Day 19: Miracles of Jesus (Trusting God's Provision).
- Make copies, prepare craft pieces, and set out the prop before children arrive.

Background for the teacher

- Foot washing was a sign of hospitality (Genesis 18:4; 1 Timothy 5:10) and one of the lowliest servant tasks (1 Samuel 25:41).
- Order of events that night (from the class lesson): Passover begins (Luke 22:15-18), the disciples dispute about greatness (Luke 22:24-30), Jesus washes their feet (John 13:1-17), the betrayer is revealed (John 13:21-30), the Lord's Supper is instituted (Matthew 26:26-29), and the new commandment is given (John 13:34-35).
- Jesus' act was an example of humble service, not a new act of worship. The apostles taught the attitude behind it (Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3-8).
- Jesus loved His disciples "to the end" (John 13:1), even the one who would betray Him.
- The Lord and Teacher took the lowest servant's job and washed dirty feet (John 13:4-5).
- Jesus gave us an example of humble, loving service to follow (John 13:14-15).
- People will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (John 13:34-35).

Lesson plan (40 minutes)

Time	Segment	What to do
0:00-0:04	Welcome and review	Attendance; quick review of earlier days.
0:04-0:08	Opener	Show a towel, a basin (bowl), and a pitcher of water. Ask the opening question.
0:08-0:20	Bible study	Have students find the passages and read aloud as you teach (script below).
0:20-0:26	Discussion	Ask the discussion questions; let students answer from the text.
0:26-0:30	Memory verse	Verse card race: put word cards in order, then say it from memory.
0:30-0:38	Activity sheets	Bible lookups first, then crossword, word search, scramble, and code.
0:38-0:40	Wrap-up and prayer	One-sentence takeaway from each student. Prayer.

Attention getter

Show a towel, a basin (bowl), and a pitcher of water. Ask: What is the yuckiest job you have ever had to do? Who usually does the jobs nobody wants?

Bible story

Teach from an open Bible so students see that the story comes from God's word. Use this script as a guide; tell it in your own words.

Roads in Israel were dusty, and people wore open sandals. Washing a guest's feet was good manners, and it was usually done by the lowest servant in the house (compare 1 Samuel 25:41; Luke 7:44).

On the night before His death, Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples in an upper room. Jesus knew "that His hour had come" and He "loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Yet the disciples argued about who would be the greatest (Luke 22:24). One of them, Judas, had already decided to betray Jesus (John 13:2).

Jesus did not lecture them. He rose from supper, laid aside His garments, tied a towel around Himself, poured water into a basin, and began washing their feet (John 13:4-5). The Teacher and Lord took the servant's place. He even washed the feet of Judas.

Peter objected: “You shall never wash my feet!” Jesus answered, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). Peter meant to show respect, but he was refusing what the Lord wanted. When he understood, he wanted to be washed all over (John 13:9).

Then Jesus explained: “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” (John 13:14-15). He added, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17).

Jesus also gave a new commandment: “that you love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). The world will know we are His disciples by our love (John 13:35). Greatness in Jesus’ kingdom is measured by service (Luke 22:26-27; Mark 10:45).

Discussion questions

1. What were the disciples arguing about that night (Luke 22:24)?
2. Why did Peter refuse at first? What changed his mind?
3. Jesus washed Judas’ feet. What does that teach about loving people who hurt us?
4. What does it mean to be “great” in Jesus’ kingdom (Mark 10:45)?

Review

- How long did Jesus love His own? (John 13:1) Answer: to the end
- What did Jesus tie around Himself? (John 13:4) Answer: a towel
- What did Jesus pour water into? (John 13:5) Answer: a basin
- What did the disciples call Jesus? (John 13:13) Answer: Teacher and Lord
- Who is blessed? (John 13:17) Answer: those who know these things and do them
- How will all know we are His disciples? (John 13:35) Answer: if we have love for one another

Memory verse activity

Verse card race: write each phrase on a card, mix them up, and let teams race to put the verse in order. Then say it from memory.

Craft (Craft Time): Servant’s Towel

Materials: Small washcloths or paper towels; Fabric markers or regular markers; Ribbon

1. Write “Serve Like Jesus” and John 13:15 on the towel.
2. Around the edge, list five people you can serve this week.
3. Roll and tie with ribbon.
4. Each day you serve someone, put a check by their name.

Recreation and snack

Game: Servant Relay: teams pass a towel and a dry bowl down the line, each child naming one way to help someone before passing it. Or “Serve the Team”: kids carry cotton balls on a spoon to fill a teammate’s cup.

Snack: “Towel rolls”: rolled fruit snacks or tortilla roll-ups, with a cup of water. Older classes can serve snack to a younger class today. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

Songs (a cappella)

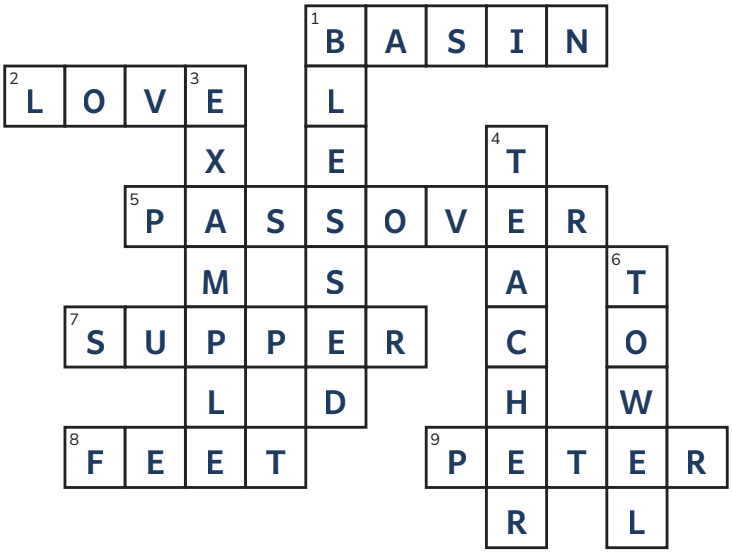
Sing without instruments. Suggested titles: Jesus Loves the Little Children; Oh, How I Love Jesus; Deep and Wide; Footprints of Jesus; Jesus Loves Me.

Answer keys

Bible lookups

Reference	Answer
John 13:1	to the end
John 13:4	a towel
John 13:5	a basin
John 13:13	Teacher and Lord
John 13:17	those who know these things and do them
John 13:35	if we have love for one another

Crossword



Across: 1 BASIN; 2 LOVE; 5 PASSOVER; 7 SUPPER; 8 FEET; 9 PETER

Down: 1 BLESSED; 3 EXAMPLE; 4 TEACHER; 6 TOWEL

Word search



Word scramble

1. TOWEL, 2. BASIN, 3. WATER, 4. SERVE, 5. EXAMPLE, 6. HUMBLE, 7. SUPPER, 8. LOVE

Secret code

Answer: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Sources for this lesson

- "31 Days with Jesus" by Christopher Gallagher, The Preacher's Pen: Day 25: The Lord's Supper (Remembering Jesus); Day 30: "Do You Love Me?" (Renewed Love and Calling); Day 19: Miracles of Jesus (Trusting God's Provision) (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/)
- Preaching Library lessons and outlines: Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-20, 2016 class lesson); Love As Displayed By God (1 John 4:7-9)
- Scripture: John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27. All quotations from the New King James Version (NKJV).