FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · TEACHER GUIDE · GRADES 7-8

# Day 3: Jesus Shows Me How to Love

Serve Like Jesus! | Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

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|---|---|
| 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

- Study John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27 in context.
- Describe the servant heart Jesus modeled (John 13:14-15; Philippians 2:3-8) and plan a way to serve.
- Memorize John 13:15.
- Write a specific, personal application.

## 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: Note cards and envelopes; Pens; List of shut-ins or members to encourage (from the church office)

## 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 |
|---|---|---|
| 0:00-0:05 | Opener | Discussion starter (below). |
| 0:05-0:20 | Bible study | Read the passages together and teach the lesson (script below). |
| 0:20-0:30 | Discussion | Small groups of 3 to 4 work through the discussion questions. |
| 0:30-0:33 | Memory verse | Write it from memory; discuss key words. |
| 0:33-0:38 | Study sheet | Begin the study sheet in pairs; finish the journal page at home. |
| 0:38-0:40 | Application and prayer | Each student names one action step. Prayer. |

### Discussion starter

Rank these from most wanted to least wanted: team captain, cleaning bathrooms, class president, taking out the trash. Why do we rank them that way?

## Bible study

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.

John 13 opens with one of the most moving sentences in the Gospels: "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" (John 13:1). Jesus knew the cross was hours away. Yet His focus was not on His own suffering but on teaching and serving His disciples.

The disciples, meanwhile, were arguing about rank and places of honor (Luke 22:24). Foot washing was the job of the lowest servant, and none of the twelve volunteered. So Jesus rose, prepared Himself like a servant, and washed their feet (John 13:4-5). It was genuine loving service, an act of humility, and a courtesy their pride had made them forget. He washed Judas' feet too, overcoming evil with good.

Peter's objection (John 13:6-8) sounds respectful, but good intentions become dangerous when they lead us to refuse the Lord's will. Peter was letting his own reasoning be his guide. Jesus' answer was firm: "If I do not wash

you, you have no part with Me." Discipleship means surrendering to the way of humility Jesus came to teach, even when we do not yet understand.

Jesus explained His action: as Teacher and Lord, He had served them, so they ought to serve one another (John 13:13-15). The apostles never taught foot washing as a church ritual or act of worship. They taught what it pictured: lowliness of mind, subjection, and loving service (Philippians 2:3-8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 5:5). The point is a servant's heart.

This kind of love comes from God. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Real love acts: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). When you are tempted to think about your place, your rights, or your reputation, picture the Son of God with a towel around His waist, kneeling at the disciples' feet.

## Discussion questions

1. Jesus knew the cross was coming, yet He served others. What does that tell you about His love?
2. Peter's intentions were good but he resisted Jesus. How can good intentions lead us away from obedience?
3. Why do you think the apostles taught humility and service instead of a foot washing ritual?
4. Where is the "who is the greatest" attitude strong in your world?

## Review

- What is the big idea of today's lesson? (Following Jesus means loving and serving others the way He loved and served us.)
- Quote John 13:15.
- 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).

## Memory verse activity

Have students write the verse from memory, then discuss its key words and how it connects to today's text.

## Craft (Craft Time): Towel and Basin Service Project

Materials: Note cards and envelopes; Pens; List of shut-ins or members to encourage (from the church office)

1. Read Philippians 2:3-8 together.
2. Each student writes two encouraging notes to members who are homebound, sick, or serving.
3. Plan one practical service the class can do before VBS ends (clean classrooms, help the nursery, serve snack).
4. Report back on Day 5.

## 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.

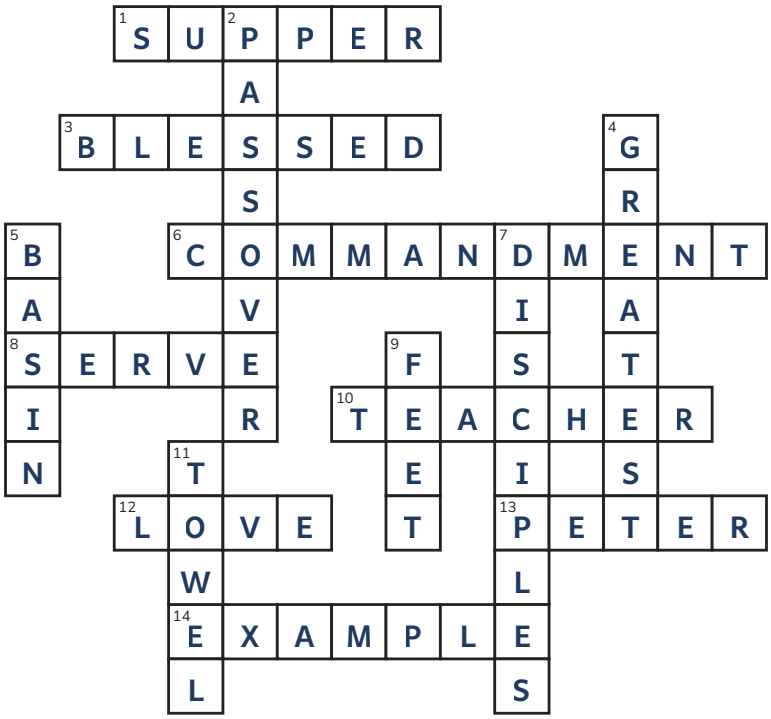
**Snack:** "Towel rolls": rolled fruit snacks or tortilla roll-ups, with a cup of water. Older classes can serve snack to a younger class today. Always check allergy information on registration cards before serving food.

## 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

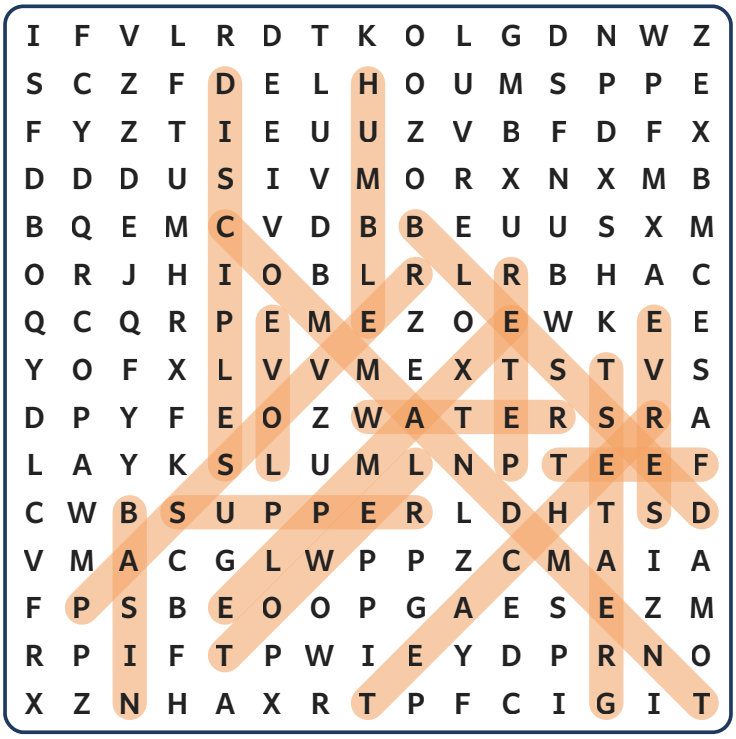
## Crossword




Across: 1 SUPPER; 3 BLESSED; 6 COMMANDMENT; 8 SERVE; 10 TEACHER; 12 LOVE; 13 PETER; 14 EXAMPLE

Down: 2 PASSOVER; 4 GREATEST; 5 BASIN; 7 DISCIPLES; 9 FEET; 11 TOWEL

## Word search



### Study sheet

Answers come straight from the passages listed. Let students read the text aloud and answer in their own words; guide them back to the verse when needed.

## 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).