FOLLOWING JESUS VBS · DAY 3 · HIGH SCHOOL (GRADES 9-12)

Student Lesson

Jesus Shows Me How to Love: Serve Like Jesus! | Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27)

Text: John 13:1-17, 34-35; Luke 22:24-27

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

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.

> "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."
> **John 13:15 (NKJV)**

Four points to remember

- 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).

Background

- 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).

Discuss

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?
5. What is one "towel and basin" job you could do that no one else wants to do?

Live it

- Do one unseen act of service at home every day this week (dishes, laundry, cleaning) without being asked.
- Write a note of encouragement to someone who is often overlooked.
- As a class, plan a service project for the church or community (cards for shut-ins, cleaning, yard work).

Further reading: "31 Days with Jesus" at The Preacher's Pen (preacherspen.org/courses/31-days-with-jesus/): 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).