



Lesson Title: Who Should Serve?



Key Concept: Service is key to our identity as disciples of Jesus and to living out the greatest commandment. But who should serve? Serving others is messy, yet all are required to serve.



Scriptures:

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

(John 13:12–15 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: John 13; 1 Timothy 5:10



Lesson Thoughts:

Jesus washing his disciples’ feet is only recorded in the gospel of John. This is significant because John’s gospel elevates the divinity of Jesus more than the other gospels. And yet, this account portrays Jesus as a suffering servant. The act of foot washing was repulsive, and no one would willingly debase themselves to do it. There were rules that Jewish slaves were not allowed to wash the feet of their masters, a task reserved for Gentile slaves, wives, or children.¹ This nauseating task of washing feet caked with sewage and dirt from the streets of the city was demonstrated by Jesus as he bent down to wash twenty-four filthy feet. The act shocked the disciples. In fact, Peter adamantly refused to be washed. But Jesus emphasized, “Unless I wash you, you won’t belong to me” (John 13:8). What a strong declaration of how crucial it was for Jesus to wash their feet. This act of service is mandatory for those who participate in the kingdom of Heaven. Service is not an option but a command for his disciples.

¹ Beasley-Murray George R., *John* (WBC 36; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 233.

What Jesus demonstrated to the disciples was not a one-time occurrence; rather, it must be continually emulated by his disciples as he instructed, “do as I have done to you.” This act of service was *for all* the disciples in the room, to be done *by all* the disciples in the room. They had to bend down and wash the plague-infested feet of their neighbors. Service does not always look and feel great, but Jesus’ command to continue this act of service tells us that all are to serve.

This act of service exhibited a lack of prejudice because Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, was among the twelve. Yet Jesus, knowing what Judas would do, still washed his feet. Service is not just for the worthy, but for all, including those who will betray us, exploit us, and ultimately harm us. We cannot predict the outcome of our service; however, it doesn’t change our mandate that all are required to serve.



Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why would Jesus—God Incarnate—wash his disciples’ feet?
- 2) Why is service as part of discipleship a difficult concept to embrace?
- 3) What are some difficult people to serve or places to serve in?
- 4) What are some reasons people give for not serving? How does the Bible address those reasons?
- 5) Has your service ever not worked out? Was the service worth it?

Next Lesson: Why Should We Serve?

Notes and Reflections

- 1) Do a slow read of John chapter 13 with a better understanding of the cultural implications. Do you see anything differently?
- 2) What are ways you can get involved in serving in your local church? Your local community?

Notes and Reflections, cont.