

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	JULY 18	21

SERVED BY THE KING

JOHN 13:1-38

JULY 18, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 13:1-38. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS HAS DEMONSTRATED FOR US HOW TO HUMBLY SERVE ONE ANOTHER SO THAT OUR SELFISHNESS MIGHT BE REPLACED WITH SELFLESSNESS.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS CALLS US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE HAS LOVED US.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS LOVED US BY GIVING HIMSELF UP FOR US COMPLETELY.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Who are some of the most influential leaders in your life? What led you to admire them as you do?
- 2 What traits do such influential leaders share? What traits are unique to them?

The list of qualities and characteristics that influential leaders possess is seemingly endless. Trustworthiness, charisma, and vision are among many others that come to mind when describing great leaders. Less often, however, do we use words like “dependent” or “modest.” Yet it is these and similar traits that Jesus insists must define great Christian leaders—they are to be defined by humility. Each one of us—not just leaders—are called to lives of humble service.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:1-11.

Prior to the Feast of the Passover—and in the presence of Judas who was to betray Him—Jesus took on the garb and posture of a slave and washed His disciples’ feet.

- How did Jesus’ washing of His disciples’ feet serve as an act of love “to the end” (v. 1)? Why do you think John chose to emphasize Judas’ presence in this foot-washing scene? Does it surprise you that Judas was there? Why or why not?

- Does the fact that Jesus washed even Judas' feet have any special impact on the significance of this event for you? Why or why not?

Notes:

Whether “to the end” means Jesus loved His disciples “to the uttermost” or “to the end of His life,” the emphasis is still the same. In washing His disciples’ feet, Jesus displayed His unstoppable love for His own, and the washing of His disciples’ feet, even the feet of Judas, would not be the most dramatic demonstration of that love. That would come at the cross.

- Why do you think John described Jesus in such powerful terms in verse 3?
- What is the relationship between Jesus as He is described in verse 3 and the role He took as a foot-washing slave in verses 4-5?
- What might have been going through the disciples’ minds as their Lord removed His outer clothing and began to wash their feet? What might such an act have done to the dynamic of the room during a shared meal?

With the power to rule the universe, Jesus willingly chose to take on the form and function of a lowly slave, rather than use His power to thwart God’s will for His life. He could have destroyed Judas, His betrayer, but He chose to serve him instead. He could have demanded that the disciples serve Him, yet He chose to model humble service for them and for us.

- How would you describe Peter’s response to Jesus’ actions? How do you think you would have responded? Why?

- Why are profound acts of humility frequently admired as much as they are despised?

Notes:

- What, if anything, was significant about Peter's request that Jesus wash his hands and head as well?

Though Peter initially responded with indignation, faith in and love for Jesus led him to submit to Jesus' humble act. Jesus' statement to Peter in verse 8 ("Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.") conveyed a powerful idea in its immediate context and foreshadowed the washing believers experience by Jesus' blood poured out on the cross. In both instances, the exalted Messiah King assumed the role of a despised servant for the good of others. While some theorize that Peter's reference to the washing of his hands may be a reference to ritual cleanliness and "head" as a reference to his perceived need for total cleansing, most scholars see no special significance in Peter's statement. True to his personality, Peter was verbally unrestrained in his enthusiasm.

> HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:12-17.

Having completed the act of washing His disciples' feet, Jesus conversed with them about the meaning of His actions. Jesus set an example of humble service to be reflected in their lives.

- Consider Jesus' question to His disciples in verse 12. Do you think they understood what He had just done and why? Do you understand?

- What excuses might the disciples have made for not wanting to follow Jesus' example? What excuses do we tend to make? What do these excuses reveal about our hearts?

No student has the right to think he is exempt from the same responsibilities his teacher willingly takes on. So it was for Jesus and His disciples. As He served them, so they must serve themselves and others.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:31-35.

- Does it surprise you that love is something Jesus had to command? Why or why not?
- Who is our “one another”? How do our love for God and our love for one another go hand in hand?
- Read Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:34-40. What was new about the commandment to “love one another,” which He gave in John 13?

The biblical command to love our neighbors as ourselves is not a new commandment (Lev. 19:18). By the time Jesus spoke John 13:34-35, He had already cited love for neighbors as one of the two greatest commandments (Matt. 22:34-40). Jesus even taught us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). So what was new about the command in John 13:34? The answer is in Jesus’ words: “as I have loved you.” The disciples were to love one another according to Jesus’ model. But little did they know the depth of love Jesus was about to demonstrate.

- How might thinking deeply on what Christ has done for us cause us to truly love others?
- What are the ramifications of Jesus’ statement in this verse? What’s riding on our willingness to demonstrate love?

- What message do believers give to the world when they show love for one another? What message do they give when they fail to show love for one another?

- How does our love for one another glorify God?

Notes:

As followers of Christ, our motivation for expressing love is Jesus' example, which means our love must also be demonstrated through action. Loving one another through humble, sacrificial service can be a powerful witness to the world that we are His and that it is good to be His. Through our visible expressions of love, non-Christians should be able to see the love of an invisible God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Read Philippians 2:4-11. What would it mean for you to have the attitude of Christ? What selfish attitudes would you need to sacrifice?
- Thinking about the relationships in your life, how can you practically “wash their feet?”
- Who serves you like this? What can you do to thank them this week?

PRAY

Praise God for Jesus’ work and example of service, love, and humility. Thank Him that Jesus was willing to humble Himself in love for you. Ask God to help you daily reflect His humility as you live out the gospel in your relationships, and that by doing so, others would be drawn to Jesus.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Why is it essential that we live in community with other Christians if we hope to cultivate Christlike love for others?
 - How might obeying these “one another” commands demonstrate Christ-like love for others?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 13:34.

- > The text for next week’s study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 14:1-14.

JOHN 13

13:1–17. With his crucifixion imminent, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a final proof of his love and to give them an example of humility and service. In a striking demonstration of love for his enemies, Jesus washed all of his disciples' feet, including Judas's. Jesus's act is all the more remarkable because washing people's feet was considered a task so low it could be performed only by non-Jewish slaves. In a culture where people walked long distances on dusty roads in sandals, it was customary for the host to provide water for foot-washing. This was usually done upon arrival, not during the meal. The disciples probably felt guilty that none of them had thought to do this.

Notes:

13:1. References to Jewish religious festivals and the coming of Jesus's hour now converge. Jesus's own refers to the Twelve, the representatives of his new messianic community (1:11).

13:2–3. These verses show that Judas already was under Satan's influence and that Jesus had full knowledge of this before he washed the disciples' feet.

13:4–5. The practice of foot washing had a long OT tradition (Gn 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24; Jdg 19:21; 1Sm 25:41). Jesus's performance of this menial task exemplified his humility (Php 2:6–8).

13:6–11. What Peter failed to realize was the humiliating nature of Jesus's mission to be our Savior.

13:12–15. The phrase in 1Tm 5:10, "washed the saints' feet," shows that the disciples got Jesus's message.

13:18–30. Judas's betrayal of Jesus comes as no surprise to the alert reader. John repeatedly anticipated this treacherous act (vv. 10–11; 6:70–71; 12:4). It is shocking that one whom Jesus had chosen as an apostle would betray him. But far from indicating that Jesus made a mistake, the betrayal actually fulfilled Scripture (13:18, citing Ps 41:9). God's plan was right on track. This section

also contains the first mention of “the one Jesus loved” (13:23). He is frequently featured side by side with Peter in the second half of John’s Gospel.

Notes:

13:18. Judas’s treachery fulfilled OT typology. Jesus cited Ps 41:9, which dealt with Absalom’s rebellion against King David. Judas’s betrayal came as no surprise to Jesus (Jn 13:19). Eating someone’s bread indicated close fellowship, and yet Judas raised his heel against Jesus, an idiom that describes betrayal. Not only did Jesus’s public foes plot against him; even his own disciples could not be trusted.

13:19–20. Jesus’s statement is one of several references to his omniscience in this section (14:29; 16:1, 4, 32, 33). I am he, as in 6:35, 48, very likely had overtones of deity.

13:21–22. Jesus’s being troubled in his spirit (cp. 11:33; 12:27) parallels the emotions of David, who expressed anguish over the betrayal of a close friend (Ps 55:2–14; cp. Ps 31:9–10; 38:10).

13:23. The reference to one of his disciples, the one Jesus loved ... reclining close beside Jesus (Gk kolpos), echoes the description of Jesus as the one who is “at the Father’s side” (Gk kolpos) in 1:18. This disciple is mentioned again in 21:20. Clearly he was an integral member of Jesus’s group. Tradition identifies him as John, author of this Gospel.

13:24–28. See note at 13:18. On a human level, Jesus’s action of giving bread to Judas constituted an indication of friendship as well as a final appeal that Judas rejected.

13:29. The supposition that Jesus may have sent Judas to give something to the poor harks back to 12:5, where Judas presented himself as a champion of charity. Almsgiving was an important part of Jewish piety (Mt 6:2–4).

13:30. The phrase it was night strikes an ominous note. Compare Lk 22:53: “But this is your hour—and the dominion of darkness”; see Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17; 1Co 11:23.

13:31. This verse echoes Isaiah (Is 49:3; see note at Jn 2:4).

13:31–16:33. Jesus’s farewell discourse in John’s Gospel is patterned after Moses’s farewell discourse in Dt 31–33. Such discourses typically include predictions of a person’s death and departure; predictions of future challenges for his followers after his death; arrangements for succession; exhortations to moral behavior; a final commission; an affirmation and renewal of God’s covenant promises; and a closing doxology. While Jesus’s farewell discourse is generally true to this pattern, there are differences as well. Jesus’s farewell was only temporary (his followers will see him again after “a little while,” Jn 14:19), so his final words focused on the future rather than the past. Also, the vine allegory in Jn 15 is distinct from OT or second-temple farewell discourses. Overall, Jesus made provision for the Holy Spirit to continue his mission through the disciples. Jesus himself would continue to direct their mission from his exalted position with the Father.

Notes:

13:31–32. Looking through the eyes of faith, Jesus’s glorification refers to his death.

13:33. Jesus’s words repeated to the Jews and the disciples mean different things. The Jews would not be able to find him, but Jesus would prepare a place for his disciples.

13:34–35. Love must be the distinguishing mark of Jesus’s disciples. Jesus’s new command closely resembled the Mosaic commands to love the Lord (Dt 6:5) and one’s neighbor as oneself (Lv 19:18; cp. Mk 12:28–33). Elsewhere Jesus said we must love even our enemies (Mt 5:43–48). While the command to love God and one’s neighbor was thus not new, Jesus’s example (as I have loved you) was unparalleled, as was his insistence that we should love our enemies.

13:36–38. Peter would indeed deny Jesus three times (see 18:15–18, 25–27). After his resurrection, Jesus would ask Peter three times, “Do you love me?” (21:15–17).