



Group Discussion Guide

## With Jesus In My Serving

Sunday, October 2, 2011

### Read

Read aloud through the story found in John 13:1-17. Go around the circle in the group with each person reading a few verses until you're done.

### Discuss

Imagine yourself at an important business dinner with your department and the CEO of your company. Now imagine your CEO walking back to the kitchen, putting on the clothing of a restaurant worker, and coming back to wait your table. He or she takes your order, brings out your food, cleans up the spilled drink... how would you feel? How do you imagine the disciples felt as Jesus dressed as a servant and began to wash their feet?

The dinner conversation among the disciples during this meal was not that different from what you might expect to hear today... read Luke 22:24-27. They were arguing who among them was the greatest. But God's kingdom is upside down – the least is the greatest – and Jesus sets an example as one who serves in humility. What do you think true humility looks like in action? How is humility different from low self-esteem?

Jesus said that we should follow his example of serving one another (v. 14-15). Can you think of practical ways you can put serving into practice with your family, friends, or coworkers? How does "serving" actually play out? What does it look like? How do you serve if you're in a position of power or authority?

Sometimes it's easier for us to serve than to be served. It's easier to be charitable than to receive charity. Why do you think that is? Why do you think Peter initially reacted so strongly against having his feet washed by Jesus? (v. 8)

Footwashing is a meaningful part of many churches' normal worship. It is a symbolic act of our commitment to follow Jesus' example of service. If your group feels comfortable with the idea, take turns washing each other's feet as you pray for one another.

### Pray

Reserve at least the last 15 minutes of group time to pray for the things that came up in your discussion and any other prayer needs.

## **Here's some background information on John 13:1-17:**

### **Why did Jesus wash his disciples' feet?**

To show his love (v. 1), and by extension, the love of Jesus' heavenly Father. Jesus said that he only does what he sees the Father doing (5:19), and this footwashing is not said to be an exception to that rule. John's introduction to the event ensures that we understand God's glory is revealed in Jesus in this sign. This is what God himself is like--he washes feet, even the feet of the one who will betray him! Thus, the footwashing is a true "sign," for it is a revelation of God.

### **What is meant by the devil having prompted the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot (v.2)?**

Judas had already agreed to betray Jesus, see Matthew 26:14-16: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him." It is extremely important to realize that Jesus is going to wash the feet of one who is considering betraying him. Judas has not yet given in to the temptation (cf. v. 27), but the devil has *prompted* him, or more literally, "put it into his heart."

### **Why did Jesus take off his outer clothing and wrap a towel around his waist (John 13:4)?**

It was a demonstration of humility. Jesus was dressing Himself down as a slave to serve. For a teacher or Rabbi to take this humble position would have been considered scandalous (as evidenced by Peter's reaction in verse 8.) Jesus "*got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist*" (v. 4). Interestingly, the verb used for "*took off*" (*tithemi*) is not the usual word for this idea (*apotithemi*). Perhaps John intends an allusion to Jesus' imminent laying down of life at the cross, since this verb is used for that idea elsewhere (10:11, 15, 17-18; 13:37-38). Similarly, the word used for taking up his garments (*lambano*, v. 12) was used to describe his taking up his life again (10:17-18). So perhaps through the language he uses, John is connecting these two events of great humility. Jesus' act of humble servitude stands in stark contrast to his disciples' dinner conversation about who among them was "the greatest" (see Luke 22:24-27).

### **What is meant by, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet... " (John 13:10)?**

People would bathe before going to a special meal, but their feet would get dirty on the way since they wore sandals. Here, as in verse 8, Jesus is addressing Peter as an individual, but by implication he is also addressing each of the disciples. Jesus must wash him, or else he is not clean and has no share with him. What does this washing or "bath" refer to? Some think that the bathing (v. 10) is the cleansing from sin on the cross and that the footwashing would refer to the forgiveness of one's daily sins.

### **What are the implications of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet?**

While the disciples were still reeling from this embarrassing event, Jesus spells out the implications for their own lives of what he has done: "*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you*" (vv. 14-15). But what does Jesus have in mind? Are we to literally wash each other's feet? Jesus does not say to do "what" he did but "as" he did. The disciples are to pass on the same teaching that Jesus had just demonstrated, both in word and deed: the selfless love of God.

*The background information above was adapted from JustBible.net and IVP New Testament Commentary.*