

## STUDY GUIDE

**NEW VISION**  
THE MIDDLE  
JESUS  
WASHES THE  
DISCIPLES  
FEET  
JOHN 13:1-26  
11/12/2017



# NEW VISION

## MAIN POINT

We experience and share the grace of God when we do the most menial tasks for the most undeserving people.

## INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the dirtiest job you have ever done? Are you willing to do it again? Why or why not?**

**Describe a time when someone served you in a profound way, doing something for you that you absolutely did not want to do. How did that make you feel?**

We live in a culture that constantly encourages us to “look out for no. 1,” to put ourselves first, and do whatever it takes to get ahead. We value the idea of the self-made person. We like to think that we are self-sufficient, that we don’t need the service of others. If we are honest before God, however, none of us got to where we are solely on our own effort. There have been countless people around us who took on lesser roles to serve us and our lives were never the same. Just before going to the cross, Jesus did just this. He willingly took on a lesser role and modeled humility for His disciples.

## READ AND REFLECT

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER TELL THE STORY (JOHN 13:1-26) DO AS BEST YOU CAN, DO NOT STOP AND TEACH, TRY NOT TO MAKE POINTS (COMMENTARY), JUST TELL THE STORY.**

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**REBUILD THE STORY AS A GROUP: CHRONOLOGICALLY REBUILD THE STORY FROM MEMORY. ASK QUESTIONS IF NECESSARY. LIKE – “WHAT HAPPENED FIRST?”, “WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?”, “DID WE LEAVE OUT ANYTHING?” FINALLY, HAVE PARTICIPANTS LOOK AT THEIR BIBLES AND SEE IF ANYTHING WAS ADDED OR LEFT OUT OF THE STORY AS THEY GO THROUGH IT ONE MORE TIME**

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

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:1-6.**

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**How does 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 the presence of Judas in this foot-washing scene?**

Jesus knew where He came from, where He was going, and who He was, so He could be confident. Jesus lived with a single-minded passion for God's glory and an unwavering focus on His mission. This allowed Him to continue to put other people ahead of Himself even with the threat of the cross looming over Him, and even if those He was serving played a role in His death.

**Compare and contrast the description of Jesus in verse 3 with His actions in verses 4 and 5. Is this the sort of behavior we expect from people of tremendous power and authority?**

**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?**

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:6-11.**

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

**Why was Peter offended by the idea of Jesus washing his feet (v. 6, 8)? What does this say about his heart?**

In verse 8, Peter used a double negative to refuse Jesus' act of service. In Greek, a double negative indicates a strong and passionate refusal. The thought of Jesus bowing so low to serve him angered Peter. He was offended not only because he didn't think that Jesus should be doing such a vile task but because Peter himself was full of pride. Peter's pride was keeping him from seeing his desperate need for divine cleansing.

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

**What might it say about the condition of our hearts when we refuse to let people serve us?**

**What does Jesus' statement in verse 8 foreshadow, and how?**

**What does Jesus mean by "If I don't wash you, you have no share with me"?**

Jesus did not just want Peter to entrust his dirty feet to Him. Jesus wanted Peter to entrust his dirty life to Him. Likewise, we need Jesus to cleanse us from our sins. We need trust that God served us before we can ever hope to serve Him. The cross was the greatest act of humble service ever committed. God took on flesh and dwelt among us and gave up His life to take the punishment that we deserve for our sins. This act of service changes everything for those who trust Christ.

**What is significant about Peter's request that Jesus wash his hands and head as well?**

Though Peter initially responds with indignation, faith in and love for Jesus leads him to submit to Jesus' humble act. Jesus' statement to Peter in verse 8 ("If I do not wash you, you have no share with me") broke Peter's pride. In this moment, Peter realized that he desperately needed Jesus to cleanse him.

**What do you think Jesus is trying to communicate to Peter by saying, "the one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet" (v. 10)?**

Jesus communicated to Peter that His one act was enough and is worthy of Peter's trust. Jesus is enough for us as well. The cross is sufficient to wash our sins completely away. When we trust Jesus with our lives, we are made eternally righteous before a holy God.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 13:12-17.**

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**How might we demonstrate to the people around us that Jesus has washed away our sins (vv. 14-17)?**

**What are some practical ways we can "take the lesser role" and serve those around us?**

## APPLY

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

**In what areas of your life is it hardest for you to accept the service of others? How might you respond differently now that you have considered how Christ served His disciples?**

**Jesus washed all of His disciples' feet, including Judas who would betray Him (v. 11). How can you "take the lesser role" and serve those who oppose you this week?**

**What can our group do to serve people in our community who are opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**

## PRAY

Close in prayer, praising God for serving us through His Son's death on the cross for our sins. Ask God to help us follow Jesus' example and serve others whether or not we think they deserve it. Pray that God would make us a community of believers who constantly ask what else we can do to serve each other and to serve the lost. Pray that God would make us willing to take the lesser role in order to point one another and the lost world around us to our desperate need for Jesus.

## COMMENTARY

### JOHN 13:1-17

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13:1. The time had come, and Jesus would soon leave this world. This term for "world" appears 185 times in the New Testament; 8 times in Matthew; 3 times in Mark, 3 in Luke; but 78 in the Gospel of John. The other two key words are time and love.

13:2. Judas typifies a society in rebellion against God, but the Lord's treatment also demonstrates God's grace and compassion with that society. Though the disciples never grasped Judas' true nature until after the betrayal in the garden, Jesus knew it from the beginning. Yet He gave Judas every opportunity to turn from his wicked ways,

repent, and follow his Lord. John pulled no punches in his description of the betrayer and his evil master. In a few more verses (v. 27) we read that “Satan entered into him.”

13:3-5. Verse 3 reminds us that Jesus was the omnipotent God. Jesus allowed the full scenario to play out as the errant disciple made choice after choice leading to his suicide. Some interpreters take these words symbolically, making the water equal to the Word, the towel demonstrating righteousness, and so forth. That hardly seems necessary in light of the culture of the first century. An old proverb says, “Actions speak louder than words,” and the Lord’s willingness to wash the feet of His disciples, even Judas’s, reflects servant leadership at its best. People who are familiar with first-century culture will immediately recognize how socially inappropriate this behavior was. Never in Jewish, Greek, or Roman society would a superior wash the feet of inferiors.

13:6-7. Little discussions with Peter fill the synoptic Gospels, and John enjoys recording them as well. Shocked by the cultural reversal as he literally looked down at his Lord, Peter said in effect, “What’s going on here?” And Jesus replied, “You have no idea, but some day you will.” Presumably Jesus began the foot-washing with Peter, so he was the first to be shocked.

13:8-9. Peter was too humble to have his feet washed, but not too humble to command the Lord. As soon as Jesus emphasized that this symbolic act united the disciple with the Lord in some significant way, Peter took the full plunge. Let us not miss the practical theology of these verses. There is no place in the body of Christ for those who have not been cleansed by the Lord. Washing in this symbolic context cannot refer to baptism, but the atoning cleansing of sin.

13:10-11. Here we have a beautiful picture of forgiveness and one of the most important theological texts of the New Testament. How often does a person need to be saved? Once? Every time he or she sins? Just before death to make sure? These verses tell us that a person who has been completely cleansed once will only require regular washings after that. A full bathing depicts initial regeneration; the repeated washings symbolize forgiveness of ongoing sinful behavior.

13:12-14. The washing not only demonstrated humility and servanthood to the disciples, but also laid an experiential foundation for the teaching of verse 10. When the foot-washing ended, Jesus taught an important lesson about the relationship of believers—you also should wash one another’s feet. Jesus emphasized the words Teacher and Lord in contrast with the way they had behaved toward Him. The Lord reminded them that He washed their feet as their leader.

13:15-17. Throughout the New Testament, we learn the importance of example, never more so than when Jesus refers to Himself. But here we are not focused on some great spiritual reality or doctrinal truth; the passage deals with how we treat other people. Since Jesus loved His disciples and loves us in the same way, we need to do for others what He has done for us.