

FPFWC Christian Development



Godly Love Among Believers

November 2020

Fall Quarter

October 31, 2020

Lesson #1 –Serving Love

Scripture Focus – John 13:1-15, 34-35

ICE BREAKER –

1. When and why is it difficult for you to serve others?
2. When and why do you find it difficult to allow others to serve you?

Key Verse: For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. John 13:15

LESSON BACKGROUND

The apostle John was one of Jesus' closest associates. Jesus trusted him enough to task him with the care of Jesus' own mother, Mary, at the cross (John 19:26–27). Church tradition says that John later moved to the great city of Ephesus, taking Mary with him. There he ministered for many years, dying sometime between AD 95 and 100. His exile to Patmos is also well known (Revelation 1:9).

There are five books in the Bible written by John: the Gospel, 1-3 John, and Revelation. The other three Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels because they share much of the same perspective (as shown in the amount of shared material). John's stands alone, with much unique content. It was written after the other three, likely between AD 90 and 94, though dates both earlier and later have been suggested.

All four Gospels include a retelling of the last supper, but the earliest surviving account is from Paul. He shared a description of the supper, material he learned from the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23a), about 25 years after the actual event. While the accounts from Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–39; and 1 Corinthians 11:23b–26 are similar, the way John records the story is quite different. The focus of the other accounts (the bread and cup) are in the background of John's last supper. Rather than the institution of the elements of the Lord's Supper, John includes two things the other accounts leave out. The first is the content of our lesson today. The second is nearly five chapters of Jesus' oral teaching and a lengthy prayer (John 13–17), mostly unique material found nowhere else in the New Testament.

LESSON COMMENTARY

A. Washing the Disciples' Feet (13:1–20)

13:1. Of the three Passovers cited in John, this **Feast of the Passover** is the only one recorded in the Synoptics. **Jesus** was fully aware that the time of His death had come (cf. 12:23). His disciples were not. **He loved** His disciples, even Judas, **to the end** (*telos*)—to the cross where He cried, “It is finished” (*teleo*, 19:30). Up to this point in John, it was said that his hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). Now it is said that **His hour had come**, i.e., the time of His death, resurrection, and ascension as described in the words, to **depart out of this world to the Father**.

13:2–5. The idea of betraying Jesus was not an original thought of Judas; **the devil** had **already put** the notion **into** his faithless **heart** (cf. 6:71; 12:4). Once again (cf. v. 1), Jesus had a complete self-awareness of His universal authority (cf. Mt 28:18), His origin, and His destiny (v. 3). That **He had come forth from God** was symbolized as He **laid aside His garments** to take the role of a servant (v. 4). In Israel, one’s feet became dirty as one walked from place to place. Washing the feet of a guest was a common courtesy provided by a host but performed by a household servant, and never by the head of the home. Jesus became His disciples’ servant, breaching social customs. Instead of saying that Jesus “took off” and then “put on,” John said He **laid aside** (*tithemi*, v. 4) and “took up” (*lambano*, 13:12) His garments—words used earlier for His death (10:17–18).

13:6–8. Some of the disciples submitted as Jesus washed their feet. But when Jesus **came to Simon Peter**, he questioned the Lord’s lowly act. Jesus knew Peter’s limited understanding (**you do not realize now**, v. 7). The meaning of the foot washing would become clear **hereafter**, i.e., after the upper room teachings and/or after the resurrection. Peter still resisted (v. 8), using a strong negative in Greek: **Never shall You wash my feet!** Jesus replied that if Peter refused to have his feet washed by Him, then he could **have no part with** the Messiah. Ongoing partnership or fellowship with Jesus is conditioned on the recurrent cleansing of the believer as he confesses his sins (1Jn 1:9).

13:9–11. In Peter’s enthusiasm to be in companionship with his Lord, he asked Jesus to wash his whole body. Jesus’ instructions to Peter about two distinct cleansings must not be overlooked. **He who has bathed** [*louo*] **needs only to wash** [*nipito*] **his feet**, because he **is completely clean** (v. 10). The bath represents the complete, unrepeatable cleansing of new birth; the washing of the feet pictures the repeated cleansing needed for intimacy with Christ after salvation (cf. 15:14). This intimacy requires walking in the light and confessing sins (see 1Jn 1:6–9). The apostle interpreted Jesus’ words (v. 11), **you are clean, but not all of you**, to single out Judas. Since Judas had not believed, he was not clean, i.e., regenerated.

13:12–15. For Jesus to have **taken up His garments** again forecasted His glorification at the resurrection. After a rhetorical question to gain their attention, Christ reasoned that He was rightfully above them. They themselves called Him **Teacher and Lord** (v. 13), terms relevant for ongoing discipleship. Since a servant is not above his master (Mt 10:24), the disciples needed to humble themselves like their Teacher and serve others. To **wash one another’s feet** (v. 14) included laying down their lives for their brothers or sisters (10:11, 14, 17; 15:13; 1Jn 3:16).

Foot washing is not set down as an ordinance but as an **example** (v. 15) of all forms of humble service modeled by the Lord's foot washing (cf. 1Tm 5:10).

LESSON NUGGET – The distinguishing mark of true disciples is their love for one another (1 John 2:7-11), and it is the kind of love that the world can see. He commands us to love, and He gives us the power to obey (Rom. 5:5).

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*