

John Chapter 13

For Jesus and the others at the table with him, having your feet washed is a big deal. Remember, it was only a few days ago that Jesus had his own feet washed with ridiculously expensive perfume. But, think about it. If you were sitting at a low table, eating with a bunch of guys who have been walking around in sandals all day, you would want everyone's feet to be clean, right? Since nobody else is cleaning feet, and it needs to be done, Jesus steps up to serve his disciples. When he's done, he tells the disciples he wants them to do the same for others.

Some Christians take this literally and schedule times to wash their friend's feet as an act of obedience to Jesus here. There is some significance to this modern foot washing practice, but does it really get to the point Jesus was making? Unless you're getting a pedicure or you are physically unable to do it yourself, have you ever had someone wash your feet? Would it make you feel appreciated and respected if someone did this, or would it just feel weird?

Foot washing is not a normal part of our culture like it was for Jesus and his disciples, so that specific action doesn't translate. What does make sense for us is to become a servant to those around us. That is really the point Jesus is trying to make by using something his disciples are used to seeing take place. Jesus is powerfully teaching his disciples and us to not act like we are more important than other people. Find something others need done and take it upon yourself to do it for them.

Maybe you can come up with your own version of foot washing that actually fits in the context of your life. Something you can do for others that will make them question your motives. Because, that leads to questions and opportunities to talk about Jesus.

Notice that Jesus' act of service is completely inclusive. He even includes the guy he already knows is about to hand him over to be killed. Jesus doesn't pick and choose who he will serve. He washes Judas' feet right along with all of his loyal followers.

Could you do the same? We always want to know ahead of time who our friends are and who will be our enemies. If we know this going into a situation, we tend to act differently based on that knowledge. We do a little extra for those who are loyal to us, and we are hesitant to do the same for those who we know will stab us in the back. Jesus, however, gives Judas the exact same treatment as he does the rest of the disciples.

This is something we also need to be careful of when we choose who to spend time with. Often, in an attempt to use our time more wisely, Christians will only spend time with non-Christians if they think they will be able to easily convert them, as if any time spent with unbelievers that does not lead to immediate repentance is wasted. But, that is not the example Jesus gives for us.

In fact, Jesus makes it very clear here that we are not responsible for converting anyone. Our presence among unbelievers gives them the opportunity to receive us and, Jesus says, that will lead to them receiving him and the Father. Simply being received opens doors and hearts that allow Jesus to enter in.

After Judas leaves, Jesus gives the remaining disciples one more instruction. He tells them to love each other in the same way he has loved them. Selfless love. The years Jesus has spent with the disciples have served as an example. This is why the Gospels don't skip straight from Jesus' birth to his death on the cross. Christmas and Easter are very important parts of our faith, but so is all the time in between. The example Jesus gives for us should inform the way we live every day. He is banking on it! Because our lives are the places where people will see him.

Jesus tells us the world will know we are his disciples because of our love—because we love like he loves. Sadly, there are far too many instances when Christians are recognized because of something other than the love of Christ. We tend to be more notorious for the things we oppose than for the love Jesus has put inside of us.

What would happen if we were to focus more of our efforts on showing love than we do on telling people how to be moral? Are there times when your attention tends to be overly focused on rules or prohibitions? Can you think of areas in your life that would improve if you were more intentional about showing the love of Jesus?