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SERVING LIKE JESUS

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A BIBLE STUDY ON SERVING GOD AND OTHERS

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The first job of many adults was in the service industry. This industry includes businesses that help people by providing enjoyable experiences. Work is primarily performed after school, serving customers in fast-food restaurants. As young people, being a part of the service industry was not as important as the money they earned. Money paid for clothes, shoes, and other material items for an enjoyable teen life. Overtime this attitude changed because of the need for the service they provided. And right along with this change, the service industry itself changed.

In the adult arena, some of those service jobs include waiter, teacher, doctor, lawyer, salesperson, business manager, plumber, entertainer, and janitor. But for many of these service oriented jobs, in-person service has changed to online service. The use of technology has reduced the need for many workers.

For example, robotic arms can now prepare food and drink orders from a voice generated computer. These advances reduce the need for server humans who provide the warmth and kindness of personal interaction. This is not what the Bible intended for how we serve others.

First Peter 4:9-10 tells us, "Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God." Servicing others is an important part of being a Christian. It is a way to show love and kindness, and it brings us closer to God. When we serve others, we not only make their lives better, but we also grow in our faith. This unit provides insights to the way service was demonstrated in the life of Jesus. In seven sessions, we will not only look at what the Bible says about service in the life of Jesus, but also why it matters.

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SESSION 1

FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH SERVICE

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
MAKE IT YOUR PRACTICE TO SERVE OTHERS LIKE JESUS DID.

JOHN 13:3-17

3 Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands,
that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God.
4 So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel,
and tied it around himself.
5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples'
feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

.....

6 He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to
wash my feet?"
7 Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but
afterward you will understand."
8 "You will never wash my feet," Peter said. Jesus replied, "If I don't
wash you, you have no part with me."
9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands
and my head."

.....

12 When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he
reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for
you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly,
since that is what I am.

MEMORY VERSE

**14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you
also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an
example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.**

16 "Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a
messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.
17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

KEYWORDS

Wash disciples' feet (v. 5)–No known example from the ancient world depicts a superior washing the feet of those who would have been considered inferior. Jews, Greeks, and Romans in Jesus's day believed that touching or washing someone else's feet was repulsive. Jews considered this task demeaning and shameful and a task for slaves.

Put on His outer clothing (v. 12)–Earlier, Jesus "laid aside his outer clothing," which showing He assumed the role of a servant. (v. 4). Putting clothing back on indicated He returned to His role as Teacher. Like with His incarnation, Jesus temporarily laid aside His divine privileges to assume the position servant.

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WHAT SHOULD BELIEVERS KNOW ABOUT SERVING OTHERS LIKE JESUS DID?

There has never been a better example of what it means to serve others than when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. However, it's unfortunate that people, even some believers, are caught up in serving themselves. That's the world we live in today. Rather than growing close together, we live in cliques. I heard someone say that he had lived in his house for ten years but did not know the names of his neighbors. This would be a statement of shame if said by a Christian. Yet, it's true for many of us.

We are called to live differently from people in the world. Jesus has called us to serve one another, and this includes our neighbors. Think about the difference a knock on the door would make, especially if that person or family is in need. Think about the difference it would make to invite your next-door neighbors to church with you. At church they would receive a serving of love and an opportunity to know and worship God. That's what it looks like to follow Jesus in service. He did not live reclusively. He did not ignore people that He walked past. He did what was necessary to be of service to everyone, and so should we.

Foot Washing May Be Required

// John 13:3-5

Disciples were like most people. We learn better when someone models or provides a visual of the lesson for us. Jesus understood this. Using words through sermons and teachings, Jesus had taught His disciples how to pray, what should be our priority when serving God, and many other spiritual principles for life. But on the last night before His death, Jesus modeled love and service, then He told His disciples very simply to follow His example.

Jesus shared an end-of-life lesson with His disciples. When people are living their last days or moments of life on earth, it makes sense to leave something meaningful. We typically call it a legacy. A legacy is not necessarily money or material possessions. A legacy can be the essence of who you are, your morals, your ideals, your life preferences, the reason that you got up every day, and more so for believers, your Christian faith. Jesus wanted the disciples to learn an important lesson that was part of His legacy.

When we get ready to leave this earth, we want to leave a legacy that will be impactful for our loved ones and even the world. This legacy will grow out of the way we live our lives. The life that each



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of us lives should not be focused inward. An inward focused life sidesteps God's commands because it prioritizes self rather than loving and serving others.

We know that we will not live forever on this earth, so we should be diligent in our preparation. Jesus took advantage of the time He had left to share what He knew would happen. We are reminded, at this moment, of Jesus's omniscience. He knew these three things:

- **He was given everything into His hands by the Father;**
- **He had come from God;**
- **He was going back to God.**

Jesus also knew what was in Judas's mind. Jesus understood that Judas had joined Satan's regime and was in rebellion against God. But rather than stopping Judas, Jesus allowed everything to play out. Judas could have repented and changed his mind, but he made one bad choice after another leading ultimately to his suicide.

Rather than focusing on Judas, Jesus began His visual demonstration of what it means to serve others. The creator of the universe, God's only Son willingly began to wash the feet of His disciples, even Judas's feet. Never in Jewish culture should a superior wash the feet of inferiors.

Jesus showed servant leadership at its best. He was comfortable enough in His own skin so that despite any disapproval or opinions about what He was doing, He could serve His disciples. Jesus pushed aside the demeaning ramifications. He exemplified one of the ways believers should live outwardly.

HOW DOES HUMILITY ALLOW US TO SERVE OTHERS?

But lowering ourselves as Jesus did to serve others is difficult for some believers for two reasons. First, pride gets in the way and keeps us focused on ourselves. This attitude is influenced by the culture in which we live. We see people who disregard the needs of those around them for the sake of heaping things on themselves.

Second, for many believers, our lives as kids were filled with need, especially in the black community. We may have longed for the toys, clothes, and things that other kids had, and this caused some of us to hang on to any gift we received.

As a result of that experience, we still we still hang tightly to what belongs to us. But we must overcome this attitude with the truth. Everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to God (1 Chron. 29:11), and God wants us to share His things with others.



DIGGING DEEPER
FOOT WASHING

Perhaps there exists no act more menial than washing someone else's feet. In biblical times, foot washing was required and necessary, because of the dusty roads on which people traveled. This task was reserved for the lowest of menial servants. Furthermore, peers did not wash one another's feet, except in the case of great love. Today in dusty countries, foot washing is no longer practiced. However, throughout church history, foot washing has been practiced as a church ordinance in some churches. When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He was demonstrating love, humility, and servanthood. He was not emphasizing a physical rite. A widow "washed the saints' feet" (1 Tim. 5:10) not because she was practicing a church ordinance but to show humble, slave-like service to other believers. In the same way, Jesus washed His disciples' feet. He has commanded us to follow His example through service to others. Disobedience to this commandment is to place ourselves above Christ and live in pride.

How has this lesson changed your view of foot washing and service?

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We May Not Understand Why

// John 13:6-9

In Philippians 2, Paul talked about the human nature of Jesus when he said, "Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead, he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity" (vv. 6-7). But the apostle John showed what this act of Jesus looks like.

As Jesus proceeded to Peter to wash his feet, Peter doesn't seem to be ready to accept the program. He showed some resistance to the cultural reversal of Jesus, his Lord and Master washing the feet of a lowly fisherman. Presumably, Peter was first to receive the foot washing. His shock of Jesus's actions may have also been felt by the others. But Jesus encouraged Peter to trust Him with the understanding about this later.

But Peter did not associate the foot washing with anything except what it was. He did not see that it was tied to future events, including Jesus's death. Peter displayed the pride of a non-believer. His confidence was in his own ability to save himself. He did not understand his need for divine cleansing.

Pride can become an issue as we walk this Christian journey. Our resistance to following the will of God for our lives can cause us to miss out on a spiritual promotion or a blessing that could have made things better for us.

Peter was too humble to have Jesus wash his feet but not too humble to issue commands to Him. As soon as Peter realized he would be separated from Jesus if he did not comply, he took the full plunge, telling Jesus to include the washing of his hands and his head. Let us not miss the practical theology of these verses. There is no place in the body of Christ for those who resists being cleansed of sin by Jesus.

In a very simple but profound way, our service to others in Jesus's name is a partnership with God that results in the saving of souls and changing of lives.

IN WHAT WAYS DO WE RESIST BIBLICAL ACTIONS THAT ALIGN US WITH GOD'S WILL?

Follow Jesus's Example

// John 13:12-17

Jesus demonstrated not only humility and servanthood to His disciples, but He also laid a foundation for the teaching of verse 10. Jesus wanted them to know that once you are saved, you are always saved. That means our sins have been atoned for and we have been completely cleansed. Following this initial cleansing, only regular washings are required. The repeated washings are a symbol of forgiveness for ongoing sinful behavior.

So, when the foot washing ended, the lesson Jesus was teaching had not. He extended what He had taught to include our relationships with one another. If our Lord and Teacher did not give it a second thought about washing the feet of His disciples, what prevents us from washing the feet of those we love and minister with? Some people recoil at the idea of washing someone's feet. They consider feet dirty and smelly and don't want to touch them. So, this foot washing can be replicated in the way we serve people. The three years that Jesus's disciples spent learning from Him had culminated to this—serving others. They would be sent into the world serving all the people to whom they took the message of salvation.

Jesus reminded His disciples that He, their leader and teacher, washed their feet. He emphasized that despite His divine nature, He willingly performed

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this menial task. He then taught that, because He washed their feet, they should willingly wash one another's feet. This passage deals with the way we treat others. Clearly, this open demonstration reveals the character that Jesus wants His disciples to have, including us. As He declared, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

WHAT DO YOU DO TO CHARACTERIZE THE LOVE JESUS WANTS US TO EXTEND TO OTHERS?

If we are to represent Christ in our churches, in our homes, or in the marketplace, we must behave toward them the way Jesus behaved toward His disciples. We will have joyful hearts by conducting our lives this way. First, we should ask Jesus to wash and cleanse us, then we need to pray that He helps us to wash others, by sharing Jesus with them. Jesus concluded that we can be blessed as Christians for acting in love and service toward others. This includes forgiving, serving and loving those who are part of the body of Christ.

Our churches are filled with criticism, complaints, and conflict. However, service to others will harmonize and strengthen the body. Jesus served by giving of Himself sacrificially. In the same way, followers of Jesus serve Jesus by serving others in His name.

DID YOU KNOW?

Foot washing was an act necessary for comfort and cleanliness for anyone who has traveled dusty Palestinian roads wearing sandals. Customarily, a host provided guests with water for washing their own feet. Foot washing was regarded as so lowly a task that it could not be required of a Hebrew slave. As a sign of exceptional love, a disciple might wash a master's feet. The initiative of the woman who was a "sinner" in washing Jesus's feet (Luke 7:37-50) was more than expected hospitality; hers was an act of great love that resulted in the forgiveness of her sins. Jesus presented Himself as an example of humble, loving service. The command to do for one another what Christ has done for them ought to not be confined simply to washing feet. What Jesus did for the disciples was lay down His life for them. Foot washing is just one expression of this.

Biblical Truth: True spiritual power and love in the Christian life is found not in exercising greatness but in emptying oneself.

In what ways are you "washing the feet" of others in your pursuit of Christlikeness?

LIVE IT

How can you include service to others in your daily rhythms of life?
Jesus washed the feet of His disciples as an act of service and a show of His love. Stunningly, Judas was included, so Jesus washed the feet of His enemy. This makes what Jesus did all the more remarkable. It also means that we should not discriminate against those we love and serve. When we pick and choose whom we should serve, we are servicing in disobedience. The person to whom you say no is someone that is loved by our Lord. We can do as Jesus did by doing the following:

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- **Begin with yourself.** Redemption cleansed us and saved us from the wrath of God. We must remain humbled by our own salvation before we serve others.
- **Ask for God's help.** Prayer keeps us from practicing servant duties on our own. Ask for God's grace to be extended through you to others.
- **Serve someone else.** Practice makes perfect. Ask God to lead you to someone through a divine spiritual encounter who needs love or a service you can provide. Then do it again.

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DAILY READINGS

1. DO THE DIRTY JOB// PHILIPPIANS 2:7

One of my favorite shows to watch growing up was Dirty Jobs. Watching people working in professions with others that would be deemed disgusting or even sickening, based on their nature, interested me. Why? These jobs were still necessary for everyone to live comfortably. Could you imagine a world where trash isn't removed? Jesus did the "dirty job" of coming down from heaven, taking on the form of a servant, and dying as an innocent man for our sins. As a believer, God calls us to follow this example and do the "dirty job" of serving others. Doing this mirrors Christ's perfect example of service.

Service to others reminds us of Christ's ultimate sacrifice and pushes us to be more like Him.

2. SERVICE AS A GUIDE //JOHN 12:26

"Without God, my life would be rugged like a ship without a sail . . ." These lyrics remind believers that the Lord guides and shapes our lives. Imagine your life without the guidance of God. Through the Word of God, we have clear direction for our lives; we are to follow Christ's example. One of His many examples of how to live a holy life is to serve others. This guidance gives us purpose, as following Christ and serving go hand in hand (John 12:26). When we use Christ's example to guide us, this pursuit drives us into a deeper relationship with Him.

Lord, help me to use service to You as a guide to life.

3. A SERVANT LEADER //JOHN 13:3–5

Strong leaders are few and far between. Many believe that loudly barking orders, being confrontational, and being the center of attention are what makes a leader. However, what good leaders know is that being willing to serve those over whom you have authority is what makes a leader. Jesus, who has all power and authority both in heaven and earth, yet lowered Himself to wash the feet of the disciples, showing us the perfect example of a leader and a servant. Being a servant leader requires that believers lead the charge of serving others while leading them to the cross. All believers have been graciously tasked to lead people to Christ (Matt. 28:16–20). A willing heart is all we need to complete the task.

Lord, give us a willing heart and mind to serve the people You've put in our path.

4. MAKE LOVE YOUR FOCUS// COLOSSIANS 3:23–24

Being a servant often comes with challenges; it comes without reward or recognition. This can leave us jaded, rigid, and even bitter, as the effort we put into our service isn't acknowledged. However, when we feel our hearts becoming stony, we must shift our focus to why we serve in the first place. Service shouldn't just be completed out of duty, but out of love. This selfless love shuns the validation of the masses and focuses on the salvation of the lost. Following this example, we ought to let love motivate our service, remembering that our most treasured reward won't come from man, but from the Lord.

When we make love our focus in serving others, our work will be rewarded by the Lord.

5. THE SACRIFICE OF SERVICE//1 KINGS 17:15–16

Giving up our time and resources can be taxing mentally, physically, and emotionally. It's extremely easy to say "no" when we're given the opportunity to serve, especially when we're at our wits' end. However, when we're faced with the option of refusal, we can instead choose to say "yes." Why? In following Christ's example of service, we are also following His example of sacrifice. Furthermore, following His example helps us to identify who Christ is to us. The widow would find God to be a provider by sacrificing her last and being obedient. How will He reveal His character to you if you do the same?

Following Christ's example of service requires sacrifice and our "yes!"

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BEFORE YOU TEACH

Serving Like Jesus Overview

Begin this study by meditating on the word "serve." Merriam-Webster has multiple definitions including "attending to someone's needs ... giving homage, respect, or obedience to a superior." For believers, the superior One is Jesus and giving homage to Him begins with serving others. Ponder why this study is important in a "me first" culture and plan to pose this question to your group. To further introduce this study, use the overview poster to review the session titles.

In Jesus Shoes

Imagine how it must feel to know that your death is imminent. Additionally, think about your dearest friends not being able to assist you or setting out to betray you. Remember, that this was Jesus' state. Challenge your students to list what they would do if they only had one day to live. Ask, "Would you humbly kneel down to a servant's position, like Jesus, and symbolically wash the feet of others?"

LOOK BACK

Reflect on the previous study - The Lifestyle of a Witness. Allow the class to recall at least three key nuggets that resonated with them. Take time to recap the key topics and how God uses His Word to guide our path. Next, have the class discuss ways they incorporated the "Live It" statements into their week. As they share their experiences, connect the statements to the Unit Topic: Serving Like Jesus.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

DO: At the beginning of class, give each student half a sheet of paper. Have them fold it on the long edge. Once the paper has been folded, tell them to label one column "humility" and the other column "vanity."

ASK: "What words come to mind when you think of humility and vanity?"

SAY: Write the words in the appropriate column. Which column best describes you? Note: Only you and God will know which column you chose.

GUIDE: Lead the learner into a discussion of the words they generated. State that serving others requires displaying the characteristics of humility.

TRANSITION: Read **The Point: "Make it your practice to serve others just like Jesus did."** Also ask the session question, **"What should believers know about serving others like Jesus did?"**

PACK ITEM: Display **Pack Item 1, the "Serving Like Jesus"** poster, to introduce the major theme of this study, along with the focus of each session.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Foot Washing May Be Required // John 13:3-5

PACK ITEM: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 3, the "Footwashing"** handout. Walk through the sections of the handout together.

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read John 13:1-3.

EXPLAIN: Jesus and the disciples were traveling to the Passover Festival, and the devil had sought out Judas to betray Christ. Additionally, Jesus knew that God "had given everything into His hands" (John 13:3a).

EMPHASIZE: Direct learners to the sentence that begins "We know that" from the learner pages (p. 13). Call attention to Jesus' s omniscience and the three things that He knew.

ASK: "What had God placed in Jesus's hands?"

EXPLAIN: Jesus had the salvation of the world in His hands. He knew that the time of His departure was near. His earthly purpose as the sacrificial "Lamb of God," who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

READ: Request that another volunteer read John 13:4-5.

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DISCUSS: Have the learners share what they believe verses four and five mean. Refer to the Commentary for additional information on these verses.

SAY: "Jesus did not discriminate. He even included Judas in the foot washing despite knowing of the impending betrayal."

EMPHASIZE: Refer to (p. 13) and read the sentence that begins "But lowering ourselves." Point out that everything belongs to God and He wants us to share.

We May Not Understand Why

// John 13:6-9

READ: Assign a learner to read John 13:6-9.

EXPLAIN: Peter probably verbalized what the other disciples were thinking. Imagine Peter thinking ... Jesus is our teacher, so how can I allow the one in charge to perform a task that is below His status. Though Peter's pride motivated his actions, Peter was right to be in awe of who and what Jesus was about to do for him. Continuing in the passage, Peter goes to the extreme again when He said to Jesus, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

SAY: "We can often be just like Peter, quick to speak and slow to understand what God is doing in our lives. However, we also need to ask God to cleanse our walk, talk, actions, and thoughts."

READ: Select a learner to reread John 13:6-9

DO: Use Think-Write-Share to have learners think about the question, "What does this passage reveal when viewed from Jesus's perspective?" Then, write down their answers, and allow time to share their responses.

EXPLAIN: Jesus is using the act of washing the disciples' feet to symbolize being cleansed by the Lamb of God. When Peter initially refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet, he was unknowingly refusing to be a part of Jesus. While Peter was looking at the circumstance in the natural, Jesus was operating on a spiritual level. Like Peter, believers may not always understand what God is doing in the current situation. However, Christians should be quick to trust and obey God even though the way is not clear.

Follow Jesus's Example

// John 13:12-17

READ: Allow a volunteer to read the Scripture passage, John 13:12-17.

ASK: What words or phrases, in the passage stand out and why? Listen to responses.

GUIDE: Several key words or phrases appear in the text. First, John 13:12 states that **Jesus reclined** which indicates that the task has been completed. The disciples' feet had been washed, but more importantly they had now been cleansed by Jesus. Second, in John 13:13 the words **Teacher and Lord** are used which indicates Jesus' s hierarchy and divine nature. His position, coupled with the act of foot washing, sets the example for how we are to serve others. Third, Jesus asked in John 13:12b, **"Do you know what I have done for you?"** This act of cleansing made the disciples the recipients of being washed by the Lamb of God. Next, Jesus provided a litmus test in John 13:16 when He states that **"a servant is not greater than His Master."** In other words, since Jesus humbly served, then so should His followers. Finally, in John 13:17, Jesus states that if you **"know these things"** and do or practice acts of service **"you are blessed."**

DISCUSS: Have a learner read the second paragraph under "Follow Jesus's Example" from the learner pages (p. 14) and discuss.

ASK: "What about you? What do you do to exemplify the love Jesus wants us to extend to others?" Allow time for the group to share.



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



PACK ITEM 3

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OBJECT LESSON

DO: Download and print an image of the Last Supper that depicts Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Hold the picture up for the class.

SAY: "Think of the position of a person at a basin level and person who needs to be washed."

ASK: "What message is given in both positions?"

EXPLAIN: Jesus humbled Himself to wash the feet of the disciples. When it was Peter's turn, he initially refused but Jesus explained that he would be rejecting Christ's act of humility and service. As believers, one should model Jesus's example of service.

ASK: "Today, what message are we giving and receiving due to our position?"

CLOSE THE SESSION

PACK ITEM: Make copies of **Pack Item 2, the "Serving Like Jesus Memory Verses"** handout, and distribute to the group to help them memorize Bible verses that will help them follow Jesus's example of humble service.

SUMMARIZE: Share with your class, that Jesus is the ultimate model of service and requires His followers to be servants as well.

CHALLENGE: During this week, put into practice the directives found in the "Live It" (p. 15).

PRAY: "Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us how to serve through your Son Jesus. Help us to serve with humility and grace as we seek to help others. Amen."

COMMENTARY

JOHN 13:3-5

Connection to the Point. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

Verse 3. *"Jesus knew."* These two words appear together five times and only in John's Gospel (also 6:64; 13:1; 16:19; 19:28). Each usage points to divine knowledge or facts with spiritual significance—as opposed to information obtained through one's senses. The phrase highlights Jesus's omniscience.

Verse 4. The Greek word for outer clothing is *himation*. This was a large rectangle of cloth that wrapped around a man's body. A man would typically throw the end of the mantle over his left shoulder. Under this, men wore a tunic, which was made of two rectangles of cloth, often sewn together with holes left for the arms and head. A Latin loan word for towel, *lention*, appears only here in the New Testament. This long cloth was normally affixed at the shoulder. A servant or slave might wrap this type of cloth around his waist.

Verse 5. A basin was one of two options that Jesus would have had for washing His disciples' feet. Sometimes, to wash someone's feet or hands, a person might use a pitcher from which water was poured (2 Kings 3:11). No known example from the ancient world depicts a superior washing the feet of those who would have been considered inferior. Jews, Greeks, and Romans in Jesus's day believed that touching or washing someone else's feet was repulsive.

JOHN 13:6-9

Connection to the Point. It's awkward for a follower to be on the receiving end of menial service by the leader.

Verse 6. Jesus had begun working His way around the table, washing the other disciples' feet—evidently without hearing an objection or being impeded (v. 5). John did not indicate

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in his Gospel whether any of the other disciples asked for an explanation or clarification. Simon Peter, though, did. He could not believe what he was seeing—Jesus the Master was taking a basin and towel to wash His disciples' feet. Simon Peter did not refer to Jesus by name or by the title "teacher" or "rabbi." The term "Lord" can express respect or authority, but here it points to Jesus's divine authority. The title Peter used here did not match what he was seeing; the "Lord" behaving like a "slave" seemed like a contradiction.

Verse 7. Jesus's words are a reminder that God's ways are higher than ours (Isa. 55:8-9). Jesus knew Peter did not realize the significance or symbolism of what He was doing. His actions were pointing to the cross; there Jesus would voluntarily assume

Verse 8. Simon Peter's protest here is a reminder of the story in the previous chapter, when Judas Iscariot protested Mary's wasteful extravagance as she washed Jesus's feet (12:1-8). How ironic that these two verbal protests put Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, in the same camp as Peter, the one who preached the great Pentecost sermon that brought thousands to faith in Jesus. The word "If" here does not mean that Jesus did not know whether Peter would allow Him to wash his feet. This statement was a lead-up to the lesson about the significance of what Jesus was about to do. Although Jesus was physically washing the disciples' feet, His words here pointed to cleansing of His followers spiritually.

Verse 9. The boisterous Simon Peter was back. He understood that having cleaned feet symbolized having a daily walk with God. He, though, wanted more. Peter's words here reflected what David had prayed centuries earlier, "Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. 51:2). Although he did not fully comprehend or appreciate the implications of what Jesus had said, Simon Peter was ready for Jesus to wash his feet—and more! Hands and head would be Peter's actions and thinking. He wanted nothing to impede his fellowship with Christ.

JOHN 13:12-17

Connection to the Point. We follow the example of Jesus by serving others.

Verse 12. Jesus had earlier "laid aside his outer clothing," which showed He was assuming the role of a servant. (v. 4). Putting that clothing back on indicated He would be returning to His role as Teacher. Reclining was the normal position for more-formal meals in the first-century Mediterranean world. To recline, people would lay on a dining couch on their left side, prop their head up with their left hand, and eat with their right hand. Three of these couches were commonly put together in a squared-off, capital U configuration.

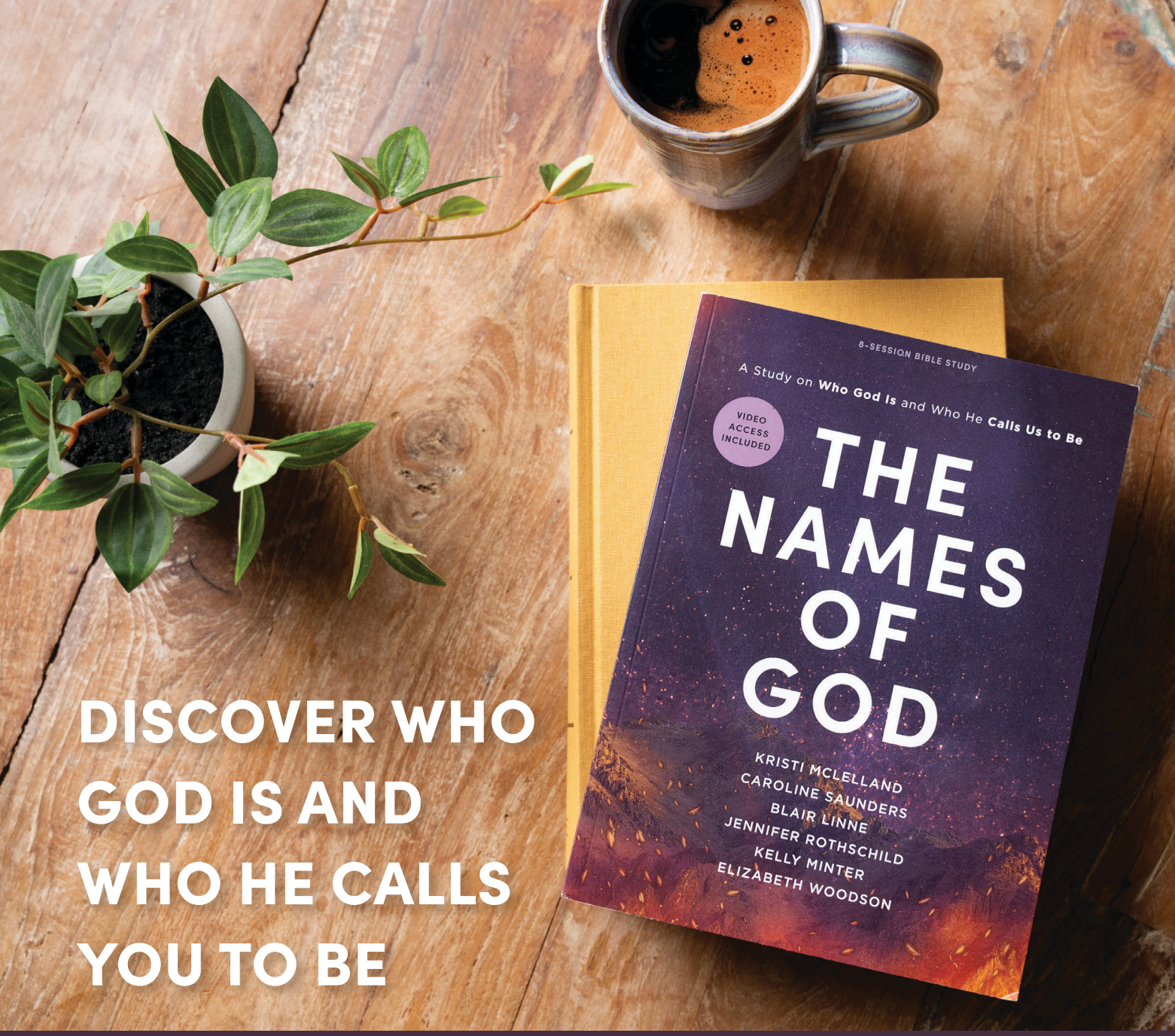
Verse 13. *Teacher and Lord.* These two words held significance in first-century Judaism. Jesus called Himself a *Didaskalos*, a Greek word that referred to someone who taught about both the things of God and the responsibilities of man. The word "Lord" (Greek, *Kyrios*) highlighted Jesus's authority. In secular usage, the Greek term could be translated "Master" or "Sir," a title of respect. Translated here as "Lord," this rightly spotlights Jesus's divinity and authority.

Verse 14. Before this moment, these men would have never considered washing the filth off the feet of the man beside him. Yet, in girding Himself like a servant, in meekly kneeling before each disciple, and in washing each man's feet, the Lord and Teacher demonstrated shocking humility. This was consistent with Jesus's ministry-long message. He consistently turned cultural norms on their heads.

Verses 15-17. The Greek word for example refers to a pattern and model that was to be copied—and not merely admired. The whole purpose of the example was so it could be imitated. Since Jesus performed this debasing task, His followers had (and have) no conceivably acceptable excuse for not following His pattern of humble and selfless service. The Christian faith always calls us both to know and to do (Matt. 7:24-27; Jas. 1:22-25).

Note: Additional commentary can be found at you.lifeway.com.

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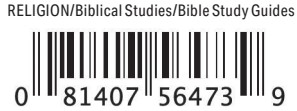
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