

Life & Love

John 13:1-35

Love Illustrated

☐ A few days after Jesus entered Jerusalem for the final time, he gathered with his disciples for the Passover meal.¹ Read John 13:1-17.²

1. As you read this story, what do you find most striking (impressive or surprising) about Jesus' actions?³

2. How does Peter respond to Jesus' actions? (13:6-9) Why do you think Peter responds in this way?⁴



☐ Jesus applies the foot washing in two primary ways, and one secondary way.

† Symbol of Jesus' cleansing sacrifice on the cross.⁵

☞ "...the blood of Jesus, [God's] Son, cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

† Secondary symbol of subsequent cleansings as believers confess their sins.⁶

☞ "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, *ESV*)

† Model of Christian conduct

☞ "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (13:15, *NIV*).

3. What point (or points) does Jesus make in verses 13-17?

¹ Most likely, Jesus entered Jerusalem on Sunday (12:12-13) and had the Passover meal on Thursday. 'Passover' is the annual festival in which Jews remember and celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Passover week (also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread) began with the Passover meal and lasted seven days.

² John 13 records the beginning of Jesus' last extended conversation with his disciples before he 'leaves this world and goes to the Father' (13:1). This takes place in an 'upper room' where they eat the Passover (Mark 14:15).

³ Though Jesus is the Son of God, and all things are under his power (13:3), he takes the form of a lowly servant (13:4) and humbly washes and dries the disciples' feet (13:5). Also, though Jesus knows that Judas is going to betray him (13:2, 11), he still washes Judas' feet (13:12).

⁴ Probably all of the disciples were shocked and embarrassed that the Son of God was washing their feet! Obviously Peter is thinking only of the physical washing (13:8a, 9), while Jesus is thinking about its symbolism (13:8b, 10).

⁵ Jesus' humble act of washing feet is symbolic of his ultimate act of service and love. Jesus would lay down his life for his followers (John 10:15; 15:13). He would die on the cross for our sins. Jesus is 'the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (1:29). If we receive Jesus as Lord, we receive the forgiveness of sins that he provided.

⁶ Not everyone recognizes this application, but it follows from a common interpretation of verse 10. Jesus' death on the cross was the one-time provision for forgiveness of sins. When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord, we are completely forgiven and brought into an everlasting relationship with God. We've had a 'bath' and our 'whole body is clean.' However, believers still sin in this world (1 John 1:8). So – one way to put it – as we walk through life, our 'feet get dirty.' Thus we need to ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing in order to enjoy fellowship with God.

Love Rejected

- ❑ After Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he became "troubled in spirit" and said, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me" (13:21). Peter motioned to John⁷ and said, "Ask him which one he means" (13:23). Read John 13:25-30.⁸
 4. If Jesus knew that Judas was planning to betray him, why did he not prevent it? Why did he say, "What you are about to do, do quickly."? (13:27b)⁹



Love Commanded

- ❑ Read John 13:31-35. Since Judas had left, it would not be long before Jesus was taken away. This was a troubling thought, but Jesus talked about the glory of God. The Father and Son are glorified¹⁰ through the Son's obedience, death, resurrection and exaltation (13:31-32).
- ❑ Jesus tells his disciples that he will be gone soon, and they cannot come to where he is going (13:33).¹¹ These words trouble the disciples, so they need more assurance (John 14:1-20).
- ❑ Then Jesus gives the disciples a "new command":¹²
 - 📖 "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (13:34).
 5. How well do Jesus' followers obey this command? Why do we fall short? How can we do better?¹³
 6. A particular type of love provides evidence that we are truly followers of Jesus (13:35). What are the characteristics of this love?



Reflection/Application

- Do you feel that you are lacking in love? Only through faith in Jesus Christ, can we fully experience God's love. Only through faith in Christ, can we love others as God commands.
- If you are a believer, can others see that you are a believer by your love for others? Reflect on Christ's love for you, and ask God to empower you with his love. This week, commit to show love to a brother or sister in Christ, or to another person who needs the love of God.

⁷ John's name is not mentioned, but the majority of Bible scholars believe that 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2-9; 21:1, 20-23; 21:24-25) is John, the son of Zebedee, and the author of this Gospel.

⁸ Apparently Jesus answered John in a quiet voice. Perhaps only John heard the answer. In any case, none of them seemed to understand that Judas was the one who would betray Jesus. They did not understand *many* things because they could not imagine that the Son of God would be arrested, tried, tortured and crucified within the next 24 hours. However, they would understand later, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and sending of the Holy Spirit (13:7).

⁹ Jesus knew that he must die. It was God's plan (Acts 2:23) and Jesus' purpose. As Jesus said earlier, '...it was for this very reason I came to this hour' (John 12:27).

¹⁰ The 'glory of God' is revealed in the Father and Son. The 'glory of God' is difficult to define, but might be described as the splendor of God's unique and perfect essence, or the radiance of God's infinite perfections.

¹¹ When Jesus said this to the Jewish leaders (7:33-34; 8:21), his tone was different. He told the Jewish leaders, 'you will die in your sin' (8:21) whereas he later tells the disciples, 'I am going there to provide a place for you' (14:2).

¹² Jesus is talking specifically about love within the community of believers. Love itself is not a 'new (*kainos*) command', but an old one (Leviticus 19:18). 'The new thing appears to be the mutual affection that Christians have for one another on account of Christ's love for them' (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 562). There is a new standard (Christ' love) and a new community and order (in Christ).

¹³ Of course, Jesus' standard is a high one! But we can do better by reflecting more on Jesus' love for us (1 John 4:9-11) and constantly remembering that the ability and power to love comes from God (4:7; Galatians 5:22).