



# SERVING IN THE HOUSE

John 13:1–17

<sup>1</sup>Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup>rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. <sup>5</sup>After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. <sup>6</sup>Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." <sup>8</sup>Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." <sup>11</sup>For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." <sup>12</sup>So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

—John 13:1–17

**Read John 13:1–17**

Jesus taught His disciples that the order of His kingdom was to be in great contrast to the hierarchy of the world. *You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many* (Matthew 20:25–28).

In John 13:1–17, Jesus gave a visible illustration of this reality when He got up from the table, girded Himself in servant's garb, and began to wash His disciples' feet one by one. In the time of Jesus' disciples, it was customary for hosts to keep a basin near the front door for guests and household members to wash their feet before entering. In wealthier homes, the lowest servant was relegated to the task of washing the feet of guests and household members. You can imagine what a miserable job this must have been for the servant. This was the time before paved roads, sanitation, and proper shoes. Feet not only got filthy, but they easily succumbed to sweat, fungus, blisters, disfigurement, and a host of other repulsive ailments. This was not a pleasant gesture that Jesus chose to administer. The task was so demeaning that Peter even tried to prevent the Lord from performing it. Not only was Jesus demonstrating to the disciples just how humble and service-oriented He was requiring them to be, but He was also illustrating the great truth of His incarnation. Paul the apostle would write of Jesus' great condescension in Philippians 2:5–8 when he urged those in the church to have the mindset of Christ. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, took the lowest place on earth and died the most degrading criminal death in order to bring the Father's love and salvation to every man and woman. Just as Jesus humbled Himself to rescue us, He asks us to humble ourselves in service so others can see His life manifested through our lives.

Let the Spirit magnify the wonder of Jesus' great humility and love as you read and study John 13:1–17.

1. Capture the context and glory of what took place in this house by noting and commenting on the following from John 13:1–3:
  - a. The time of year
  - b. What Jesus knew
  - c. Jesus' love
  - d. The devil's activity
  - e. Jesus' awareness
2. Use the following phrases from John 13:4–5 to observe and remark on what Jesus did after supper:
  - a. *Rose from supper*

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Jesus loving His disciples to the uttermost [John 13:1] shows how much He loved His own. It's glorious to realize that we are numbered among His own. How much does Jesus love you? He loves you to the uttermost; He loves you to the completion of your redemption.*

—Pastor Chuck Smith

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

—John 15:13

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*Foot washing was a task so low it could be performed only by a non-Jewish slave.<sup>34</sup>*

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*Jesus adopts the dress of and duty of the lowliest menial servants. Doubtless the disciples would have been happy to wash Jesus' feet, but they could not conceive of washing one another's feet let alone their master washing their feet.<sup>35</sup>*

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

The Old Testament mentions the custom of foot washing in the following Scriptures: Genesis 18:4, 19:2, 24:32, 43:24; Judges 19:21; 1 Samuel 25:41.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*To have no share with Jesus means that one does not belong to him.<sup>36</sup>*

b. *Laid aside His garments*

c. *Took a towel*

d. *Poured water into a basin*

e. *Began to wash the disciples' feet*

f. *And to wipe them with the towel*

3. Record the interaction by putting the dialogue between Peter and Jesus into your own words:

a. Peter (verse 6)

b. Jesus (verse 7)

c. Peter (verse 8a)

d. Jesus (verse 8b)

e. Peter (verse 9)

- f. Jesus (verse 10)
4. What reason is given in John 13:11 for why Jesus said, *But not all of you?*
  5. Use John 13:12–16 to explain the significance and implications of what Jesus had done.
  6. What blessing did Jesus offer to His disciples? John 13:17
  7. What is your greatest takeaway from Jesus serving in the house?

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*Those who have been washed through Jesus' once-for-all death also need daily cleansing of their sins (symbolized by their frequent need to wash their feet).<sup>37</sup>*

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*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

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

*You must keep in mind that the Romans had no use for humility, and the Greeks despised manual labor. Jesus combined these two things when he washed the disciples' feet.<sup>38</sup>*