

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

questions

Read **John 13:1-11**.

1. In this setting of a shared meal between Jesus and his disciples, what does Jesus know about the future that the disciples don't know (**13:1, 3, 11**)?

He knew the time had come for him to leave this world and go back to the Father in heaven; he knew where he had come from, where he was going and that the Father had put all things under his authority; Jesus knew that before the night was over, Judas would betray him and Peter would deny him.

2. Considering that Jesus knows these things, what is remarkable about his *emotions* and *actions* on this night (**13:1-4**)?

Even though he knew that he was going to be disowned and then betrayed by those closest to him, Jesus was more concerned about how he could show his disciples how much he loved them. He willingly stooped to serve not only his disciples, but also his enemies. He knew **who** he was and **where** he was going, yet he deliberately served, in a very humble and degrading way, those who were far below him in status and power.

Jesus did not use his foreknowledge to save himself; rather, he was more concerned about teaching and helping his disciples. He even served and showed his love to Judas, even though it was his betrayal would cause Jesus' death.

- ♥ Imagine Jesus recalling the story of this night as a guest on *Oprah* or *Larry King Live*. What would our culture find unbelievable about Jesus' definition of **love** and **authority** (**13:1, 3**)?
 - ♥ When have you seen love demonstrated in a remarkable way?
 - ♥ **Who** or **what** would be on your mind if you knew for sure that you would leave this world in a week's time? What is one thing you would definitely have to do before you left? Should you do it now? Why or why not?
3. The borrowed room where this meal takes place obviously had water, a basin and a towel, but no slave or servant to do the customary foot washing. What do we learn about the disciples and their thinking by the fact that the meal had begun without anyone getting the expected and necessary foot washing?

No matter how badly the foot washing was needed (because of travel), it seems that it was better to have dirty feet than for someone to act like a servant or slave by washing the feet of others. **Not** degrading oneself to do the work of a slave was more important than meeting the needs of others and making them comfortable. We can be pretty sure that all the disciples saw the equipment necessary for the customary foot washing, but it never entered their mind to use it on Jesus, the others or even themselves. In their minds, everyone being dirty and uncomfortable was preferable to degrading oneself by doing the work of a slave. It never occurred to them to think "outside the box" and lower themselves to serve the others.

- ♥ Can you think of a humble or lowly task that no one wants to do that could be a contemporary example of "foot washing"?
- ♥ What lowly, unpleasant task is especially difficult for you to do? Why?

4. From Peter's reaction in **13:6-8**, what do you think Peter was thinking as he watched Jesus wash the feet of all the disciples and why did he say to Jesus, "No, you will never wash my feet" (**13:8**)?

He was probably thinking how terrible it was that Jesus was degrading himself by doing the work of a servant or slave. If Peter were in Jesus' position, he would never do what Jesus was doing! It wasn't so much – I don't deserve your service. Rather, it was veiled pride.

Notice that Peter did not offer to wash the disciples feet in place of Jesus, nor did he offer to even wash Jesus' feet. Peter did not want to degrade Jesus, but he did not want to degrade himself either. He was protesting to show that both Jesus and he were above doing the work of a slave.

5. Peter took Jesus' reply to his protest literally (**13:8-10**), but what did Jesus really mean when he used the words *wash* and *clean*? What spiritual truth was Jesus teaching his disciples? (**1 John 1:7-9** may help you in your answer.)

Jesus was using the foot washing to teach the disciples about spiritual cleansing – being washed and forgiven of our sins. Unless our sins are washed by the blood of Christ (we accept the sacrifice of death that Jesus made for us), we have no part with Christ. If we confess our sins and accept Jesus' "washing", we are forgiven and cleansed or purified from our sins.

♥ Are you *washed* and *clean* in the sense that Jesus was using these words? How so?

♥ Why does a person who has had a bath, need only wash their feet (**13:10**)?

Jesus distinguishes between a once for all cleansing, as in having a bath, and continual and regular cleansing of the parts of the body that need it because of constant use. Even after a bath, when the whole body is clean, the hands and feet need to be regularly washed because of continual use. When we are saved and our sins are forgiven, we have been spiritually bathed all over. We don't need a full-body wash again. But since we keep sinning, we do need continual "foot washings".

Read John 13:12-17

6. Sum up in your own words the spiritual truth or principle that Jesus wanted his disciples to understand (**13:13-14**).

Jesus knew that if the disciples served anyone, it would be someone that they considered to be "over" them in authority and power, perhaps someone they were forced to serve. He totally flipped the tables when he as Teacher and Lord, washed the feet (served) those that were "beneath" him in authority and power. The leader served the follower!

Then Jesus went on to say that because he was there Teacher and Lord, they should follow his example and serve each other regardless of position or power. They, as future leaders, are called to humbly serve those who will follow them.

♥ How did Jesus challenge the disciples idea of what it means to be a leader? Why the role reversal? Love and service to people who don't deserve it is who God is. God is our "leader" and out of love he stooped to the level of his fallen creation and died in their place in order to have a loving relationship with them again.

♥ How do you feel about serving someone whom you admire and like as a person? How do you feel about serving someone who you don't particularly like or value?

When we fail to offer loving service to others, we are in essence declaring that we are greater and more important than Jesus himself.

- ♥ **Luke 22:24-27** tells us what the disciples were talking about over dinner. How does Jesus define greatness? How is this counter-cultural? How important is it to live this way? Why?

Jesus defines greatness by saying, "But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant." This is totally against the way our culture thinks and acts, but as followers of Christ, it is the way we are called to live. This is what makes the Kingdom of God great. Living this way reflects God's character.

7. For what reasons did Jesus expect his disciples to obey his command (**13:14-17**)?

He expected them to obey his command because they should follow his example. Jesus does not ask us to do anything that he, himself does not do. We should do what has been done for us by Jesus himself. To not follow Christ's example would be the same as saying that we are above him – of greater worth and importance.

Jesus also says that we will be blessed. Knowing is not enough, but if we do what Jesus calls us to do, we will be headed down the path of blessing. God knows what leads to true contentment and joy.

- ♥ What are some ways a person might be blessed if they choose to follow Jesus' example (**13:17**)?

We are blessed with joy and contentment because we are living life as it is supposed to be lived. Serving others is a way of dying to self and all the self sins like self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, etc. and we will grow in the grace of humility.

- ♥ Do you feel awkward and uncomfortable when others serve you? Why or why not? What should be your attitude when others serve you?

It is an act of service and submission to allow others to serve us. When we allow another to serve us, we are recognizing their Kingdom authority over us and we allow them to be blessed because of their service. We should receive the service, never feeling we must "repay" it. If we refuse to let others serve us, we are failing to submit to Christ's commands.

- ♥ What do you learn about servanthood from the fact that Jesus washed Judas' feet even though he knew that Judas would betray him? What "Judas" in your life could you serve? What would be your motive? We don't serve others because they "deserve" it – we serve because of what it does to our heart.

8. Read **Philippians 2:3-8**. This is not the way the world and our culture thinks. This Christ-like attitude has sometimes been called "the upside-down kingdom." Why do you think that Jesus puts such emphasis on our having this kind of attitude and who benefits when we live this way?

When we live this way, everyone benefits – the one who serves because of what the "heart work" it does as well as the one who is being served or helped. We also are showing others who God is and what he is like.

In Philippians, Paul stresses Jesus' attitude in these verses. Being a servant is different than doing acts of service. You can do acts of service without a servant's heart. Becoming a servant has to do with motivation. You have made the choice to bend you will to the will of another; literally "to serve as a slave". What if you are taken advantage of? Walked all over you? That is not an issue; a person can't take advantage of you because you have already decided to serve them. It is your choice, not their demand that makes you the servant.

If we serve others, God will take care of us. Philippians 2:9-11 says, " Because of this (Christ's attitude of service), God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We don't have to worry about protecting ourselves when we serve because we trust God to take care of our needs as we meet the needs of others.

- ♥ Jesus knew who he was, where he was from, where he was going and what authority he had (13:3). How well do you know these things about yourself? How would knowing these things make it possible for you to humbly serve another without pride or resentment?
- ♥ Are motives important when we serve another? Why or why not? What are your motives when you serve another: Because you should? Love for others? Love for Jesus? To impress others? Other motives?

Read **John 13:18-30**.

9. What is usually Satan's first move when he tempts us to sin (13:2)?

He prompts us or entices us by putting a thought into our minds

How can you fight this strategy?

Sin always begins in the mind. We need to be careful what we let into our minds and what we choose to think about or let our minds dwell on. (Philippians 4:8 . . . *Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*) Being tempted in our mind is not the same as sinning. We need to recognize the temptation for what it is and ask the Holy Spirit to fill our minds with his thoughts.

10. The giving of a piece of bread, dipped in the common dish, was a mark of friendship and honor (13:26).

Why do you think Jesus did this for Judas?

Even though Jesus knew what was in Judas' heart, he continued to appeal to him and call him to himself, right up to the last moment. One commentator put it this way:

"For one last, lingering moment Judas' destiny hangs in the balance as the love of God incarnate shines one more time into his benighted heart. But the moment is no sooner present than it passes, as Judas in a final act of defiance closes his heart against the light, and turns away into the darkness that has no end. This the final act of love becomes the decisive moment of judgment . . ."

- ♥ If you knew ahead of time that someone would betray you, how would you treat that person? How does Jesus' example speak to you? What happens to us when we hold grudges, harbor resentment and seek revenge?

11. What connection do you see between Judas accepting the bread from Jesus and Satan entering him (13:27)? What does this teach you about temptation and sin?

Even though sin begins in the mind and that is where Satan often tempts us, we have to choose to act on and follow where our thoughts are leading us. Judas knew what he was going to do, yet he accepted the bread from Jesus, knowing it was given with love and honor. His action gave Satan control.

Temptation becomes sin when we choose to take action.

- ♥ Have you ever been *stabbed in the back* by a friend? How did it feel? What difference does it make to know that Jesus was troubled by Judas' betrayal (13:21)? What should you do when you are betrayed?
- ♥ Have you ever betrayed or denied Jesus by your **words** or **actions**? How did you feel and what did you do about it?

Read **John 13:31-38**.

12. What, if any, difference do you see between Jesus' new command to love (13:34) and the old command to love (Leviticus 19:18)?

The command in Leviticus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus' new command calls us to love others as Christ has loved us.

What are the defining characteristics of Jesus' love for us (13:1, 4,5; 15:13)?

He loves us and shows us the full extent of his love. He humbles himself and serves us in his love. He loves us so much that he even dies for us. Jesus does all this because he does not want to be separated from us. Dying for us allows us to come back into loving relationship with him.

♥ Can you love another as Christ loves you and still disagree, confront or correct? Why or why not? God loves us deeply and unconditionally, but as someone has said, he loves us too much to leave us where we are and not to continue to change us and form us into the image of Christ. He will confront us and correct us for our own good. Loving does not mean always giving someone what they want or never making them uncomfortable. Sometimes we have to show "tough love." Love is not a feeling or emotion. It is an action taken in the best interest of another.

♥ What do you think it means to love another as Christ loves you?

13. What is one of the tangible results of Christ-followers loving each other as Christ loves them (13:35)? Other people will know that we are followers of Christ and will be drawn to Christ because of the sacrificial love we show each other.

Why is this important and what would be the result?

Jesus intended that living this way toward each other would be a powerful form of evangelism – a way to share our faith and demonstrate to others what God is like. If Christ followers truly loved each other as Christ loves us, others would be drawn to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

A loving community, says Jesus, is the visible authenticity of the gospel. Love is the "final apologetic" said Francis Schaeffer. Jesus places no limit on this demonstration of love; all will recognize and know it. Unlike other organizations that are based upon common interests or outlook, the community of Christ is to be marked by a loving inclusiveness which demonstrates the universal appeal of Jesus. To love like Jesus is to love inclusively, indiscriminately and universally. When this kind of love flows within a community, the world will see it and want it.

Tertullian, an early father of the church, reported in the late second century the comment of the pagans of his day: "**Behold, how these Christians love each other! How ready they are to die for each other!**" History tells us that the Christian's mutual love was the magnet which drew multitudes of unbelievers to Christ. It can still do the same thing today!

Response

Discuss with your small group practical ways you can put into practice what you have learned in this lesson. This is important! Jesus has called us to live this way – for our benefit and for the benefit of those we serve. Ultimately, we are serving Jesus.

Jesus calls us to a life of service, for our sakes as well as for the ones we serve. Below are examples of different types of service you can give others. Choose an act of service that is new for you and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you whom you can serve this week. (Taken from Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline*.)

The Service of:

- ❖ *Hiddenness*; secret, anonymous acts of service; a great pride-buster!
- ❖ *Small things*; simple assistance in trifling, petty things that take up your time
- ❖ *Guarding the reputation of another*; refusing to talk behind another's back
- ❖ *Being served*; submitting humbly to someone serving you
- ❖ *Common courtesy*; simple things that acknowledge others and affirm their worth
- ❖ *Hospitality*; opening your home to another
- ❖ *Listening*; patiently giving someone your full attention, especially someone "lesser"
- ❖ *Bearing the burden of another*; comforting another; weeping with those who weep
- ❖ *Sharing the Word of Life*; sharing a word you have received from God to encourage another

Encounter with Jesus

For **10 days in a row**, begin the day by praying this prayer: *Lord Jesus, as it would please you, bring me someone today whom I can serve.* Share with someone what your expectations were before you began this exercise and then what actually happened. How did Jesus answer your prayer?

BELOW IS THE EXTRA SCRIPTURE FOR LESSON 10 THAT YOU CAN PRINT OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME

1John 1:7-9

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Luke 22:24-27

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

25 Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. **26** But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. **27** For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Philippians 2:3-8

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, **7** but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Leviticus 19:18 “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

1John 1:7-9

But if we are living in the light of God’s presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.

8 If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. **9** But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

Luke 22:24-27

And they began to argue among themselves as to who would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom. **25** Jesus told them, “In this world the kings and great men order their people around, and yet they are called ‘friends of the people.’ **26** But among you, those who are the greatest should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. **27** Normally the master sits at the table and is served by his servants. But not here! For I am your servant.

Philippians 2:3-8

Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself.

4 Don’t think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.

5 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. **6** Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. **7** He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. **8** And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal’s death on a cross.

Leviticus 19:18 “Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.