

BRMC Small Group Study: John 13:1-38

Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

In the previous study, we saw Jesus being anointed by Mary and his entry into Jerusalem. The events that happen from John 13 till the end of John occurs over a day. These chapters cover the last teachings that Jesus has for his disciples before he was arrested.

Introduction:

Today, we will be studying Jesus' actions in washing his disciples' feet. We will also end the session off by doing the practical act of washing each other's feet. We will also see how Jesus explained his betrayal and Judas leaving to put it into action.

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand the humility involved in washing one another's feet. This is like the humility Jesus showed in washing his disciples' feet.
- To understand the new commandment to love one another as Jesus has loved us.
- To live out Jesus' humility and love.

Observation

1. Imagine you are one of the disciples having your feet washed by Jesus. How would you have felt?
2. What instructions did Jesus give the disciples after washing their feet (John 13:1-20)?
 - *That even though he was Teacher and Lord, he washed their feet. Likewise they should also wash one another's feet.*
3. What were the events that led to Judas leaving the group (John 13:21-30)?
 - *Jesus was troubled in his spirit and shared that someone would betray him. Peter then told John (disciple whom Jesus loved) to ask Jesus who it is. Jesus told him that he would give a morsel of bread to the betrayer. After giving it to Judas, he told him to do his deed quickly. The other disciples did not know what happened and Judas left.*
4. What is the new commandment that Jesus has given us (John 13:31-38)?
 - *That we love one another: just as Jesus has loved us, also are to love one another.*

Interpretation

5. Why did Peter initially react to Jesus in the manner he did when Jesus was about to wash his feet?
 - *Peter did not understand the significance of this act. Peter thought that it was inappropriate because Jesus was the master and Peter was the disciple.*
 - *At a deeper level, Peter, like many Christians, did not have the understanding that Jesus offers us his grace and service even before we can offer him our service.*

- *Even in our time, many of us believe that we must first serve our masters before we are rewarded. Here, Jesus shows us how radical it is for us to believe in him. We just need to allow him to give us grace and we can be a part of him.*

6. What do you think Jesus meant in John 13:8?

- *In essence, Jesus was saying that we have to accept what he was going to do on the cross for us, because if we failed to do so, then we cannot be in fellowship with Jesus.*
- *Jesus' act of cleaning physical bodies represents a cleansing of the darkest and dirtiest sins in our lives. In order for that to happen, we must also confess our darkest and dirtiest sins. That is how we are to allow Jesus to wash our feet.*

7. Why did Jesus choose to point out Judas in such a manner (John 13:23-26)?

- *Context (taken from John: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries): When people reclined on cushions around a triclinium, leaning on their left elbows, the head of the person on the right would be close to the other person's chest... It was easy for the disciple whom Jesus loved to make use of his close proximity to Jesus to ask the question quietly.*
- *On the surface, Jesus gave the bread to Judas quietly as he did not want to start a fight between the disciples. If they knew that Judas would be the betrayer then, they would have attempted to stop it. However, Jesus knew that the betrayal had to go through for him to be crucified.*
- *The giving of the bread also signified that Jesus still loved Judas and was willing to break bread with him. This, as well as the earlier act of washing his feet, shows us Jesus' extraordinary love that he has for men. Even those who would turn away from him.*

8. How did Judas choose to respond to Jesus' act of giving (John 13:27-30) and why did he act this way?

- *Judas' response to Jesus' act of love through the sharing of bread was to leave to set in motion the betrayal.*
- *Jesus was offering Judas one last chance to remain and to follow him. However, Judas chose not to stay as he already had the evil one in him.*
- *The words "and it was night" (John 13:30) shows us that Judas went away from the light of Jesus into the darkness of the world. It also shows us that Judas appreciated the spiritual darkness rather than the loving light that Jesus provided.*
- *This contrasts with the story of Nicodemus in John 3 who came to Jesus by night. He had feared retribution from the other Pharisees and as such, chose to meet Jesus secretly. What this represents is a fallen man who lives in spiritual darkness coming to Jesus who is the light of the world.*

9. How are we recognised as a true disciple of Jesus?

- *We become disciples of Jesus when we confess him as our lord and saviour and follow him. We will also begin to love one another.*
- *John 13:35 says that for others to recognise us as Jesus' disciples, we must love one another.*
- *If we profess to be Christians but do not love one another, we are not true disciples (1 Cor 13:1-3).*

Application

10. Cell leaders are encouraged to wash their members' feet after the session. Otherwise, do something in the modern context that brings out the spirit of serving.

- *When we let someone else wash our feet, we are figuratively letting them see the 'darkest and dirtiest' part of our lives.*