



Week 13: John 13-15

Study Guide for the week of March 23-29

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, meditate upon John 13:1-16, Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

Read through the passage several times slowly so you have the story firmly in your mind. Now close your eyes and imagine the scene: the noises of the meal being prepared, the smell of the bread baking and the lamb cooking, the conversation as people are gathering in the room, the warmth of the fire, the jostling of people as the room becomes more crowded, the anticipation in everyone's face as they look forward to the Passover meal and the retelling of the story of God's rescue, the light dimming as the sun sets and the oil lamps are lit, the invitation to come to the table, the food being set before the diners, the atmosphere in the room. What emotions are you experiencing as you see the anticipation of the disciples? What emotions are playing across Jesus' face? How do you read Jesus' body language as the meal begins? Do you feel welcomed to the table or do you hang back, out of sight?

You notice Jesus excusing himself from the table, taking off his outer robe, tying a towel around his waist, and pouring water into a basin. Watch the reaction of the disciples around the table. What is happening to the conversation? What are the emotions on the disciples' faces? What is the atmosphere in the room?

Watch as Jesus slowly makes his way around the table, washing each disciple's feet in turn. How are the disciples reacting? Listen to the exchange between Jesus and Peter. Do you identify with Peter's refusal? With his demand to have his hands and head washed also? Do you wonder which disciple isn't clean? Do you wonder if Jesus is talking about you?

What are you feeling as you watch Jesus wash the feet of the disciple closest to you? Can you hear the mumbled words Jesus and the disciple are exchanging? What are you feeling as Jesus takes off your sandals and looks into your face? Feel the cool water on your hot and dirty feet. Feel Jesus' hands gently washing and drying your feet. What do you want to tell him? What do you want him to do?

Jesus finishes washing everyone's feet, pours the dirty water out, wipes up the floor, folds up the wet towel, and puts his robe back on. What is the atmosphere in the room? He sits next to you and asks, "Do you understand what I was doing?" How do you respond? Have a conversation with Jesus and share your heart with him (this is prayer). Now listen quietly for a few moments and see what Jesus may reveal to you (this too is prayer). Write down your thoughts, feelings, impressions, what you learned about Jesus and what you learned about yourself.

This exercise of slowly reading and placing yourself into the biblical story to encounter God is an ancient practice called *lectio divina*, or prayerful reading. You can use this same exercise each day this week to prayerfully read through different parts of the daily Bible reading that especially strike you. Or you can practice *lectio divina* using the account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet every day; don't be surprised if you identify with a different character each time. You may learn something new every day or you may return to the same conversation and feelings several days in a row. Both are valuable; the most important thing is that you are spending time talking with and listening to God – which is prayer, an essential for everyone who follows Jesus.

(over)

Discussion starters

1. John 13-17 records Jesus' last conversations with his disciples before his death. Have you considered your last conversations? What deep truths have you discovered that you want to impart to your family and friends? What legacy are you building?
2. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he displayed the characteristic of humility, a characteristic his followers are to emulate. Name some leaders who seem to lead from a heart of humility. Why do you think they remain humble? How are you doing with humility or is it hard to be humble when you're so good? 😊 How do you treat those for whom you are responsible or who report to you (children, employees, volunteers)?
3. Reread John 14:1-6. What do you think of Thomas' question? Are you surprised at the bluntness Jesus is willing not only to tolerate, but seems to welcome? Reread John 13:1. Recall some of the less than stellar actions of Peter, James, Matthew, Judas, Thomas. If Jesus can love these disciples to the end, despite their sins, what does that say about Jesus' love for you?
4. Reread John 14:15-21. How are Jesus' followers supposed to respond to Jesus' love? What do you think accepting Jesus' commandments looks like? Obeying the commandments? Do people get stuck between the acceptance and the obedience parts? Why or why not?
5. What type of fruit do you think Jesus is talking about in John 15:1-8? Read Gal 5:22-23. Do you know people who seem to produce a lot of fruit? Do you know what their connection to the vine is? How is the fruit in your life? How healthy is your connection to the vine?

Bible verse to memorize: John 13:34