

Lean in and Listen  
Jesus has a Message for you

John 13:1-35  
A Message of Love

### Introduction

Parting words are rarely frivolous or meaningless. When time is of the essence, our words matter. They carry weight. Our study together over the next 8 weeks will explore the final words of Jesus to those closest to Him. He knows His time on Earth is short. He knows what is just ahead, but His disciples have yet to grasp the gravity or the significance of these final moments with Jesus. These few chapters are as if Jesus has lovingly grabbed them by the shoulders while looking into their eyes and saying, “You must understand these final words!”

John is the youngest of Jesus’ disciples during Jesus’ earthly ministry. But his gospel is written much later, probably one of the last books of the New Testament to be written. John writes with a purpose and he states it clearly in John 20:30-31-that people would believe that Jesus is the Son of God and in believing, have life.

There are several things to note as we begin this study together

1. As we study John 13-17, you will see recurring themes. Recognize them as you read.

#### **A. Relationship with Jesus**

Jesus with the Father

Jesus with the disciples

The disciples with Jesus

The disciples with each other

The disciples with the world

Every relationship mentioned in Chapters 13-17 has Jesus at the center

#### **B. The Holy Spirit**

#### **C. Prayer**

It is as if Jesus is saying, “If you can understand and live out these few truths, you understand it all.”

## 2. The Simplicity of the Message

Jesus is speaking to fisherman and tax collectors. He is speaking to uneducated and untrained men (Acts 4:13). The message of Christ is for flawed people, people who have tempers, and egos, and problems. His message is for shepherds, and prostitutes, and broken people. IT IS A SIMPLE MESSAGE.

Jesus’ words to the disciples in the upper room are not extremely complicated. His words are not above any of us. They are deep, but not intellectually elite. The simplest heart can comprehend them.

His message to the disciples, and to us, is foundational. If we miss these messages---we miss everything about Jesus.

## 3. These Messages are for Family

The ones closest to Jesus are gathered in the upper room. He has finished His ministry to Israel in general. He is not healing the sick, casting out demons, or raising the dead. He is speaking to His closest family.

He is not naïve about this group. He knows them to their core. And He aches with love for them

If you are attending this study and you are a believer in Christ, you are part of the family—the inner circle. These messages are for you. Lean in and listen.

If you have never met Jesus, you will be challenged by the His words. John recorded them for you. My prayer is that you will lean in and listen, that You will taste and see, and that you will reach the inescapable conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God.

No matter who you are or why you are here---Lean in and Listen. Jesus has a message for you.

## I. **Great Love** (John 13:1-4)

Jesus and the 12 disciples have gathered in a room, on the second floor of a house, to celebrate the Jewish Passover (Exodus 11-12). It is a Thursday night. It is a somber yet celebratory gathering. We could spend weeks studying the significance of the Passover and Jesus' fulfillment of the Passover lamb. Suffice it to say, the gathering in the Upper Room, and this particular Passover season, has deeper meaning than any disciple understands in the moment.

Two words stand out in the John 13:1-4

Know

Love

What Jesus **knows** and who He **loves** directs everything He will say and do.

### **A. What does He know based on John 13?**

1. *He knows His hour has come.* Three other times in John's gospel, Jesus states His hour has not come. But now it has. The hour, or the time, is His time to be glorified, lifted up, given honor. His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension will prove His deity and everything He has said about Himself.
2. *He knows the time is short.* It will be only hours until Jesus fulfills His purpose on earth.
3. *He knows ALL things are in His hand, He is God, and He is Sovereign Lord (vs 3).*
4. *He knows He has come from God and He will return to God(vs 3).*
5. *He knows Judas Iscariot will betray Him Vs 2).*
6. *He knows His disciples.*

He knows Peter will deny Him. He knows they do not understand what is about to happen. He knows they will scatter after He is arrested. He knows fear is looming. He knows Thomas, Philip, and the other Judas will question Him with doubts (Chapter 14). He knows them better than they know themselves.....

## **B. And He loves them to the uttermost! (John 13:1).**

John uses the word “love” 28 times in these five chapters. It is the Greek word *agapeo*. *Agapeo is a love of the will*. It is a love that originates with God. It is intentional and directional. He sets this love upon us, loving us as we need to be loved. It is not based on fluctuating emotions. *It is love that finds its greatest joy in someone else*.

Love is foundational for everything Jesus says and does. His love for these flawed humans is unwavering and unchanging because it flows from the unwavering, unchangeable character of God. His love is not based on their performance or their faithfulness to Him. It is based on HIS faithfulness.

Dear one, Jesus knows you. He knows every flaw, every short-coming, every sin, every hurt, every heartache. He knows you better than you know yourself. And He loves you! He finds His greatest joy in you! His love for you is intentional, directional. It does not wax and wane. He will not withdraw it or change it. He loves you. If you miss this foundational truth about Jesus, you miss the heart of Jesus. You miss the compelling intention of His message to you. You miss the reason for His death and resurrection. You miss it all, if you miss the fact that He loves you.

Romans 8:35-39 an inseparable love

Jeremiah 31:3 An everlasting love

Ephesians 2:4-5 A love rich in grace and mercy

1 John 4:10 A giving love

Still your heart and mind. Breathe it in. *Jesus loves you to the uttermost and He finds in greatest joy in you!*

## **II. Great Lessons (John 13:5-**

All four gospels record events from the Upper room. Luke 22, however, gives insight into the mindset of the disciples. Luke 22:24, *“And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be the greatest.”* The disciples are arguing over who will be the greatest when Jesus takes over. Obviously, they have it all wrong.

They understand and indeed believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They know He is the Messiah. But they have a skewed idea of what that means. They've been part of the Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem. They have watched Him cleanse the Temple with great authority (Matthew 22-24). They have heard Him take on the religious leaders. And Wow! They are a part of it. When Jesus becomes "King", they will be His assistants! They will be rulers too. Right?

## **Humility**

I think Jesus signs and decides to SHOW them the heartbeat of Messiah. They have much to learn. According to Luke 22:26-27, Jesus asks them questions about serving. I can just see the wheels in their heads turning. Before they can answer, Jesus lays aside His outer tunic, fills a basin with water, and wraps a towel around His waist. They must have wondered what in the world He was doing.

When Jesus laid aside the outer garment, He is left wearing the simple white, ankle length, tunic. It was the attire of a servant or a slave. He shocks His disciples as He stoops to wash their feet and wipe their feet with the towel. They are horrified! This is not kingly behavior.

Washing feet was a common Near Eastern custom. But it was also an undesirable task, always given to the lowest servant. If a servant was Jewish, he could not be forced to wash feet. It was too demeaning. And yet here was the very Messiah they thought would overthrow Rome and reinstate the Golden Age of King David. God's Messiah---and King. But this? On His knees, taking up the task of a houseboy?

Jesus is demonstrating a kingdom principle that was totally foreign to them—and many times to us. Humble service given from a heart of love.

Jesus understood His identity. He is God. All things have been given into His hands. He has been from the beginning—creating all things, in all things, holding all things together. He is God. But Paul writes in Philippians 2, Jesus laid aside His majesty to take on human form for a brief season, so that we could know God. He never lost His deity or His identity. The kneeling Messiah wiping the filth from their feet is still the King. He is still God.

Read

Genesis 1:1 and 1:26, John 1:1 (Jesus has been God from the beginning)

Isaiah 6:1-6

Revelation 1 :12-17

Philippians 2:5-8

## **Holiness**

When Jesus gets to Peter, impulsive Peter refuses to let the Lord wash his feet (John 13:8). Jesus tells him, ‘If you don’t let me wash your feet, you cannot participate with me.’”

Peter thinks about it and blurts out, “Then wash my head and hands too!” Again, I can hear Jesus sigh 😊

Jesus assures Peter, he does not need an entire bath. Peter only needs the filth washed from his feet. Jesus is speaking in spiritual terms.

Peter is already clean. He has a relationship with Jesus. He trusts in Jesus (even though Peter does not understand everything clearly) In our terminology—Peter is saved. He is part of the family. He is a Christian. He only needs a cleansing, a daily cleansing, forgiveness from the dirt of sin.

If you are a believer in Christ—you are clean. Your salvation is secure. You do not need a bath. But as we operate in this life, we get dirty. We sin. We have wrong attitudes, motives, thoughts, words, and actions. We will always have to deal with daily sin. And we do that by humbly allowing Jesus to cleanse us. 1 John 1:9 is clear, *“If we confess our sin, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin and to CLEANSE us from all unrighteousness.”*

If we do not allow Jesus to cleanse us from daily sin, our fellowship with Him is temporarily broken. We are prevented from fully participating in the joyful, abundant life He desires for us. We must humble ourselves and let the Messiah “wash our feet.”

When we allow Him to cleanse us, we experience the great love of Christ. His love is always demonstrated to us through grace and mercy. Mercy is withholding that

which we deserve (because of sin we deserve punishment, death, judgement. Instead of these things, we are shown mercy). Grace is giving that which we do not deserve—the riches of God through Christ, the favor of God because we know Christ.

Sadly, some Christians approach cleansing with the faulty attitude that Jesus can't possible cleanse them—there is too much junk, too much sin, too much baggage, too much dirt. On the other hand, some may not see a need for cleansing. They are good enough, everyone is doing it, they are not so bad. Either approach—either end of the spectrum-- is rooted in human pride and in opposition to Christ.

As we humble ourselves and are cleansed, receiving mercy and grace THEN we are able to get up and serve others—offering them the grace and mercy we ourselves have experienced from Jesus. WE MUST RECIEVE GRACE AND MERCY BEFORE WE CAN EVER GIVE IT.

Sometimes it is difficult to receive someone's gift of service to us. It humbles us. And it is with that same attitude we serve others.

John 13:12-17, Jesus gives an explanation of His actions. Teaching them to be servants, emulating Him. Verse 17, "*If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*" The word *blessed* means *happy*. This whole servant thing brings great joy!

### **III. Great Loss**

John 13:18-30 focuses on Jesus' relationship with Judas—the Betrayer. Jesus chose Judas to be part of the 12, knowing all along, Judas would reject Jesus as Messiah and would eventually betray Jesus. Judas had every opportunity to receive Jesus but instead chose to reject Christ.

There are many dynamics and layers to the relationship between Judas and Jesus. In them is the age-old tension of the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man. But what strikes me most is the fact that in the Upper Room, Jesus washes the feet of Judas! And then in verse 26, Jesus offers bread dipped in wine to Judas—a gesture of honor and friendship. Judas takes the bread but rejects the relationship.

Verse 30 gives me chills. *“And after receiving the morsel, he (Judas) went out immediately; and it was night.”* The night is much more than the hours after sunset. The night is the darkness of Judas’ heart. It is a stark contrast to the light of Christ and the grace He offers. Judas’ rejection is a sorrowful loss to Jesus.

#### **IV. Great Love Required**

The atmosphere of the room changes when Judas leaves. Jesus knows God’s plan has been set in motion. Time is short and the remaining hours on earth will be intense. He turns to the 11 disciples and the first words out His mouth are again about love.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).*

The commandment, however, was not new. It had been given in Leviticus and repeated throughout Scripture. So, what does Jesus mean?

Replace the word *new* with the word *fresh*.

Jesus is giving them:

**Fresh motivation**---the love Christ has for us

**Fresh example**---the humble example of Jesus washing feet

**Fresh direction**---one another—not the outside world—but each other

**Fresh results**---the outside world will know what the love of Jesus looks like by watching His disciples.

For us too, Jesus message is *“love one another”* Who does that include? *“One another”* is other believers. The church. Certainly, He will eventually deal with our relationship to those outside the church, but at this point He is focused on other believers.

Augh! Christians can be tough. They can be mean. They can be wrong. They can be ERG people (Extra Grace Required). And yet, if we have received mercy and grace—the love of Christ—we are equipped to give it to others. When the church loves each other, the world takes notice.

Does it make us doormats when we love and serve others? NO. It makes us disciples, humbly following the example of Christ. We will learn later, that each us serves according to our giftedness and we serve with the wisdom and discernment the Holy Spirit gives us. But in this first message, we are simply to abandon ourselves to Christ, loving others ***as we have been loved***. Expressing that love in grace and mercy as we serve.