



Walking With the Savior

Through An Eyewitness Account of John

John, one of the sons of Zebedee, stood as an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He began his journey as a fisherman, leaving behind his nets and the future he had planned for himself to follow a teacher, a prophet, and a miracle worker. At the outset, John did not fully understand who Jesus was or what lay ahead. In faith, he aligned himself with Jesus, drawn by His words and deeds. As John walked alongside Jesus, witnessing His teachings and miracles, he gradually realized that Jesus was far more than a prophet or a remarkable teacher. John came to understand that Jesus was God in the flesh. This revelation was not just a turning point for John personally, but a moment of eternal significance. By choosing to follow Jesus, John's future was forever changed, and his decision would go on to impact the world—not only in his own time but throughout every generation to come. ***Let's embark on an inspiring journey with John as we walk alongside Jesus.***

Background Matters

JESUS' WASHING OF HIS DISCIPLES' FEET (13:1–17)

John's Gospel reports more of the content of Jesus' instructions to His disciples than do the other three Gospels. Chapters 13–17 concentrate on His teachings on that fateful night in which He was arrested. Before the instruction, Jesus washed His disciples' feet and predicted His betrayal.

13:1. **Jesus knew that the time had come** (cf. 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 12:23, 27; 17:1) **for Him to leave this world and go to the Father**. Jesus' death and resurrection were now imminent. He had come to die in obedience to the Father's will. His coming was also an act of love for all mankind (3:16). But He has a special love for His sheep: He **loved His own**. Then He **showed them the full extent of His love**. His humble service (13:1–17), His teaching (13:18–17:26), and finally His death (chaps. 18–19) are in view. All three revealed His love.



13:2–4. At **the evening meal** before the Passover, **the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot … to betray Jesus. Jesus** had predicted this (6:70–71). Later Satan actually entered Judas (13:27). Yet **God** was in control of all events leading to Jesus' death. Jesus **knew** (cf. vv. 1, 18) His sovereign authority, His origin, and coming destiny; yet He voluntarily took the place of a slave, washing the feet of His disciples. His action contrasts sharply with their self-seeking (cf. Matt. 20:20–24; Mark 9:33–34; Luke 22:24–30) and pictures His whole ministry on earth (cf. Phil. 2:5–8).

13:5. Foot-washing was needed in Palestine. The streets were dusty and people wore sandals without socks or stockings. It was a mark of honor for a host to provide a servant to wash a guest's feet; it was a breach of hospitality not to provide for it (cf. 1 Sam. 25:41; Luke 7:40–50; 1 Tim. 5:10). Wives often washed their husbands' feet, and children washed their parents' feet. Most people, of course, had to **wash** their own **feet**.

13:6–8. **Peter** sensing Jesus' reversing of their natural roles, asked why He, Peter's **Lord**, should **wash** the **feet** of His servant Peter. In Peter's question the word **You** is emphatic in the Greek. **Jesus** said that **later** (after His death and resurrection) Peter would **understand.**

No … You shall never wash my feet, Peter replied. Apparently he did not feel that Jesus should act like a servant toward Peter. This is another case of Peter's thoughtless speech (cf. Mark 8:32; 9:5). **Jesus** responded, **Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me**. This does not mean, "Unless you are baptized you cannot be saved," but, "Unless I wash your sins away by My atoning death (cf. Rev. 1:5) you have no real relationship to Me" (cf. 1 John 1:7).

13:9–10. **Peter** continued to miss the spiritual lesson, but he was certain of his desire to be joined to Jesus. Therefore he asked Jesus to wash his **hands** and **head as well** as his **feet. Jesus answered, A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean**. (Some Gr. mss. omit the words "his feet.") Roman Catholics sometimes have interpreted verse 10 to mean that after infant baptism only penance is needed. A preferable interpretation is that after salvation all one needs is confession of sins, the continual application of Jesus' death to cleanse one's daily sins (cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:1–2). When Jesus added that **not every one of you** is **clean**, He was referring to Judas (cf. John 13:11, 18). This suggests that Judas was not converted.

13:11. Judas had rejected the life-giving, cleansing words of Jesus (cf. 6:63; 15:3), so he was yet in his sins. Judas did have his feet literally washed, but he did not enter into the meaning of the event. John stressed Jesus' supernatural knowledge (cf. 2:25; 4:29) of Judas' deception.

13:12–14. After giving this object lesson in humility the Lord questioned the disciples in order to draw out the significance of the lesson: **Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them** (cf. v. 7). **Teacher** (*didaskalos*) **and Lord** (*kyrios*) show that Jesus is on a higher level than they. Yet He had done a humble service for them. Meeting others' needs self-sacrificially is what they ought to do too.

13:15–16. The foot-washing was **an example** (*hypodeigma*, "pattern"). Many groups throughout church history have practiced literal foot-washing as a church ordinance. However, present culture in many lands does not call for the need to wash dust from the feet of one's guests. Whereas the Lord's Supper was practiced by the early church as an ordinance, it apparently did not practice foot-washing as an ordinance in church gatherings. This passage emphasizes inner humility, not a physical rite. A Christian widow's practice of "washing the feet of the saints" (1 Tim. 5:10) speaks not of her involvement in a church ordinance but of her humble slavelike service to other believers. Not to follow



the example of Jesus is to exalt oneself above Him and to live in pride. **No servant is greater than his master** (cf. John 12:26).

13:17. God blesses His servants not for what they **know** but for their responses to what they know. Christian happiness (**you will be blessed**) comes through obedient service (**if you do them**, i.e., **these things** Jesus commanded).[1]

This Week in "Walking With the Savior,"

We enter John chapter 13, where Jesus models humility for His disciples and us. While we can learn much from His teaching, serving one another with a humble spirit may be one of the most difficult qualities to develop as we work together in kingdom ministry. Are you earning enough credits to graduate with a degree in humility? This week, let's take a humility quiz and see whether we pass the final exam; it has eternal rewards as a bonus.

If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.1 Co 3:14-15.

Study Guide 41

This study guide presents daily assignments that are specifically crafted to enhance your growth in the Word. Embrace each moment to meditate and reflect, and watch as your spiritual maturity flourishes through your dedicated efforts.

Humility: Are You Pursuing a Degree?

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

John 13:1–17

Topics:

Ambition, Attitude, Example, Forgiveness, Glory, Greatness, Help, Honor, Humility, Jesus Christ, Life-style, Love, Ministry, Motives, Pride, Self-centeredness, Serving

[1] Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 319–20.



Open It, Mondays. Open your heart and mind to the truth of the Word.

1. *What is your idea of great customer service?

   _____
   _____

Explore It, Tuesdays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

2. What did Jesus know it was time to do? (13:1)

   _____
   _____

3. What had the devil prompted Judas to do? (13:2)

   _____
   _____

4. What did Jesus know that the Father had done? (13:3)

   _____
   _____

5. What did Jesus do when He got up from His meal with the disciples? (13:4–5)

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   _____

6. Why did Peter express shock? (13:6)

   _____
   _____

7. How did Jesus respond to Peter's amazement? (13:7)

   _____
   _____

8. *What did Peter declare he would never allow? (13:8)

   _____
   _____



Push on Wednesdays; keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

9. Why was it important for Jesus to wash the disciples' feet? (13:8)

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_____

10. What did Peter want Jesus to do? (13:9)

_____
_____

11. Why did Peter need only his feet washed? (13:10)

_____
_____

12. Why did Jesus qualify His statements? (13:11)

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_____

13. *What did Jesus tell His disciples they should do? (13:12–15)

_____
_____

14. *What is the difference between servants and masters? (13:16)

_____
_____

15. How did Jesus say that His disciples would be blessed? (13:17)

_____
_____

Get It Thursdays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

16. When and why do you find it difficult to allow others to serve you?

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_____



17. *When and why is it difficult for you to serve others?

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_____

18. How has Jesus cleansed us?

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19. *In what way does Jesus wash our feet today?

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20. In what way are we to wash the feet of others?

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_____

21. What example did Jesus set for us to follow?

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22. In what areas do you struggle with being humble?

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23. What makes being humble so difficult?

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_____

Drive it Home, Fridays, keep the rhythm of personal study moving.

24. Who is someone you can serve today? How?

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_____

25. *Whose service do you need to accept the next time he or she offers?

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