

The Servant's Love

As we step back and look at John's gospel account of Jesus Christ we see that chapters 1-12 cover a three-year span in His life. Chapters 13-17 of John cover the events and dialogue that took place in the course of one evening, the final night Jesus exclusively spent with the Twelve that ended with His betrayal and arrest. This event is commonly known as the "Upper Room" discourse. Although the cross was only one day away, Jesus focused on the spiritual welfare of His disciples, imparting instruction to ready them for their future ministry and offering comfort and encouragement in preparation for the closing act of His earthly life. *In these chapters we are given a glimpse into the spiritual chambers of our Savior's heart like no other place in Scripture.*

1. To prepare for the study of this new section of John, scan chapters 13-17 and observe the topics that Jesus is discussing. Note your observations below.

Drawing Near: Our Father in heaven, You are forever gentle, loving and caring. It is with deep gratitude of heart that we praise You, Lord. Will You help us to gain wisdom from Your Word today and to grow in understanding? Amen.

The Setting: John 13:1-3

2. You will find that the first three verses of chapter 13 introduce the setting for the whole of the "Upper Room" discourse (chapters 13-17). **Read verses 1-3 several times.** Observe how verse 1 consists of three sequentially successive statements. Write out each of John's statements in the order given. Explain how each statement perpetuates the next, keeping in mind Jesus' prior knowledge about Himself and His disciples.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Which meal was being served and what had happened even before the meal began (verse 2)?
4. According to verse 3 what else was Jesus aware of?

Read John 13:4-17 three times. (*Refer to the handout for cultural background about dining.*) In the Near East sandals were the footwear worn on the dusty roads which made foot washing a crucially important task. At that time in history it was the responsibility of the servant/slave to wash their master's feet upon arriving home.

5. Beginning with verse 4 Jesus proceeds to carry out the first of His final acts demonstrating to His disciples "the full extent of His love." Describe the poignant scene from verses 4-5 in your own words.

6. Why do you think Peter protested having his feet washed by Jesus (verses 6 and 8a)?

7. Jesus' reply to Peter was on a spiritual level. What two types of spiritual cleansing was Jesus speaking about to Peter and to us (John 13:8b-11)? Also consider 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 1 John 1:9.

For historical perspective on the basin used for washing see Exodus 30:17-20.

8. What do you learn about the meaning of love from the fact that Jesus washed the feet of His betrayer? (Consider Matthew 5:44.)

Read John 13:12-17. Jesus now resumes His role as the disciples' teacher as He puts on His outer garment and returns to His place. In verse 12 Jesus poses the question, "Do you understand what I have done for you?" laying the foundation for His explanation and lessons to follow.

9.
 - a. As you consider the two kinds of washing described in 13:8b-10 and Jesus' instruction to His disciples in 13:14-17, what meaning do you draw from Jesus' act of washing the disciples feet?

 - b. What acts of humility, service and cleansing might we perform for each other?

 - c. Choose one or two specific people that you would like to better serve this week and tell how you will serve them.

10. As Jesus concludes His exhortation to His disciples (verse 17) what two distinct aspects of following Jesus are mentioned here and why are they both essential?

11. a. **Read** John 13:17-18 together to get a sense of the shift in thought from verse 17 to verse 18. Who is Jesus excluding in verse 18 and why?

- b. When comparing Psalm 41:9 with John 13:18 what do you discover?

Note: Showing the bottom of one's foot was an expression of contempt. The modern vernacular for this would be "kicked me when I was down."

12. What was Jesus' purpose of informing His disciples in advance of betrayal by one of the Twelve (verses 19-20)?

Read John 13:21-22 carefully. Put yourself in the disciples' place as they hear these words from Jesus for the first time testifying of a betrayer in their midst.

Before moving further into the narrative study the handout "Dining in First-Century Palestine," which will brief you on how the people of that period ate their meals. Then **read John 13:23-30.**

13. a. Who was the host of the meal and where was he seated?

 - b. Who was seated to the right of the host and who was likely seated on the left? What clues do you discover in Scripture (verses 23 and 26)?
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14. In Jesus' culture, eating or "breaking bread" with someone demonstrated deep trust and friendship. Why might Jesus have given such a place of honor to His own betrayer?
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15. Explain the meaning and significance of verse 27.

16. How did the disciples interpret Jesus' command to Judas Iscariot (verses 28-29)? Why?
17. After Judas' act of accepting the "morsel," with what four words does John conclude the scene _____ (verse 30)? Is there a double meaning here? Explain.

When Judas left the room Jesus continued speaking with the Eleven true disciples. (**Read John 13:31-32.**) The glorification of the "Son of Man" began with Jesus' dismissal of Judas for Jesus knew that on the heels of the betrayal would befall the commencement of the crucifixion.

18. How do you interpret Jesus' declaration of mutual glorification between the Father and the Son?

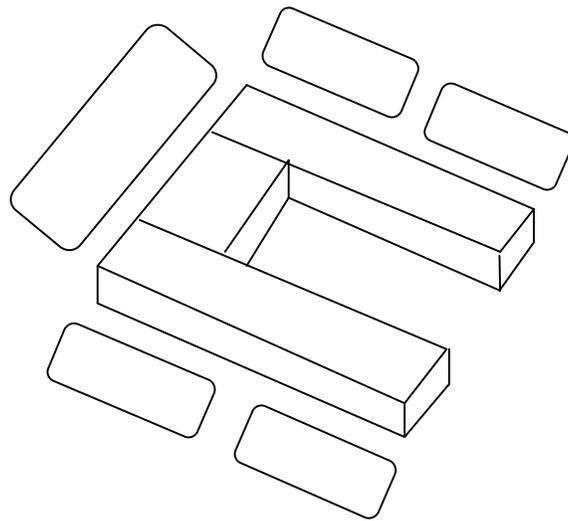
The disciples were about to encounter a devastatingly horrific turn of events. Endearingly, Jesus spoke to His disciples and called them "my children," emphasizing that their time together was short and their separation was certain. Meditate on Jesus' words to His own in verses 33-35.

19. Compare John 13:34 with Leviticus 19:18. What is *new* in John 13:34?
20. Why is this kind of love so powerful in convincing others that we are Jesus' disciples (verse 35)? Give an example.
21. **Read John 13:33 and 36-38.** As you consider the dialogue between Jesus and Peter what irony do you see in the fact that Jesus gave His new commandment (13:34) in the midst of knowing what Judas and Peter were about to do?
22. In this chapter we are given vivid examples of love and betrayal/good and evil. From these illustrations what truth has made the greatest impression on you? How might you incorporate this truth more fully into your life?

Dining in First-Century Palestine

The usual arrangement at a formal meal was to have a series of couches arranged in a U around the table. The guests reclined with their head toward the table and their feet stretched out obliquely away from it. They leaned on the left elbow, which meant that the right hand was free to secure food. The host, or the most important person, reclined in the center of the chief couch, a couch for three, placed at the junction of the two arms of the U. The place of honor was to the left of, and thus slightly behind the principal person. The second place was to his right, and the guest there would have his head on the breast of the host.

-Bible Background Commentary



Artist's conception