

“Service with a Smile” (John 13:1–17)

One day an airline flight was canceled due to bad weather. One solitary agent was trying to rebook all of the travelers whose schedules had gotten messed up. One passenger became impatient and pushed his way to the front and slammed his ticket down on the counter. He said, “I have to be on this flight, and it has to be first class!” The agent politely said, “I’m sorry, sir. I’ll help as soon as I can, but I have to take care of these other people first.” The man became angry and shouted, “Do you have any idea who I am?” Without hesitating, the agent picked up the loud speaker microphone and said to the hundreds of people in the terminal, “May I have your attention, please? We have a passenger here at the gate who does not know who he is. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to the gate.” The man backed off, and the crowd of people burst into applause. Regardless of whom that man was—whether he was rich or famous or a little bit of both—he certainly didn’t have the respect of the people at the terminal that day. It’s hard to respect someone who considers themselves the most important person in the room and who puts his or her needs ahead of everyone else.¹

Perhaps you think I’m talking about your spouse, your teenager, your neighbor, or your mother-in-law. (I might be.) But maybe I am actually talking about *you*. Have you ever said, “I’m not going to do *that*.” “No one’s going to tell *me* what to do!” “I don’t have to put up with this.” “They don’t realize who I am.” “They don’t appreciate all I do around here!” “I don’t get any respect.” If you have said these things or thought these things, I am talking directly to you...and, I’m afraid, to me as well. If the truth be known, we’ve all thought these things, and most likely, even said these things out loud. Thus, we need to be reminded that there is no job beneath us. In case you question this remark, in John 13:1–17 the apostle John shares an account from Christ’s life² that reveals our need to study this passage.³

In 13:1–3 John writes, **“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,⁴ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God.”** Before we get too deep into this great episode, it is important to set the context. John asserts that it is the day before the Feast of Passover—a meal that commemorated Israel’s release from Egypt.⁵ It is Thursday evening, less than twenty-four hours away from Jesus’ death on the cross.⁶ What would you be doing if you knew that you had less than twenty-four hours to live? Perhaps, you would be praying to be spared from death. Or maybe you would be doing some last-minute confession of sin. Not Jesus. His mind is set on preparing His disciples for His imminent departure. In fact, all of Jesus’ teaching in John 13–17 takes place on the eve of His death. Thus, this series is entitled, “Focus on Your Family: What Matters Most to Jesus.” Our goal is to discover how to truly be Jesus’ disciples and do church as He desires.

As we begin this account, it is critical to observe that John emphasizes twice what Jesus knows. In 13:1, Jesus knows that He is going to die and return to His Father. In 13:3, Jesus knows that the Father has given all things into His hands, and that He has come forth from God, and is going back to God. These statements reveal that Jesus knows His origin and His destiny. It is my conviction that true humility grows out of our relationship with God the Father. When you know that your needs are met in Christ, when you know who you are, where you came from, and where you’re going, you’ll be able to freely serve others. If you don’t know who you are, where you came from and where you’re going, you’ll not be secure enough to serve. Instead, you’ll be tempted to manipulate people to get your needs met. But as a follower of Jesus you ought to approach relationships out of a sense of fullness. You know who you are and you have nothing to prove. You no longer have to manipulate people or be paranoid about other people’s expectations and opinions. As you meditate on biblical truths that emphasize your security and significance in Christ, you’ll be more prone to serve rather than seek to be served.⁷

Before we move on, it is critical to grasp 13:1b, which may be the key to the Upper Room Discourse. Regardless, this phrase has had a tremendous impact on my pastoral ministry. Jesus, **“having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”** The theme of this section is service founded and grounded in love. Twice John emphasizes Jesus’ great love for His disciples. His life and ministry were characterized by a commitment to “having loved⁸ His own⁹.” During His earthly ministry, Jesus invested all His time, energy, and teaching into His disciples. But John also makes the startling point that Jesus “loved them to the end.” There is a double meaning here: Jesus persisted in faithful love toward His disciples in going to the cross *and* He persevered in unconditional love for them.¹⁰ Despite their ignorance, unbelief, disobedience, and eventual apostasy, Jesus persevered in His love for His disciples. One of the greatest incentives to serve others is to recognize that Jesus Christ has a vast, unconditional love for you. If you begin to grasp this love, it will motivate you to want to serve others as an expression of gratitude to Jesus.¹¹ Today, you may struggle loving unlovely and unlovable Christians. We all struggle here. However, there is hope: When you feel you cannot love a brother or sister, immediately call out to God and acknowledge, “I can’t love this person, but I know you can. Will you love this believer through me?” You may have to pray this prayer (silently) several times whenever you see this person. But since this is God’s will for you (cf. 13:34–35), He will give you the supernatural strength to love your brother or sister. This Christ-like love will also take your ministry to the next level.

John has disclosed what Jesus *knows* about Himself and His future (13:1–3). Now he reveals what Jesus *does* in response to His knowledge. In 13:4–5, John describes Jesus’ actions in seven slow-motion scenes: **“He [Jesus] got up from supper, and laid aside His garments;¹² and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”¹³** Don’t miss the fact that according to 13:4 (cf. 13:2) the meal is already underway when Jesus begins washing the disciples’ feet. This may strike you as odd, and rightly so. Foot washing normally occurred before the meal when guests entered a home.¹⁴ Foot washing was needed in every home in Palestine. Not only were the streets dusty and dirty, but they usually contained garbage and the waste from the animals that traveled up and down the same streets. Furthermore, the people didn’t wear socks, much less Nike Air. Instead, they wore open-toed sandals and their feet became very grimy, grungy, sweaty, and smelly. Needless to say filthy, smelly feet could make the meal and the fellowship rather uninviting. Thus, in Jesus’ day, foot washing was mandatory! Typically, a guest normally washed his or her own feet after the host offered a basin of water. You knelt down, removed your sandals, washed your feet, and then dried them with a towel. If a host had servants, they might be delegated to do the job for you. This was a mark of a high achievement in biblical times. A host that could provide this luxury had arrived! But under no circumstances would the host wash the feet of his guests. The master would never stoop so low as to wash the feet of those beneath him. Slaves washed feet. Masters never did.

So why in the world is Jesus, the Master, washing His disciples’ feet? Why hadn’t the disciples washed each other’s feet? Why hadn’t someone washed Jesus’ feet? After all, this was the evening before his crucifixion. If there was any night the disciples should have served Jesus, it was the Last Supper. Why did they start the meal with dirty feet? No doubt the events of the final few days had distracted them. But we get a greater clue from Luke 22:24 (cf. 9:46). On the way to the Last Supper, the ambitious disciples had been quarreling over who should be the greatest and who would have precedence in Christ’s kingdom. They were like Muhammad Ali claiming, “I am the greatest!” When they entered the Upper Room, there was apparently no slave to perform the customary washing of the feet of the guests. The disciples probably took turns when there was no slave, but on this occasion none would condescend to do the menial task. Their minds were full of the subject of their bitter contention, and none was willing to be servant of all. Each feigned unconsciousness of the neglected duty.¹⁵ The disciples were jealous of one another and were competing for the best place. They were all looking out for number one. No wonder they didn’t wash each other’s feet. No wonder it was left to Jesus. “They were ready to fight for a throne, but not for a towel.”¹⁶

The attitude of the disciples is what makes John's deliberate slow-motion account all the more powerful. By delaying the foot washing into the meal, Jesus escalated the level of suspense. Have you ever been at a restaurant with some friends, and that awkward moment arrives when the check is placed on the table? The question that likely runs through your mind is: Whose turn is it to pay? Of course you likely assume it is your friends' turn to pay for the meal. So you wait and wait hoping that they will pick up the bill on the table. Finally, it dawns on you that your friends are not going to pay. So you slowly reach for the bill, hoping that they will beat you to it. It may seem that this is what Jesus is doing. After all, His disciples attended Jesus Christ Biblical Seminary. After three years with the world's greatest theologian, you would hope that they would be willing to serve Him. But this is not the case.

However, before we are too hard on the disciples, we must understand that Jesus is a detail oriented administrator. It seems that the lack of a servant to wash the disciples' feet was deliberate. First of all, it was the host's responsibility to provide this (see Luke 7), and Jesus *was* the host. Furthermore, throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus very carefully arranging things in advance (e.g., procuring the donkey and its colt, securing a place in which to celebrate Passover). It is unlikely, then, that the omniscient Jesus would forget to provide for the foot washing. Finally, all the things that were necessary for the foot washing were present (i.e., the basin, the water, the towel). Therefore, it is likely that Jesus purposefully arranged for a servant not to be present, so that He could wash the disciples' feet, knowing (as He did) all that would take place during this meal.¹⁷ Jesus was and is the quintessential servant.¹⁸

Now, if you are familiar with the Gospels, you are probably anticipating what is about to happen. Peter and Jesus have some legendary dialogue. In 13:6–11, John records Peter's apprehension over Jesus washing his feet. John writes, "**So He [Jesus] came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, 'Lord, do You wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter'"** (13:6–7). Although Peter can be slow of mind and heart, he finally recognizes that his Creator, the very Lord of glory should not be washing his feet. However, Jesus explains that this act will make sense "hereafter." Jesus is referring to the explanation that he will share with His disciples in 13:12–17. A question remains though: Will Peter truly understand the purpose and intent of Jesus' words? The answer is: Absolutely yes. After Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter understood fully. It is worth noting that Peter almost certainly had this episode in mind when he commanded his readers in 1 Pet 5:5: "Clothe yourself with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."¹⁹ The verb translated "clothe yourself"²⁰ is reminiscent of Jesus putting on the garb of a slave. Eventually Peter did indeed catch the point of Jesus example.

At the moment, however, Peter is fighting Jesus tooth and nail. In 13:8, Peter responds to Jesus' offer by saying: "**Never shall You wash my feet.**" The Greek is even more forceful: "You will never wash my feet forever." In other words, Peter uses eternal language to say: "Jesus you will never, ever wash my feet, not now or anytime in the future." You've got to love Peter here! When he gets it wrong, he gets it spectacularly wrong.²¹

Jesus responds to Peter by saying, "**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me**" (13:8b). Jesus is not threatening Peter with a loss of salvation. This would contradict God's Word and His very character. Rather, the purpose of foot washing is to illustrate Jesus' philosophy of ministry, which is servant leadership. For Peter to reject Jesus' offer to wash his feet is to reject His entire approach to ministry.²² The implication here is that Jesus wants Peter to tend His sheep (cf. John 21:16–17), but the only way that this can occur is by adopting Christ-like servant leadership. Furthermore, the only way to truly enjoy intimate fellowship with Jesus is to serve Him and keep short accounts. This is the challenge that Jesus issues to Peter.

Of course, Peter is a man of extremes. Good, ole' Peter. Sometimes the only time he opens his mouth is to change feet!²³ In 13:9, Peter says to Jesus, **“Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”** Peter says, “Jesus, just give me a bath! I’m ready to jump into the tub.” Naturally, he is overcompensating, so Jesus says to him, **“He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”**²⁴ **For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’**” There’s a great lesson here: We walk in a dirty world every day, and some of the dirt rubs off on us. We need to let Jesus get close enough to us so He can keep our lives clean.²⁵ Again, the issue is intimate fellowship with Jesus. This is subsequent to salvation and is explained in 1 John 1:9. Yet, in the midst of a discussion of intimate fellowship, Jesus also brings up the topic of salvation, knowing full well that Judas is an unbeliever. His point is: Peter needs to have his feet washed, while Judas needs to be immersed in a tub! What a great picture of the distinction between salvation and fellowship.

I have in my possession a “Scratch & Win” card from Taco Bell. This scratch card has a circle in the bottom right-hand corner. I chose to scratch this card off in my quest to win a free prize. Once I scratched this card my surprise gift, or lack thereof, was revealed. Nothing can undo the result. However, I could have opted not to scratch off the circle. I could have said, “I never win anything. Why bother?” “Nobody probably wins a car from one of these scratch cards.” “I have a lot of intellectual issues with scratch cards.” By refusing to scratch off the circle, I could’ve lost any chance to win. Fortunately, I didn’t make this mistake, and I won a free large Dr Pepper. (Who would like a free Dr. Pepper? Give away the card.)

Salvation is similar to this scratch card except the rules are different. Jesus identifies your free gift upfront. It is salvation! This gift is available to you if you will simply believe in Christ’s person and work, which is akin to scratching off the circle on a scratch card. Better yet, unlike Taco Bell, Jesus promises you that He will not revoke your free gift even if you lose your card. Of course, the great risk that you run is not to scratch off the card. When you refuse to believe in Christ, there is no hope for you. If you have never believed in Jesus, I challenge you to do so today. Claim the free gift that is available through Christ.

Again, Jesus Christ, not only died on the cross for the sins of the world, He lived a life of servanthood. During this last supper, Jesus washed all the feet of his disciples, including Judas, the one who would betray him in a matter of hours. To visualize this it is important to remember that Jesus and His disciples are not sitting in chairs around a dining room table.²⁶ Rather, they are reclining on their left elbows, eating with their right hand, and have their feet behind them.²⁷ The stench from their feet must have been horrendous. How could they really have enjoyed their meal? Nevertheless, Jesus went from disciple to disciple and washed their feet. In His love, He was able to endure the ingrown nails, corns, calluses, cracked heels, and fungi. What a great, sacrificial love!

In 13:12–17, John’s account becomes rather pointed. **“So when He [Jesus] had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’”** (13:12) Jesus, the master teacher, poses a question because He knows His disciples are slow of mind and heart. He wants to make sure that they have really caught this truth. He then follows up His question with a powerful declaration: **“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet”** (13:13–14).²⁸ Twice in these verses, Jesus calls Himself “Teacher and Lord.” It is worth noticing that no disciple ever addressed Jesus casually. No one ever called Him “Jesus” and they certainly never used expressions like “Sweet Jesus” or “Dear Jesus.” They called Him “Master” or “Lord.”²⁹ Often, I think we make a mistake in being too familiar with the Lord Jesus Christ. We envision Him as a cosmic Santa Claus or a Mr. Rogers with a nice zip-up polyester sweater. We rarely ponder the fact that He came as the Lamb of God but is now the Lion of God.³⁰ If we had a holy sense of awe at the power and sovereignty of Jesus and recognized that He willingly served humankind, we would not hesitate to do so as well. It is when we have a great view of Jesus and a small view of ourselves that we get things done.

It is worth noting that some Christians³¹ understand 13:14b to proscribe foot washing as the third ordinance, along with baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, most Christian groups have said that this is not the case because, (1) there is never a record of it being done by any church in Acts; (2) it is never advocated in the New Testament letters;³² and (3) it is never specifically said to be an ongoing ordinance as are baptism (cf. Matt 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor 11:17–34). This is not meant to imply that this might not be an important worship event.³³ But it is more appropriate to look for other creative ways to wash people's feet.

John's account concludes in 13:1517 with a powerful punch line: **“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly,³⁴ I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”** The command is: Do as I have done. Apparently, Nike copied Jesus when they trademarked the slogan, “Just do it!”³⁵ Jesus is simply saying, “See what needs to be done and do it.”³⁶ Therefore, if I could boil down this sermon into one statement, it would be: *Actions speak louder than words.*³⁷ If Jesus asked the disciples (even on the road to the upper room), “Do you love Me?” they would have responded, “We love You with all our hearts.” If He had asked them, “Do you love one another?” His disciples would have replied, “We love each other and all of God's children.” Jesus' disciples knew the right things, but they did not do the right things. Yet, James, the half-brother of Jesus said, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (Jas 1:22). *Actions speak louder than words.*

Many cathedrals in Europe suffered damage as a result of bombing raids during World War II. The explosion of a bomb in one great cathedral blew the hands off a statue of Christ. Though the cathedral was repaired, the statue of Christ stands there today with His hands missing. An inscription on the pedestal reads, “Christ hath no hands but yours.”³⁸ Today will you be Jesus' hands and feet?

This past week, I began looking for contemporary examples of foot washing. I didn't need to look far. I found them everywhere among the people in our church. On Tuesday afternoon, I received some cookies from a busy leader in our body. They came at just the right time when I was working late at the office. Since I didn't have any dinner, I enjoyed five cookies instead. On Wednesday, during his lunch hour, our pastoral care director and a group of men from our church helped a widow move some furniture. On Wednesday afternoon, our outreach director and a number of people in our church went into downtown Olympia and put change into delinquent parking meters with the note: “Your parking meter time expired. We deposited more coins to show God's love in a practical way.” On Thursday afternoon, one of our men offered to help another busy family by taxiing their son around town. On Saturday, a couple in their 70s offered to clean the house of one of our members. On Sunday morning before church one of our elders sent out an e-mail to suggest practical ways that we can help a man in need. I could go on and on, but the capstone for me was a memorial service on Saturday afternoon for Helen Stover (86) who has exemplified Christ-like service for decades. We celebrated the rich legacy that Helen left behind. But we were also fortunate to see the busiest leaders in our church serving behind the scenes (e.g., running sound, preparing refreshments, setting up and tearing down). It was a thing of beauty. Even my own eight year old daughter served in the kitchen with a group of ladies in our church. On our way home, Jena said, “Daddy, the time went so fast.” I replied, “How could it have gone fast? It was hot in that kitchen and you worked hard.” Little Jena explained, “When I work hard, time goes by so fast, because it is fun.” That is the joy that can come from serving like Jesus.

Today, will you pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you a single person He wants you to serve? Don't think about a list of twenty, just one single person that the Lord will lay upon your heart. Ask Him for the grace to love this person unconditionally and to serve him or her with your whole being. This is a prayer that God will answer. Remember, *actions speak louder than words.* May you and I follow in the sandals of Jesus and become foot washers.

Scripture References

John 13:1–17

Philippians 2:6–11

Luke 7:44–46; 14:8–11; 22:24–27

Matthew 23:1–7

1 John 1:9

Romans 5:20; 8:33–34

Psalm 32:1–2

Study Questions

1. How would I describe my love quotient for other believers (13:1)? When have I found it difficult to persevere in my love for the body of Christ? What makes certain believers so unlovable? How were Jesus' struggles with His disciples similar to some of the challenges I face? How can I prepare myself to love God's difficult people and follow Jesus' example?
2. In what ways did Jesus' self-awareness enable Him to lovingly serving others (13:3, 13–14)? When have I had to be humble and firm at the same time? What was the outcome? How can I learn to balance confidence in Christ with humility of heart?
3. In what ways do I serve my church (13:4–5)? How do I go about serving my family, my coworkers, my neighbors, and my community? How can I seek to meet the tangible needs of those whom God has placed in my life? Would those who know me best say that I have a servant's heart? Why or why not?
4. What is the difference between salvation and fellowship (13:6–10)? How can I know for certain that I have received the free gift of salvation? How can I be confident that I am in fellowship with God? How can I clearly distinguish between these concepts?
5. How important is church unity and community to me (13:1–17). On the last day of my earthly life, would this be the first thing on my mind? Why or why not? What can I learn from Jesus' priorities? How can I apply His heart to the body of Christ that I serve?

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Notes

¹ Steve May, “How to Win the Respect of Others” (Phil 2:5–11): www.preachingtoday.com.

² Many interpreters extend this text through John 13:20. However, with the contrast between the believing disciples and the unbelieving Judas, it seems best to make the break after 13:17.

³ There are several parallels between John 13:1–5 and Phil 2:6–11. See Philip W. Comfort and Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1994), 210. There are also some intriguing parallels in John 1:1–18 and 13:1–3. See Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 225.

⁴ John 13:2 serves as a footnote about Judas Iscariot that will be expounded in 13:18–30. Burge notes, “The Greek at this point is uncertain: ‘The devil had already put in *his* heart that Judas should betray him [Jesus]’ (lit. trans.). But whose heart is this? Our assumption that it belongs to Judas (NIV) is not altogether clear. The phrase ‘put in his heart’ also means ‘made up his mind,’ and according to some Greek manuscripts, Judas is not yet the object of the devil’s work. The sense is most likely: ‘When the devil had decided that Judas should betray Jesus...’ It is not till 13:27 that Satan enters Judas. Either way, Judas becomes one who has refused to believe (12:46); since he is surrounded by the darkness, he is ready to become a pawn of Jesus’ adversary, Satan. See Gary M. Burge, *The Gospel of John*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 368.

⁵ See John 18:28; 19:14, 31, 42; cf. Exod 12.

⁶ Scholars discuss the chronological issues that stem from the timing of the Passover meal. Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7) clearly teach that Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover Supper at the prescribed time; and that He died on (what we would call) the following day (Mark 15:1 ff.). The question then becomes: Did Jesus die after the Passover Supper (thus the Synoptics), or did he die before the Passover Supper (thus, say some, John)? See William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*. Vol. 1–2, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953–2001), 2.222.

⁷ Ken Boa, “The Gospel of John – Chapter 13”: www.bible.org.

⁸ “Love” is one of the key terms in John 13–17, occurring thirty-one times in these five chapters as compared to only six times in chapters 1–12.

⁹ The Greek phrase “His own” (*tous idious*) was used in the Egyptian papyri for “near kin” (cf. Luke 8:19–21). See Bob Utley, *John and I, II & III John*: www://freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/EN/VOL04.pdf, 125.

¹⁰ The phrase, *eis telos*, if taken temporally, would mean that Jesus loved His disciples until He died. Here it is better to see it as an adverbial phrase describing the nature of Jesus’ love with which He was loving them. The meaning is similar Paul’s use of *eis telos* in 1 Thess 2:16: “to the utmost.” Köstenberger writes, “Of the five other NT occurrences of the phrase *eis telos*, four are temporal (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Luke 18:5) and one is intensive (1 Thess. 2:16). The present reference may contain an allusion to Moses’ completing the writing of the law (and his song) in Deut. 31:24, 30.” Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 402. The dual meaning is most likely correct. See Köstenberger, *John*, 402; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*. Rev. ed. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 545 n. 9; and Michael Eaton, *John*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent, UK: Sovereign World Trust, 2009), 202–3. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John*, 226 compares John’s uses of *telos* and *teleo* (John 4:34; 5:36; 13:1; 17:24; 19:28, 30) and opts for a qualitative understanding, which seems to be confirmed by the following context (15:12–17; 17:11–12, 15).

¹¹ Elsewhere John writes, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10–11).

¹² It is interesting that this same verb (*tithemi*) is used in John 10:11, 15, 17, 18 for Jesus’ laying down His life (cf. 13:37). This may be another of John’s double entendres. It seems likely that the foot washing was more than just an object lesson on humility (cf. 13:6–10). Utley, *John and I, II & III John*, 126.

¹³ Note how Jesus’ thinking and action contrasts sharply with the self-seeking insecurity of the disciples (cf. Matt 20:20–24; Mark 9:33–34; Luke 22:24–30).

¹⁴ The custom goes back so far that the first four mentions of the word “feet” in the Bible involve washing dirty feet (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24). In each case the water was provided so that the visitors could wash their own feet. This was simply common courtesy in those days. And, in fact, not to offer water for a guest to wash his feet would be a breach of etiquette and an act of unkindness to a guest (cf. 1 Sam 25:41; Luke 7:40–50; 1 Tim 5:10).

¹⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *31 Days on the Life of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 118.

¹⁶ Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 199.

¹⁷ Bob Deffinbaugh, “Menial Service” in *That You Might Believe: A Study of the Gospel of John*: www.bible.org.

¹⁸ In Phil 2:5–7 Paul writes, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.”

¹⁹ See also Comfort and Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John*, 213.

²⁰ The verb *egkomboomaiis* only used here in the NT. BDAG s.v. *egkomboomaiis*: “to put or tie something on oneself, *put on*.”

²¹ According to Matthew, John the Baptist had the same sort of problem at Jesus’ baptism, although then the water was on the other foot (as it were): “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” (Matt 3:14).

²² Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984 [2004]), 200.

²³ R. Kent Hughes, *John. Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), Electronic ed.

²⁴ John uses two different Greek words for wash/bathe in John 13:10: *louo* (“to bathe the entire body”) and *nipto* (“to wash part of the body”).

²⁵ Tony Evans, *Who is This King of Glory?* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 315.

²⁶ In the Greco-Roman world and also in the first-century Jewish world, many of the Jews adopted the Roman triclinium. This arrangement was a U-shaped affair where people would sit around the outside of the table.

²⁷ Köstenberger, *John*, 404.

²⁸ This is a figure of speech called a synecdoche—the exchange of one idea for an associated idea. The act of foot washing stands for any act of self-denying love and service.

²⁹ Eaton, *John*, 207.

³⁰ Note the contrast between John 1:29 and Rev 5:5, both written by the apostle John.

³¹ The Grace Brethren and certain Mennonite churches, among others, view footwashing as a third ordinance.

Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on John,” 2008 ed.: www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/john.pdf, 199 n. 452.

³² 1 Tim 5:10 speaks of foot washing as an example of humble service, not as an ordinance of the church.

³³ Utley, *John and I, II & III John*, 126.

³⁴ Utley, *John and I, II & III John*, 126 writes, “This is literally ‘Amen, amen.’ This is a form of the OT term for ‘faith’ (cf. Hab. 2:4). Jesus was the only one (in any Greek literature) to ever use it in this opening position. It usually was said last to agree with or confirm a statement or act. When used at the beginning of a sentence and doubled, it is an attention-getting device.”

³⁵ See Matt 7:24–27; Luke 6:46–49; Rom 2:13; Jas 1:22–25; 4:11.

³⁶ In Matthew, Mark, and Luke the central feature of the Upper Room is the institution of Lord’s Supper. But strikingly John does not mention this at all in his account. He writes as though He understands that we already have Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In place of the account of the Lord’s Table, however, John gives us an incident which the other gospels do not report—the washing of the disciples’ feet.

³⁷ Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker*, 200.

³⁸ J. Carl Laney, *Marching Orders* (Wheaton: Victor, 1983), 33.