

SEPTEMBER 26, 2021 • LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE •



Why Church?

Rediscovering the
Meaning and Mission
of God's People



PART 3 | *Serve*



Why Church?

Serve

Why Church? Part Three: Serve John 13:1-17

I. On Serving, and Being Served

- A. “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist...” – John 13:3-4

Jesus was acting out of this great sense of security. I think we need that too. To follow Jesus in a life of self-giving, it will have to flow from our own, deep seated sense of our beloved-ness. **Our serving will be rooted in the fact that Jesus already washed our feet.**

- B. “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”
– John 13:14-15

There is no place in antiquity – either Jewish or Greco-Roman – of a ‘superior’ washing the feet of an ‘inferior’ (D.A. Carson, *The Gospel of John*). So Jesus is doing something that is stunning and even seen as ‘inappropriate’ according to the social convention of his day. And then tells us to follow him in that example.

II. The Joy of Serving

When Jesus “humbles himself”, wrapping a towel around his waste to indicate he is a servant, and going so far as to go to death on a cross – he was, as C.S. Lewis says, “simply acting in character.”



Lewis goes on to say that when he sacrificed himself for us, Jesus did “in the wild weather of his outlying provinces” – meaning, here on earth – what for all eternity “he had done at home in glory and gladness.” – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

“From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated [given up] ...This is not a... law which we can escape...What is outside the system of self-giving is... simply and solely Hell... that fierce imprisonment in the self... Self-giving is absolute reality.” – C.S. Lewis

“We were made to serve and live for God’s glory, not our own. We were made to serve God and others. That means, paradoxically that if we try to put our own happiness ahead of obedience to God, we violate our own nature and become, ultimately, miserable” – Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

III. Freedom to Serve

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

– Galatians 5:13-14

Our freedom in Christ is freedom from the need to build my own identity, freedom from the need to prove to God, or myself, or those around me that I’m ‘worthy of love’. And that freedom launches our ability to truly serve others ‘humbly in love,’ to fulfill the love command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”



Who is my neighbor?

“Jesus took pains to minister to the social outcasts of his day – Samaritans, tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, traitors, lepers, the lame, the blind, the adulteress, and others.... Echoing the Hebrew Bible: Jesus calls his followers to feed and care for the poor, widows, and orphans in their midst; to visit and comfort the sick, imprisoned, refugee...And Jesus paid special attention to the care, nurture, and protection of children.”

-John Witte Jr. and Justin Latterell,
“Christianity and Human Rights: Past
Contributions and Future Challenges”
Journal of Law and Religion, 2015

“Washing feet” is not necessarily about *which* jobs we do, but about the posture of coming, like Jesus, as “one who serves”; who is living for, working for, the sake of the others. That’s a gospel-shaped living.

Colossians 4:23:

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

Life Group Discussion and Reflection

1. Share of a time when someone went out of his or her way to serve you. What was that experience of receiving help like for you?

Read **John 13:1-17**

2. Jesus act of washing feet was a stunning display of humility and love for his followers, as well as a picture of the saving/cleansing work his death would accomplish (vv.6-9). Why might it matter that we receive Jesus' 'washing' of us (see Peter's experience and v.8 in particular) as the foundation of our own service to one another?
3. Read **Galatians 5:13-14**. In his message, Pastor Dave said: "For followers of Jesus, 'freedom' is being released from self-centeredness so that that I might live for the sake of others. Our freedom in Christ is freedom from the need to build my own identity, freedom from the need to prove to God, or myself, or those around me that I'm 'worthy of love'. And that freedom launches our ability to truly serve others 'humbly in love,' to fulfill the love command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." How have you found this to be true in your life, or how have you seen it in others?
4. How might following Jesus' example – with particular attention to how the socially superior washes the feet of the socially inferior – define the culture of a church community?

Asked differently, what would a community look like where this was fully embraced? How would the leaders act? How might that impact the way that the rest of the community lives?

5. Look particularly at vv.12-17 now. In what ways are you personally: a) encouraged and b) challenged by Jesus' words? Are there areas in life where you sense his affirmation for the way you have been serving? Are there ways that you need to engage, or re-engage in an attitude and practice of serving like Jesus does here? Share some of those with each other.

Prayer: Take some time to serve one another through the ministry of prayer. Share requests of things that are burdens to you, or praise items that you are giving thanks for. Enter into a time of lifting up these prayers to God on behalf of others. Pray too that as a church community, we would grow in our attitude and practice of 'loving our neighbor'.

