

## Serve with Joy

*John 13:1-17; 15:9-12*

The Gospel of John records some of Jesus' most intimate moments with his disciples—moments that took place just hours before Jesus was arrested and crucified. They were moments in which Jesus demonstrated and taught his disciples, once again, about the joy of loving and serving others.

The story begins with Jesus, who "loved [his own] to the end;" expressing his love by kneeling before each of his disciples in humble service. He did what only a servant would have done. He disrobed, wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin and washed each one's feet.

Jesus shared his heart in those moments, saying, in essence: "I love you. In the same tender, unshakeable way that God the Father loves me, I love you. This reality is the foundation for all of life. This reality is the source of joy. You are loved. Receive this love. Rest in this love. Stay close to me and to my love for *you*."

Jesus continued by calling his disciples to love and serve others.

It is helpful to notice the order of this teaching. First, we are told that we are loved. Then we are told to remain in the reality of that love. And then we are called to love each other. First, we allow Jesus to kneel before us; we receive his gift of intimate love for us. Then, we respond to Jesus' call to join him in kneeling in joyful service to all others.

As we begin to take in God's love and rest in that love, we begin to change. We begin to see others as God sees them, through eyes of love. We also begin to see each task and challenge that lies before us as an opportunity to remain in God's love, drawing strength and wisdom from God in order to joyfully give of ourselves to others.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** Think of someone you know or have encountered who joyfully gave of themselves to serve and love others. What was it like to be with him or her?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION.** Think of a time when you found yourself joyful about serving someone. Describe the experience.

In the text for this study we watch and listen to some of the last moments Jesus had with his disciples before his death. In these fleeting moments he demonstrated his love for them and reminded them that the one commandment he was leaving them was to love and serve others. *Read John 13:1-17.*

---

1. What was on Jesus' heart and mind at this time in his life (see vv. 1-3)?

---

2. What was the significance of Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet?

---

3. Notice that Jesus knows who is going to betray him (v. 2), but his love and his act of humble service included all his disciples. What does this tell us about the nature of Jesus' love and the love of God the Father?

---

4. Describe what happens in the interchange between Peter and Jesus (vv. 8-10).

---

5. In what ways do you relate to Peter's reaction to Jesus kneeling before him as a humble, loving servant?

---

6. Why was it so important to Jesus that Peter and the others received this gift of love from him?

---

7. Jesus instructed his disciples to do what he had just done for others. What things might be comparable to this act of washing others' feet?

---

8. Jesus promises blessing when we serve others in love. What blessings often come out of acts of service?

*Read John 15:9-12.*

---

9. What connection do you see between Jesus' instructions in chapter 13 and the command he gives in this portion of chapter 15?

---

10. This text suggests that there is a direct connection between "remaining in God's love," loving others and experiencing joy. How would you describe the relationship between these three realities?

---

11. How might the focus on being loved, and loving and serving others, affect the way you experience the demands and challenges of your day?

*Thank God for Jesus' love and joyful service toward you and toward all others. Ask God to give you the grace to follow Jesus in living a life of loving, joyful service for others.*

### **Now or Later**

In a time of quiet, put yourself in the story as one of Jesus' disciples. Let yourself see Jesus kneeling before you to wash your feet. Notice your responses to Jesus. Notice the effect Jesus' actions have on you. Make a note of what this experience was like.

In a time of quiet, listen as Jesus says to you, "I love you. I love you with the same tender, intimate, powerful, gentle love that my Father loves me. Live your life from this love. Let the reality of my love for you be the center of all you do and say. Love and serve others from this center. This is the essence of life. This is the source of joy." Make a note of what it is like for you to hear these words of love and joy from Jesus.

*Daily prayer:* Lord, you kneel before me in love and joy. Help me take this in. Help me move past my instinct to refuse you. May I receive your love for me. And may I be your love for others today.