Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus, the Lord and Master, served His disciples, and He gave us an example to serve one another.
Bible passage: John 13:1–17. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." *John 13:15 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, paper and pencils, a snack and napkins to serve (optional), and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: The Teacher Serves (5–10 minutes)

Have the kids sit down. Tell them, "Today the teacher is the servant." Go to each child, one at a time, and serve them: hand them a napkin and a snack, or a cup of water, or a pencil and paper for later. Say "You're welcome" to each one. Then ask: *How did it feel to have the teacher serve you? Who usually serves whom?* Say: "Today we will see the Lord Jesus do something that surprised His disciples."

2. Bible story: The Lord Takes a Towel (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to John 13. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Before the feast. It was just before the feast of the Passover. Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave this world (John 13:1). **Look up John 13:1.** ("Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.") Jesus loved His disciples all the way to the end.

The towel and the bason. Supper was ended (13:2). Jesus knew who He was: all things were in His hands (13:3). **Look up John 13:4.** He rose from supper, laid aside His outer garments, took a towel and **girded** Himself, which means He tied it around His waist. **Look up John 13:5.** He poured water into a **bason** (a bowl) and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel. People walked everywhere, and their feet got dusty. Washing feet was a servant's job; Abigail once said she would be "a servant to wash the feet of the servants" (1 Samuel 25:41).

Peter says no. Jesus came to Simon Peter. **Look up John 13:6.** ("Lord, dost thou wash my feet?") Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (13:7): you don't understand now, but you will later. **Look up John 13:8.** Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Then Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (13:9). Jesus said that someone who is already washed only needs his feet washed, and is "clean every whit," which means clean all over (13:10).

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Not all clean. Jesus said, "Ye are clean, but not all" (13:10). John explains that Jesus knew who would betray Him, which means hand Him over to His enemies (13:11). It was Judas Iscariot (13:2). Jesus knew, and He still served.

Do as I have done. When He had washed their feet, Jesus took His garments again and sat down. He asked, "Know ye what I have done to you?" (13:12). **Look up John 13:13.** ("Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.") **Master** means teacher. **Look up John 13:14.** If their Lord and Master washed their feet, they ought to wash one another's feet. **Look up John 13:15.** That is our memory verse: Jesus gave us an example. **Look up John 13:16.** "The servant is not greater than his lord." If Jesus, the Lord, served, no one is too important to serve. **Look up John 13:17.** ("If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.") Knowing is good, but doing it is what makes us happy.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Jesus is Lord and Master (13:13), and He did a servant's job. Why do you think He did it?
2. Why do you think Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? Is it sometimes hard to let others help us?
3. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him (13:11), and He still served His disciples. What does that teach us about serving people who are not kind to us?
4. Jesus said we are happy if we *do* these things, not just know them (13:17). What is one way you can serve someone this week?
5. Who serves you every day without being thanked? How can you serve them back?

Recall questions

1. What did Jesus gird Himself with? *(A towel, John 13:4)*
2. Which disciple said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? *(Simon Peter, 13:6–8)*
3. What did the disciples call Jesus? *(Master and Lord, 13:13)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: an **example** is something to copy, **ye** means you, and **as I have done to you** means the way Jesus served them. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus served His disciples with a towel and a bason. Then He served us in the biggest way of all. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: serve one person every day without being asked, and don't tell anyone you did it.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. John 13:1: How long did Jesus love His own? *(Unto the end)*
2. John 13:4: What did Jesus lay aside? *(His garments)*
3. John 13:5: What did Jesus wipe their feet with? *(The towel wherewith he was girded)*
4. John 13:7: When would Peter understand? *(Hereafter, which means later)*
5. John 13:9: What did Peter ask Jesus to wash besides his feet? *(His hands and his head)*
6. John 13:12: What did Jesus ask after He sat down? *("Know ye what I have done to you?")*
7. John 13:16: Who is not greater than his lord? *(The servant)*
8. John 13:17: When are we happy? *(If we do these things)*

For more, use the **word search, crossword, maze or worksheet** (vbshq.com/bible-stories/jesus-washes-feet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus loved His disciples to the end and served them. Help us not just to know what Jesus did, but to do it: to serve one another, even when no one sees. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks about Judas: keep it simple. Judas chose to turn against Jesus (John 13:2), and Jesus knew it (13:11). The Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane lessons tell what happened next.

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