Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: If the Lord and Master served, no one is too important to serve. Knowing it is not enough; we are happy when we do it.
Bible passage: John 13:1–17. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." *John 13:15 (KJV)* and "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." *John 13:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read John 13:1–17 and Mark 10:45. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Most Important? (5–10 minutes)

Write these jobs on the board: president, pastor, doctor, star athlete, janitor, cook, nurse's aide, teacher, the person who cleans up after the church dinner. Students vote: which job is the most important, and which is the least? Write the votes next to each job. Then ask: *Which of these jobs serve other people the most? Which ones would you not want people to see you doing?* Say: "Today we will see the most important person in the room take the lowest job."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: John 13:1–11. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **his hour was come** (13:1): the time had come for Jesus to die and leave this world
- **unto the Father** (13:1) and **was come from God, and went to God** (13:3): Jesus is the one God who came in the flesh as a man (1 Timothy 3:16); as a man He spoke of God as His Father
- **unto the end** (13:1): all the way, to the very end
- **betray** (13:2, 13:11): hand Him over to His enemies
- **riseth** (13:4): gets up; **laid aside his garments**: took off His outer clothes
- **girded himself** (13:4): tied the towel around His waist, the way a servant dresses for work
- **bason** (13:5): a bowl; **wherewith he was girded**: the towel He had tied on
- **dost thou** (13:6): do you; **knowest not now ... hereafter** (13:7): you don't understand now, but you will later
- **no part with me** (13:8): no share with Me, not belonging to Me
- **needeth not save to wash his feet** (13:10): only needs his feet washed; **every whit**: every bit, all over

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Background: people walked everywhere, and their feet got dusty. Washing feet was a servant's job. Abigail said she would be "a servant to wash the feet of the servants" (1 Samuel 25:41), and Jesus once told a Pharisee, "thou gavest me no water for my feet" (Luke 7:44). That is why Peter was shocked.

Read out loud: John 13:12–17. Old words in this passage:

- **was set down again** (13:12): sat down again
- **Master** (13:13): teacher; **ye say well; for so I am**: you are right, because I am
- **ought** (13:14): should; it is what you owe
- **example** (13:15): a pattern to copy
- **Verily, verily** (13:16): truly, truly; **he that is sent**: a messenger
- **happy are ye** (13:17): you are blessed

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. John 13:3 says Jesus knew "that the Father had given all things into his hands," and verse 4 starts "He riseth from supper." Why does it matter that Jesus served when He knew exactly who He was?
2. Peter first said "never" (13:8), then "not my feet only" (13:9). Why do you think he swung from one extreme to the other? Why is it sometimes hard to let someone serve us?
3. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him (13:2, 13:11), and He still served the disciples. Who is hard for you to serve? What would serving them look like?
4. "The servant is not greater than his lord" (13:16). If Jesus served, what jobs are "beneath" us? Be honest.
5. Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (13:17). What is the difference between knowing about serving and doing it?
6. Read Mark 10:45. How does Jesus washing feet point to the greatest way He served us?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **example** means a pattern to copy; **ye** means you; **happy are ye** means you are blessed. John 13:15 says what to do; John 13:17 says why: there is joy in doing it.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say John 13:15 this week; keep working on John 13:17 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus said, 'For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45, KJV). **Minister** means serve, and a **ransom** is a price paid to set someone free. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where do I feel "too important" or "too busy" to serve?
2. Name one person I will serve this week, and exactly how, without being asked and without telling anyone.
3. Write a short prayer asking God for a humble heart like Jesus.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do one hidden act of service every day: a job no one asked you to do and no one sees.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus loved His own to the end and served them. Make us humble. Help us not just to know these things, but to do them, and to serve one another in love. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks about Judas: John says the devil had put it into Judas' heart to betray Jesus (13:2), and Jesus knew it (13:11). Keep the focus on Jesus serving; the Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane lessons go further.
If a student asks whether we should still wash feet: read John 13:14–15 together and let the verses speak. Encourage them to ask their pastor how your church follows it. Every day, we can follow Jesus' example by serving one another humbly.

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