

# Jesus washes the disciples' feet



John 13:1-17

*During the last meal they had together, the Lord Jesus wanted to wash the feet of his twelve disciples. To Peter, who refused at first, he said: "If I do not wash you, you are not in fellowship with me." Thereafter he washed the feet of all the disciples. He wanted to show that they were to serve each other. Furthermore he explained: "A servant is not greater than his master, nor an Apostle than the one who sent him. If you know this, happy are you if you act upon it."*

The children learn how humble the Lord Jesus was and how much he cared for his disciples.  
They are encouraged to follow his example.

**F**or three years the Lord Jesus has proclaimed God's word and performed miracles. He knows that his time on earth is running out. He is not afraid, for everything lies in God's hand. His heavenly Father has sent him to the earth and he knows that he will return to heaven. His parting from all the people he so dearly loves, is close at hand.

Passover will commence shortly. The first evening of the feast the Lord Jesus spends with his twelve disciples. Dusk has not yet set in. In a festive mood, the men walk through the streets of Jerusalem to a house where the celebration is to take place. Some of the disciples have already prepared everything: a large room has been decorated and the food and wine placed in readiness. They also remembered the jug and water basin for the washing of feet. Jesus and the disciples now enter this room and take their places at the festively laid table. Everything is ready for the meal. Deeply moved, the Lord Jesus looks around the table and says: "I have been looking forward to being with you all and enjoying this meal with you."

Now the Lord Jesus gets up, lays aside his outer garment and ties a towel round his waist. Amazed, the disciples realize

that he intends to wash their feet. They try to dissuade him: "Please stop! You are our master, you cannot wash our feet!" But the Lord Jesus pours water into the basin, carries it over to Peter and puts it down on the floor in front of him. Peter quickly pulls back his feet and asks in a shocked voice: "Lord, you want to wash my feet?" The Lord Jesus answers calmly: "What I am doing you cannot understand now. You will only understand this later." But Apostle Peter is not satisfied with this answer. He says quite resolutely: "I will never allow you to wash my feet."

"If I do not wash them, you are not in fellowship with me," the Lord replies. Peter finds that thought unbearable. He wants to be in fellowship with Jesus Christ at all cost, and share in his life, activities and suffering. Therefore he says: "Then do not only wash my feet, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus laughs and replies: "That will not be necessary. One who is washed, is clean. You only have to have your feet washed." Then Peter allows him to kneel down before him and to wash and dry his feet. Jesus Christ goes from one disciple to another, kneeling in front of each one and washing his feet. He serves each one as if he were the least and humblest amongst them. Embarrassed and surprised, the disciples allow him to do so.

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Having finished, Jesus Christ puts on his garment again and

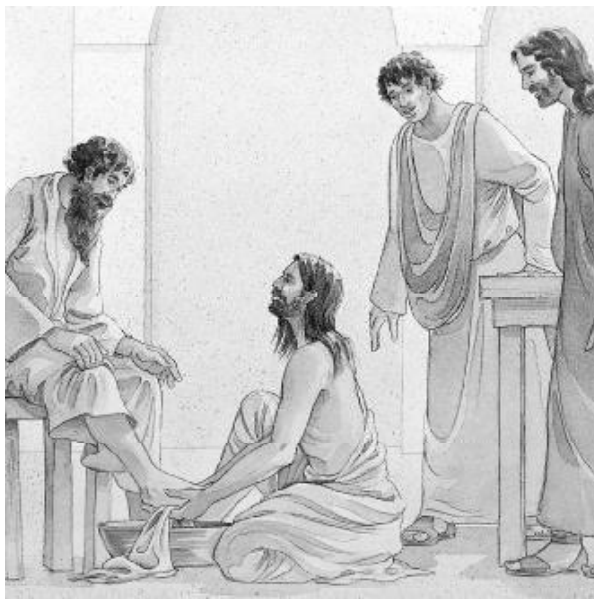
## Jesus Christ is our teacher

sits down at the table. He sees that the disciples have not understood what he did. Probably not one of them would have been prepared to perform such a lowly task. The Lord addresses them seriously: "Do you know what I have done? You call me Lord and Master, and so I am. I am your Lord and teacher and yet I have just washed your feet. From now on you shall wash each other's feet and serve one another. I have given you this example so that you will act in exactly the same manner as I have done. I say to you: A servant is not greater than his Lord, a messenger not greater than the one who has commissioned him, and an Apostle not greater than his sender.

You now know this. If you act accordingly, you will have blessing and joy."

The disciples are deeply touched and moved by this act of love. They understand what the Lord Jesus wishes to teach them: they are to serve each other humbly. He has shown them how to do it. As his Apostles, his messengers and servants, they should do the same and serve and love one another.

2/3



*In the evening before his arrest, the Lord Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He wanted to show them his great love and also give them an example: they were to serve one another in humility and love.*

- 1 We look at and describe the picture. What is the Lord Jesus doing here? Can the children imagine why he is doing it? What will the disciples have thought of it?
- 2 The children put Jesus' explanation into their own words.
- 3 Jesus Christ says: "A servant is not greater than his master." What does this mean in this context? (If the Lord serves, how much more should not his servants serve.)  
Jesus Christ gives us an example here of how we should behave. He is our example. (We should help and love one another / we should serve one another and not command or give orders / we should humbly esteem others better than ourselves etc.)  
We look for examples in the children's daily life.