

Wash Another's Feet

JOHN 13:1-20

4



GOAL

Youth engage in hospitality as a way to show God's love to others.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- AT** Abstract Thinking
- C** Conversation
- CT** Concrete Thinking
- D** Drama
- G** Game
- M** Music
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God, thank you for the opportunity to lead your children. Give me the humility to remember that I also learn from them. Teach us all to love deeper and wider. Amen.

THIS SESSION

Loving others in the way of Jesus means we get up close and personal with others. Jesus spent time in close proximity and relationships with all kinds of people. He conversed with religious leaders in the temple and fishers on the Sea of Galilee. He ate meals with despised tax collectors and outcasts. He visited with both Jews and Gentiles in their homes. He touched and healed young and old, rich and poor.

In one of his most striking acts of hands-on love, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. All of them, even those who would betray and abandon him. Such love is an act of humility. This is one of the last things Jesus did before his arrest, trial, and execution. The act of footwashing witnesses to the aim (end) of his ministry: to show tangibly what radical love looks like. To borrow from the beloved hymn, they will know we are Christians by our love.

THE BIBLE STORY

In John 13:1-20, Jesus emphasizes that he knew he was going to die soon, suggesting a sense of urgency that stirred him to teach his gathered disciples an important lesson before his death. The disciples loved and respected Jesus greatly. Yet he humbled himself to wash their dirty feet. As Jesus' followers, we are to do as Jesus has done for us. No one is greater than the one who sent us. Jesus told his disciples that they are to wash one another's feet. By showing humility and hospitality to others, we demonstrate our love for God.

CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH

Developing a healthy self-esteem is a balancing act. Pride is an alluring temptation, while self-criticism and judgment run rampant. A growing edge for young people is learning to love and celebrate themselves while simultaneously refraining from developing pride and entitlement. Washing one another's feet, whether literally or metaphorically, teaches humility and service. These two values make it possible for us to show the kind of love God desires. Youth discover how to show hospitality and service in ways that honor God, other people, and themselves.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "Footwashing" (p. 34): See activity for supplies and process. Consider how your group might participate in this activity.
- "Being the Hands and Feet of Jesus" (p. 34): Draw a five-column grid chart. Write *Body, God, Neighbor, Enemy, Self* across the top; down the side write *Hands, Feet, Body, Voice, Mind*.

GETTING STARTED

- ☐ Construction paper
- ☐ Markers or colored pencils
- ☐ Scissors

HANDS AND FEET

A

As youth arrive, have them use the art supplies to trace their hands and feet on paper. Ensure that they trace between the webs of their fingers. Then cut out their traced hands and feet. On one side of a hand and foot, have them list favorite things they do with their hands and their feet. Discuss these with one another.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

OPENING LITANY

QC

Welcome the youth with your usual opening activities. Explain that the theme of this session is “Wash Another’s Feet.” After you read a line of the litany, have youth repeat in unison “when we wash another’s feet.” Their closing line is “may we wash another’s feet.”

We love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind

when we wash another’s feet.

We love our neighbor as ourself

when we wash another’s feet.

We love our enemies

when we wash another’s feet.

Lord, in your mercy,

may we wash another’s feet.

- ☐ Markers or colored pencils
- ☐ Remaining feet cutout from “Hands and Feet” (p. 32)

NEEDING CARE

A

Invite youth to think about the ways they like to be cared for. What needs would they like to have met? Offer examples, such as some youth may appreciate verbal affirmations while others may desire a friend who can sit with them in silence. Some might desire expensive gifts, while others might appreciate a warm bubble bath. Using the cutouts of their feet, invite the youth to write or illustrate how they like to be cared for. Discuss these with one another.

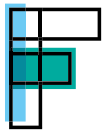
HOME RITUALS

C

Initiate a discussion about rituals and expectations that people commonly have in their homes.

- ➔ What rituals or expectations do you (or your family) have when people enter your home?
- ➔ What actions or words do you use to show respect when visiting someone else’s home?
- ➔ When guests visit your home, what things do you typically do for them to show hospitality and welcome?

Explain that, in Jesus’ time, a common act of hospitality was to wash the feet of guests when they entered a host’s home. Today, we will examine this ancient practice and discover how we can show humility and love to one another.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or both options.

FOOTWASHING HUMILITY

C AT

☐ Bibles

Read and discuss the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet in two parts. Invite a volunteer to read John 13:1–11. Pause and reflect together:

- ➔ What is your initial reaction to Jesus washing his disciples' feet?
- ➔ How do you think you would respond if you were one of the disciples?
- ➔ Why do you think Jesus said, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand" in verse 4? What did he mean by this?

Have another volunteer read verses 12–20. Discuss the full story together.

- ➔ Jesus washed all of his disciples' feet, including the disciple that he knew would betray him. What do you think about this?
- ➔ How can you connect Jesus' footwashing to the earlier session on "Love Extravagantly"?
- ➔ Do you think you could display the kind of love and humility Jesus showed here? Why or why not?

FINDING BIBLICAL FOOTWASHING

CT G

☐ Bibles

☐ Paper and pens

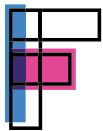
Form groups of two or three. Distribute Bibles, paper, and pens. Explain that, on your signal, each group tries to find as many examples of footwashing in the Bible as they can. Give the groups time to search for examples and write them down. Have groups report what they find. Celebrate with the team who finds the most examples of footwashing.

Reflecting on the examples that were found, discuss what different footwashings have in common. How do they differ? What do the biblical accounts of footwashing tell us about ways we should treat one another today?



Biblical Examples of Footwashing

Genesis 18:1–5; 19:2; 24:31–33; 43:24–25;
Exodus 30:17–21; 40:30–32;
Judges 19:20–21; 1 Samuel 25:40–42;
2 Samuel 11:6–9; Luke 7:36–50;
John 13:1–17; 1 Timothy 5:9–10



FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or more options.

SHARING A WADING POOL

T CT AT

☐ Internet-connected device

Show the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* video "Sharing a Wading Pool (1969)" (bit.ly/FMWadingPool, 3:05). Explain that, while Mister Rogers and Officer Clemmons do not wash each other's feet, their sharing the wading pool and a towel reminds us of Jesus' act of footwashing. Discuss similarities between the wading pool and Jesus' washing feet. Continue discussion using these questions:

- ➔ What signs of hospitality and humility are displayed in the wading pool scene?
- ➔ The video aired in 1969, at the height of Civil Rights changes. What was radical about the scene in the wading pool? What transformation is symbolized by the two men enjoying refreshing water on a hot summer day?
- ➔ How does Mister Rogers' use of his television platform to share the wading pool in a public way deepen your understanding of love?

- ☐ Internet-connected device
- ☐ Colored pencils, markers, pencils
- ☐ Copies of Resource Page 1

PAINTING/WASHING FEET

QC A

Show the YouTube video “Painting—Washing Feet” (bit.ly/FMWashFeet, 2:45). As young people watch, encourage them to notice the details being added, layer by layer. After the video, invite youth to share their impressions, thoughts, and feelings about what they watched. Discuss what message is communicated about footwashing through the painting.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 1. Provide pencils and markers for youth to color their own depiction of footwashing. Encourage them to ask God to help them build new layers of understanding of Jesus’ washing the feet of his disciples.

- ☐ Internet-connected device

SOLES4SOULS

T C

Show the YouTube video “Turning Shoes and Clothing into Opportunity” (bit.ly/FMShoeOpp, 3:25). Invite youth to share their thoughts, impressions, and feelings about what they watched. Ask youth what can be learned from Soles4Souls about love and hospitality.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

- ☐ Large bowl
- ☐ Towel
- ☐ Pitcher of water
- ☐ Kneeling pad or pillow



Teaching Tip: Instead of washing feet, youth may wash one another’s hands. Follow the directions in the activity, substituting hands for feet. Alternatively, you as leader may wash each of the participants’ feet or hands, as Jesus did for his disciples.

FOOTWASHING

AM

Have youth sit in chairs in a circle, if possible. Invite them to remove their shoes and socks so that they can wash one another’s feet. As the session leader, model the activity by being the first to wash another’s feet.

The person washing feet sits or kneels on a pad on the floor. The foot washer places a bowl at the feet of one of the youth. Have the young person hold their foot slightly above the bowl while the washer pours a small amount of water over their foot and into the bowl. Use the towel to dry their feet. While pouring and drying, give the young person a short affirmation (“I value you” or “You are loved”). Slide the bowl to the feet of the next person in the circle. The one who just had their feet washed will sit on the floor and pour water, then dry the feet of the other while providing a short affirmation. Continue until everyone has had their feet washed.

Once all participants are washed, offer a brief prayer for the trust shared in this activity. Invite conversation about how the youth felt while washing someone else’s feet. How did it feel to have their own feet washed?

- ☐ Prepared chart
- ☐ Markers

BEING THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS

Work as a group to fill in a chart identifying ways to use hands, feet, and whole body to show love to God, neighbor, enemy, and self, following Jesus as a model. Use this work to encourage youth to value what they can do to love one another.

A BOWL AND TOWEL

Invite youth to think about their daily routines. When do they use water or a towel in the day? Challenge them to focus their ordinary, daily tasks on the extraordinary example of Jesus.

Brainstorm ways that youth can turn ordinary actions into attention, love, and care for others.

Have youth identify their daily activities. Write these down the left side of a newsprint sheet. Include activities such as washing dishes, brushing teeth, doing laundry, washing hands or face (or feet), and so on. Have youth suggest ways to turn each routine activity into a blessing for someone else. Write their suggestions beside each item. Some blessings include naming people to pray for, specific words, or prayers to repeat.

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- ☐ Newsprint and markers



FOLLOWING JESUS

GIVING CARE

A

If you completed the “Needing Care” activity on page 32, have youth look at the cutout of their hands and think about the ways they like to care for others. What things can they do this week to care for someone else? Invite them to use words and pictures to illustrate how they will care for others.

Lead the group in the following prayer, having the group echo each line after you:

God of mercy, /
fill us with your love. /
Let it flow through our hands /
and onto the feet of others. /
Help us to serve others /
as you have cared for us. /
Amen. /

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- ☐ Markers or colored pens
 - ☐ Remaining hand cutout from “Hands and Feet” (p. 32)

