

Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet

John 13:1-17

Third- and fourth-graders are very social creatures and are discovering they can make a difference in the world. These kids devote much of their hearts to reaching out to others (family, friends, and the environment). Kids learn from the attitudes of those who serve them. As you teach kids about Jesus’ attitude of servanthood, be attentive to your own character. Use this lesson not only to help children follow Christ’s example in seeking ways to serve but also to allow kids to observe a servant’s heart in you that they might model.



► **Bible Point**
Jesus wants us to serve others.


Key Verse
“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

Weaving Faith Into Life
Kids will serve others.

LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
1 Getting Started	Who’s on First? <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Race to collect cotton swabs while discovering servanthood.	cotton swabs, socks, masking tape, paper plates	Make sure your floor is safe for bare feet.
2 Bible Exploration	Dinner With the Disciples <i>(about 25 min.)</i> Act in an instant drama about the last meal with Jesus.	CD player, copies of the lyrics (at the end of this lesson) Teacher Pack: CD	
	Other Feet First <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Make the last become first using water and oil.	Bible, plastic 2-liter bottle with cap, water, 1 cup vegetable oil, funnel, food coloring, CD player, copies of the lyrics (at the end of this lesson) Teacher Pack: CD	

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





LESSON	WHAT CHILDREN DO	SUPPLIES	EASY PREP
3 Weaving Faith Into Life	Fancy Feet <i>(about 10 min.)</i> Make a foot craft using sponges.	sponges, permanent markers, scissors	
	At Your Service <i>(about 15 min.)</i> Discuss ways they can serve others.	Bibles, Bible Truth Sleuth, pencils, large piece of paper, marker, tape	Tear out the Lesson 3 pages from each Bible Truth Sleuth student book.
4 Lasting Impressions	Daily Challenges <i>(about 5 min.)</i> Choose a Daily Challenge to apply God's Word.	Bible Truth Sleuth	
	Weaving Faith at Home <i>(about 2 min.)</i> Talk about how to share what they learned with their families.		

Bold text within the lesson is spoken text.





Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet

John 13:1-17

BIBLE BACKGROUND
FOR LEADERS

Jesus Offers to Perform a Demeaning Task

It is especially significant that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet because none of the disciples was willing to stoop below the others to do this demeaning task. The washing of feet, necessary because people in Jesus’ day all wore sandals, was customary before the beginning of any meal and was normally done by a servant as guests entered the house. However, since this was a private meal, there was apparently no servant there. The water, the basin, and the towel were there, and certainly the disciples thought about the fact that no one had washed their feet. But none of them took the initiative to do the washing before the meal. After the food had been set out, Jesus took action. John records all this in detail, likely feeling guilty for not being the one to pick up the towel and basin to serve his brothers and his Lord.

Peter at First Refuses Jesus’ Service

Peter’s resistance to allowing Jesus to wash his feet revealed that Peter didn’t understand what was really happening, part of which was Jesus illustrating the cleansing power of his death. Peter also exhibited pride in his refusal to let Jesus wash his feet. He didn’t yet understand that Jesus came to serve, not to be served. Peter’s rejection of Jesus’ act was based on an understanding of the Messiah that didn’t allow for such a humble, servantlike action.

Go and Serve Others

Through his actions and words, Jesus commands us to serve one another as he served his disciples, but not specifically in the washing of feet. To claim to be exempt from such service would be to claim to be greater than Jesus himself. And it would not be enough for the disciples to recognize that they were to

serve one another; they needed to take action if they were to receive the blessing promised in John 13:17.

The Jesus Connection

Jesus’ entire mission was one of humility. Imagine a king leaving his posh palace to live as a homeless man, facing abuse and mistreatment. Ridiculous? Absolutely. Why did Jesus do what he did? All for the love of you and me.

Thank Jesus for making a way for you to someday live where he is. Acknowledge that because of him, you don’t have to be afraid or ashamed about meeting God. Jesus bent down low to lift you up high. How can you live out your gratitude? Talk to God about that. You can write your prayer here.





Who's on First? Supplies

cotton swabs
socks
masking tape
paper plates

Who's on First? Easy Prep

Make sure your floor is
safe for bare feet.

1 GETTING STARTED

Who's on First?

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Welcome kids warmly as they arrive, and ask them how their week went. Tell kids that it's Barefoot Day, and instruct them to leave their socks and shoes at the door. Have kids form two groups.

Say: **To begin our lesson today, we're going to play a game. But it may end a little differently than you think!**

Have each child find a partner from the other group. Have groups go to opposite sides of the room, making sure partners stand directly opposite each other. Give each child one sock to put on his or her foot. Then have each child completely wrap the covered foot in masking tape, sticky side out. Set a handful of cotton swabs on the floor in front of each child. In the middle of the room, place a paper plate for each pair (see diagram).

Say: **Let me explain how this game works. The cotton swabs represent the people you're trying to bring to Jesus. The object is for you to try to get as many cotton swabs as possible to stick to your foot, without using your hands. Then you and your partner will hop to the middle of the room to your paper plate. Then you'll sit down and remove the cotton swabs from your partner's foot. You can't remove any cotton swabs from your own foot, though. When you've finished removing the cotton swabs, you can hop back to the line and gather more cotton swabs and repeat the process. You'll have two minutes to gather as many cotton swabs as you can. After two minutes, we'll count the number of cotton swabs on each plate to see how many people you've brought to Jesus! Are you ready? Let's go!**



After two minutes, have kids remove their tape and socks and sit down.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What was the most difficult part of this game?
- How did it feel not to be allowed to clean off your own feet and put your cotton swabs in your pile?

Say: **During this game, you may have thought that if you collected the most cotton swabs, you would be in first place. The Bible says that if anyone wants to be first, that**





person must be the very last, and the servant of all. So actually, in this game you were servants to each other; that puts all of you in first place!

Ask:

- How do you think this experience might be like serving others in life?
- Why should we serve others?

Say: **Jesus came to serve others. And ► JESUS WANTS US TO SERVE OTHERS. Sometimes we might think a task is too difficult for us to do or think we’ve got our own things to worry about rather than help other people with their problems. But Jesus tells us that those who make themselves among the least—meaning those who do things to help others—will become first in the kingdom of heaven!**

2 BIBLE EXPLORATION

Dinner With the Disciples

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Explain to your students that they will now appear in a special edition of “The Wrong Show.” As actors, they’ll perform a retelling of how Jesus washed the disciples’ feet at the Last Supper.

Decide which part of your room will be the stage, and assign the following roles: Host, Jesus, Simon Peter, and the other 11 disciples.

Say: **You’ll hear today’s Bible story told on the CD. However, parts of what you hear will be wrong. You must act out the scene until you hear the sound of a gong. Then you’ll say, “That’s not what happened!” and move backward to the part of the story you know was correct. So listen carefully for your part, and pay close attention for the “gongs” so you’ll know when to “rewind.” Is everyone ready? Let’s go!**

Cue your CD to “The Wrong Show,” and play the segment (track 7). (The CD will include six different scenes, with the sixth one being the correct story.) When kids have finished the instant drama, applaud their efforts.

Talk With Kids ■■■■■■

Ask kids to form trios and discuss the following questions.

Ask:

- In our story today, why did Jesus wash his disciples’ feet?
- How would you feel if Jesus washed your feet?
- What does this story show us about serving others?
- Why should we serve others?

Have volunteers share their answers with the rest of the class.



Dinner With the Disciples Supplies

- CD player
- Teacher Pack**
- CD: “The Wrong Show”
(track 7)





Other Feet First Supplies

Bible
 plastic 2-liter bottle
 with cap
 water
 1 cup vegetable oil
 funnel
 food coloring
 CD player
 copies of the lyrics (at
 the end of this lesson)
Teacher Pack
 CD: "Servant of All"
 (Mark 9:35b) (track 8)

Other Feet First

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Open your Bible to Mark 9:35, and show the verse to the kids.

Say: **Our Key Verse today is found in Mark 9:35. It says, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."** Show kids the 2-liter bottle.

This bottle can demonstrate what Jesus meant.

Put the funnel in the neck of the 2-liter bottle, and then fill it half full of water.

Say: **This water represents people who put themselves first in this life. They do whatever they want to do. Have you heard the saying "looking out for Number One"? When people say that, they mean they're looking out for themselves and may not care about what happens to other people. People who put themselves first fill their lives with stuff. (Add several drops of blue food coloring to the water.) This food coloring represents things that may be more important than serving others.**

Some people worry about getting the coolest clothes (add several drops of yellow food coloring to the water), **the newest gizmos** (add several drops of red food coloring to the water), **and the fastest cars** (add several drops of green food coloring to the water). Adding all these colors will make the water turn a dingy, brownish-black color. This is intentional. **They worry about these things rather than try to help others who don't have clothes, feed those who are hungry, or take the time to take a walk with a friend. People who take the time to help others put others first and themselves last. This oil represents those who help others. We'll put the oil in last. Let's see what happens.**

Add one cup of oil to the water. The water will stay on the bottom of the bottle, and the oil will float on top.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Say: **Take a look at the bottle. Let's pretend the bottle is the kingdom of heaven.**

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- **Which is on top, the water that we put in the bottle first or the oil that we put in last?**
- **How is that like being first in God's kingdom?**
- **Why should we serve others?**

Say: **By looking at our bottle, we can see that those who helped others are like the oil, which is pure and clear. It is on top—or first in God's kingdom. Those who put themselves first are like the water on the bottom—last in God's kingdom.**

Seal the bottle with a cap, and invite students to take turns turning the bottle on its side and moving it around.





Say: **No matter what happens in our lives, those who helped others and put themselves last are still first in God’s kingdom.**

Ask:

- **What are some ways you can serve others?**

Say: **Jesus told us to follow his example and be the servant of all. Let’s sing our Key Verse song.**

Pass out copies of the lyrics, and play “Servant of All” (Mark 9:35b) (track 8). Have kids sing, referring to the copies of the lyrics.



**If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.
If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last,**

**And the servant of all,
And the servant of all,
And the servant of all,
If you want to be first.**

(Repeat from the beginning.)

**If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.
If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.**

“Servant of All” (Mark 9:35b) by Uelese Fa’agutu, Rachel Fa’agutu, and Jay Stocker. © 2007 Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

3 WEAVING FAITH INTO LIFE

Fancy Feet

What You’ll Do ■■■■■■

Give each child a sponge, and have him or her draw a picture of a foot on the sponge. Then have kids cut out the foot shapes.

Say: **We’ve learned today that ► JESUS WANTS US TO SERVE OTHERS. He showed us an example of that by washing his disciples’ feet. Write today’s Key Verse reference, Mark 9:35, on your foot sponge. Then take your sponge home, and use it in some way to serve your family. You could use your sponge to wash your mom’s or dad’s feet. Or you could use your sponge to wipe off the kitchen counter.**



Fancy Feet Supplies

- sponges
- permanent markers
- scissors





At Your Service Supplies

Bibles
Bible Truth Sleuth
pencils
large piece of paper
marker
tape

At Your Service Easy Prep

Tear out the Lesson 3
pages from each Bible
Truth Sleuth student
book.

Daily Challenges Supplies

Bible Truth Sleuth

At Your Service

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Have children form pairs and look up John 13:14-15. In each pair, ask the child who was born first to read aloud John 13:14. Then have the other child read John 13:15.

Say: **The Bible says we should follow Jesus' example and wash one another's feet. You probably can think of somebody who "washes your feet." Somebody who helps you, maybe with your schoolwork, like a teacher—or somebody who does nice things for you, like a friend.**

Let's talk about what washing somebody's feet would look like to Jesus today.

Ask:

- **What does it mean to serve others?**

Distribute the Bible Truth Sleuth pages, and have kids turn to the "Who's Serving Who?" activity. Have kids form pairs, and ask pairs to think of ways they can be servants in each of the areas listed on the Bible Truth Sleuth page.

Ask one member from each pair to share with the class the pair's ideas for serving, and write their ideas on a large piece of paper to hang on the door.

Talk With Kids ■■■■

Say: **We can be servants in so many different ways. Pick one of the areas from your page that you could focus on this week. Share that area with your partner.**

Ask:

- **What can you do in that area this week to be a servant?**

4 LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Daily Challenges

What You'll Do ■■■■■■

Say: **Let's each choose a Daily Challenge for the week to help us remember that ► JESUS WANTS US TO SERVE OTHERS.**

Have kids find this week's Daily Challenges on the Bible Truth Sleuth pages and choose one to do this week. They can choose one or more of these three options:

- **Each morning when you wake up, ask Jesus to help you follow his example of serving others.**
- **Clean your house without your mom or dad having to ask you.**





- Help a friend at school with his or her homework.

Talk With Kids

Lead kids in this discussion.

Ask:

- What’s a practical way you’re going to do your Daily Challenge? Include a time, a place, and other ideas.

Say: ► **JESUS WANTS US TO SERVE OTHERS** just as he did. Let’s serve by following through on our Daily Challenges this week.

Weaving Faith at Home

Encourage kids to talk with their parents about the Daily Challenges they chose and what they learned about serving others. Kids can also do the activities in the “HomeConnect” section of their Bible Truth Sleuth pages with their families.

Talk to your Director about emailing the FREE FamilyConnect to all your church’s families. Available at group.com/digital.

Ask partners to pray for each other, asking God to help them be servants this week. Then pray for your group as you all join hands.



**Lyrics** ■■■■**Servant of All (Mark 9:35b)**

**If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.
If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last,**

**And the servant of all,
And the servant of all,
And the servant of all,
If you want to be first.**

(Repeat from the beginning.)

**If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.
If anyone wants to be first,
He must be the very last.**

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