

Jesus' Conversation with His Disciples about Servant Leadership

Message 4 of 6 in the series: "Conversations with Jesus"

1. John recorded some fascinating conversations Jesus had with people from many different backgrounds so that we can understand why He came and believe that He is the Christ.

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:30-31 (NKJV)

Christ = Messiah = "Suffering Servant"

"He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all."

Isaiah 53:3-6 (NLT)

2. In one of His final conversations with His disciples, Jesus gave them an unforgettable example of servant leadership by washing their feet.

"Before the Passover celebration, **Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world** and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now **he loved them to the very end**. It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him." John 13:1-5 (NLT)

a. By washing their feet, Jesus made it clear to His disciples that NOBODY should think they're too important to serve others.

"Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, **slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message.**" John 13:12b-16 (NLT)

Note: The disciples completely misunderstood Jesus' mission and the kind of leaders He was training them to become.

"Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, 'In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called "friends of the people." But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves.'" Luke 22:24-27 (NLT)

b. By washing Simon Peter's feet, Jesus taught us several things about staying spiritually clean and serving each other.

"When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.' 'No,' Peter protested, 'you will never ever wash my feet!' Jesus replied, 'Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me.' Simon Peter exclaimed, 'Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!' Jesus replied, 'A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you.'" John 13:6-10 (NLT)

- No matter who we are or what we've done, if we repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He will spiritually cleanse us from all of our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

- We don't need to get saved again or rebaptized every time we blow it. As we live in this fallen world,

we pick up fears, temptations, worries, etc. that interfere with our growing relationship with Christ. That's why we need to meet with God every day to surrender our fears, confess our sins, and bring all of our needs and worries to Him. "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

- We need to allow other believers to serve us sometimes. "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." 1Peter 4:10 (NLT)

- c. By washing Judas' feet, Jesus made it clear that servant leadership involves serving even those who offend/hurt/betray us.

"For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'" John 13:11 (NLT)

"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT)

"Never pay back evil with more evil... Instead, 'If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.' Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good." Romans 12:17a & 20-21 (NLT)

- d. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus made it clear that God blesses us, not for what we know, but for what we do with what we know.

"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you **do them.**" John 13:17 (NIV)

"I have given you an **example** to follow. **Do as I have done to you.**" John 13:15 (NLT)

"But don't just listen to God's word. **You must do what it says.** Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." James 1:22-25 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 03-26-23 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions:

Read Isaiah 53: 3-6 & John 13:1-17 and then discuss the following questions:

1. Have you ever had a conversation with a loved one who knew they were going to die soon? If so, what did you talk about? How did their imminent passing impact your time together?
2. Why did Jesus come as a "suffering servant"? Why didn't He come the first time as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" like He will when He comes again? (Revelation 19:11-16)
3. Discuss the following statements. Which of them is hardest for you to embrace? Why?
 - a. By washing their feet, Jesus made it clear to His disciples that **NOBODY** should think they're too important to serve others. (John 13:12-16, Luke 22:24-47)
 - b. By washing Judas' feet, Jesus made it clear that servant leadership involves serving even those who **offend/hurt/betray** us. (John 13:11, Matthew 5:43-48, Romans 12:17-21)
 - c. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus made it clear that God blesses us, not for what we know, but for **what we do with what we know.** (John 13:15 & 17, James 1:22-25)
 - d. By washing Simon Peter's feet, Jesus taught us several things about staying spiritually clean and serving each other. (John 13:6-10)
 - No matter who we are or what we've done, if we repent of our sins and surrender our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior, **He will spiritually cleanse us from all of our sins.** (1 John 1:9)

- **We don't need to get saved again or rebaptized** every time we blow it. As we live in this fallen world, we pick up fears, temptations, worries, etc. that interfere with our growing relationship with Christ. That's why we need to meet with God every day to surrender our fears, confess our sins, and bring all of our needs and worries to Him. (1 Peter 5:7)
 - We need to allow other believers **to serve us** sometimes. (1Peter 4:10)
4. Spend some time as a group praying for our church. Ask God to give us love for each other and the desire and the power to serve each other as we should. Also ask God to show us people who need to know Jesus so we can bring them to one our Easter services. (People are more likely to visit our church at Easter than any other time of year.)