



# Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

**Goal:** To practice following Jesus by serving others.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In John 13:1–17

The only account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet in the upper room during the Last Supper is in John's Gospel. Here, Jesus put into action his teachings about loving and serving others. Jesus performed an "enacted parable," displaying to the disciples the nature of what he taught during his ministry.

In this action, Jesus assumed the servant's posture. Washing the dirty, dusty feet of a visitor was a task reserved for servants. When Peter resisted Jesus' action, Jesus replied that unless Peter allowed the washing, he would have no part in Jesus (v. 8). In his action, Jesus showed his disciples that we love God by serving others. We serve others, doing anything for them, regardless of social customs or cultural roles.

In short, Jesus said, "If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do" (vv. 14–15, CEB). Jesus' actions put before us the grace he is extending to us as his disciples. We receive the grace of Jesus himself, with deepest gratitude and commitment to serving others, even as he has served us.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children of all ages will be able to tell a story about a time someone did something nice for them or a story about a time they did something kind for someone else. Sharing these stories, they can understand that Jesus' act of washing the disciples' dusty, dirty feet was an example of how he wanted them to treat others. Sometimes, and especially with children, actions help us see the meaning and intent of words. Here Jesus' simple act helps children of all ages remember how we can serve others.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

In this story, Jesus turns the tables on the expectations of a host and leader when he washes the feet of his followers. Since foot washing isn't the norm for people today as a way of welcoming someone into a home or space, consider how you might change the expectations of the children in your group as they enter the room. Perhaps you could greet them and invite them to do something that you, as the leader, usually do. Make a show of welcoming and doing some act of service for them—hang up a coat, get a chair, offer them a snack, or such.

*God, wash us with your word to us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*



## Supplies

Music & Melodies  
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More  
(SCM) i–iv, 2, 25

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

## Guided Play

choice 1: small  
containers, water,  
washcloths

choice 2: **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1

## Exploring

choice 1: cut sponges

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

## GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, using **GN 1** as a template, cut out several pairs of sandal shapes from brown construction paper to be used during “Guided Play” choice 2.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers you do not know personally. Tell the parents/caregivers that today’s story is about Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.

Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

1. **Washing Feet**—Fill some small containers with water and invite the children to wash the feet of baby dolls. Give them some dry washcloths to use as towels to dry the feet.
2. **Walking**—Provide plenty of sandal shapes from **GN 1** so children can spread them around the room and follow their path. Tell them that Jesus and his friends walked in their sandals a long way on dusty roads. Invite the children to pick up the shapes and make new paths to follow.
3. **Serving One Another**—Invite the children to play in a housekeeping area and take turns serving one another. Engage them in conversation about what they are doing, for example, making a meal, serving one another, cleaning up, bringing someone a toy, and so forth. Acknowledge acts of serving.

**T** *Transition times can be more frustrating to children if they have to wait. Be prepared to move to the next activity and alert children of upcoming changes. If children will need to wait, provide a simple task, such as a threading activity or hand clapping, to occupy the time and lessen the frustration.*



## Transitioning to Story Time

A L T

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, playing and singing “I Have Washed Your Feet”—**MM 30; SCM 25**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

### Follow the Leader

MS

As you walk, tap each child on the shoulder, inviting them to join in line, following as you go. Wander throughout the room and return to the story corner.

### Follow Me

MS

Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

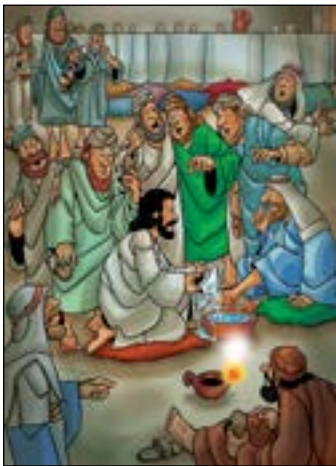
I am following Jesus. (*march in place*) /

I am learning to share. (*move both hands away from you with palms up*) /

I am learning to serve. (*move both hands together in front of you with palms up*) /

I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor's shoulder*) /

I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*) /



## Hearing the Story

T L

Open the Bible to John 13 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about Jesus washing his disciples' feet.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again, inviting the children to act it out. Begin by pretending to be Jesus washing and drying their feet. Invite the children to take turns being Jesus and serving his friends.



## EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



If children do not wish to take off their socks or tights, trace around their socked foot. Likewise, if they don't wish to touch a sponge, provide paintbrushes.

### 1. Sponge Painting

TD T

Give each child a piece of white paper. Invite them to take off their shoes and socks. Have them stand on their paper. Trace each child's feet with a pencil. If time allows, go over the lines with a permanent marker. Tell the children to put their shoes and socks back on their feet. Put watered-down blue watercolor paint on plates. Give the children a sponge and invite them to "wash" their feet pictures with the sponge. Allow for time to wash hands after the activity.

**T** *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*

### 2. Serving One Another

F LG

Place the children in pairs and have them stand facing one another. Designate one child as "1" and the other child as "2." Tell them that they are going to practice serving each other.

Instruct the children to take turns repeating after you and following your motions. Use the following actions to practice serving each other:

- ▼ 1s—How may I help you?
- ▼ 2s—I need help putting my jacket on.
- ▼ (1s—*Pretend to put a jacket on your partner.*)
  
- ▼ 2s—How may I serve you?
- ▼ 1s—I would like an apple.
- ▼ (2s—*Pretend to give your partner an apple.*)
  
- ▼ 1s—How may I serve you?
- ▼ 2s—I need help carrying these toys.
- ▼ (1s—*Pretend to carry toys in your arms.*)
  
- ▼ 2s—How may I help you?
- ▼ 1s—Can you open the door for me?
- ▼ (2s—*Pretend to open the door for your partner.*)

Make up additional actions as long as the children are enjoying the activity.



### 3. Serve Like Jesus



Tape off a square on the floor with masking tape. Using the tune “Pop Goes the Weasel,” teach the children the following song:

Jesus washed disciples' feet.  
We follow his example.  
Jesus taught to share and pray.  
I serve like Jesus.

Sing the song, with everyone marching around the square. On the word “I,” everyone jumps into the square. Let each child name one way to serve like Jesus. Let the children come outside the square, and repeat the song, naming different ways to serve.

### 4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did the disciples think when Jesus started washing their feet?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How does it feel to have your feet washed? Was the water hot or cold? Did it tickle?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How will the disciples serve one another?”

**T** *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as jumping jacks, hopping on one foot, doing a tap knees/clap hands pattern, and so forth.*

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children together, playing and singing “I Have Washed Your Feet”—**MM 30; SCM 25**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate. Ask the children how they might follow Jesus' example and serve others this week.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Invite the children to repeat after you and follow your actions as you pray:

For food to eat (*raise hands to mouth*) /  
and friends to share, (*hold hands out*) /  
for those we love everywhere, (*place hands over heart*) /  
we thank you, God. (*put hands together in prayer*) /

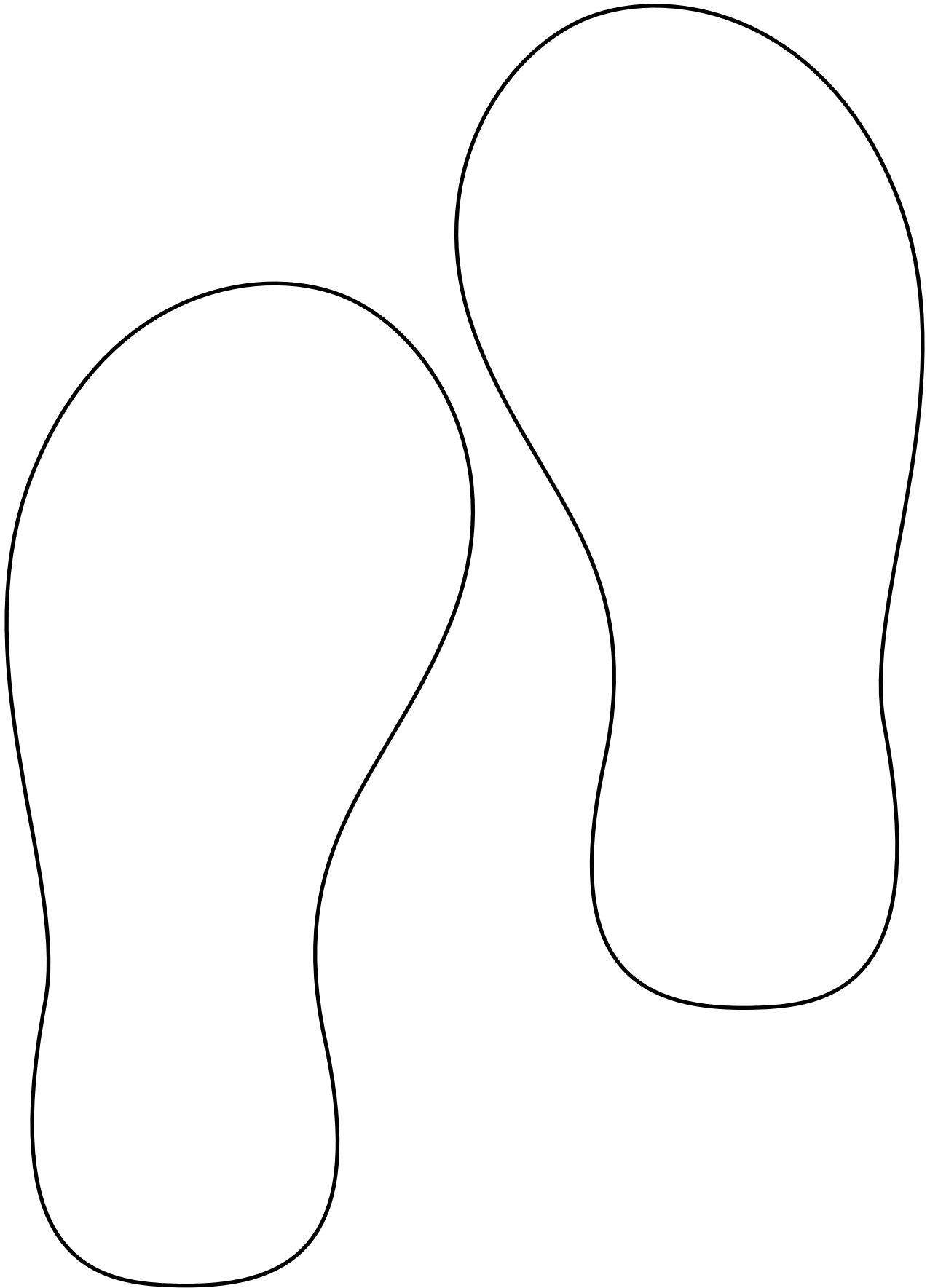
As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), follow Jesus' example. Serve one another! The grace of God is with you.”

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).









## Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet



Jesus sets an example for his friends to follow.

