



Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

Goal: To practice loving God 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, 17, 27

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

purple cloth

bowl

water in a pitcher

towel

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

one white sock per child

Responding

Claiming

footprints from
“Welcoming and
Preparing”

Celebrating

sidewalk chalk
(optional)

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing LG

Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, *(Name)*.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a purple cloth, a candle, a Bible, a bowl, a water pitcher, and a towel to place on the table. Provide copies of **GN 1**. Have each child cut out a pair of footprints and place them at the base of the table.

Ask the children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Lead children in singing a fun medley of “foot” songs.

- ▼ “If You’re Happy and You Know It” verse with “stomp your feet!”
- ▼ “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes”
- ▼ “The Hokey Pokey” verses with “right foot” and “left foot”

Singing

Sing “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian”—**MM 13**; **SCM 17**. Invite the children to create motions to go with the verses of the song.

Praying L

Turn on the candle. Lead the children in prayer, teaching the children to say in unison: “We love God by serving others,” as a response:

God, for the chance to serve you,
we give thanks:

We love God by serving others.

Jesus, for showing us how to be humble and generous,
we give thanks:

We love God by serving others.

Holy Spirit, for guiding us and gifting us,
we give thanks:

We love God by serving others.

Amen.

Turn the children’s attention to the footprints around the table and the “foot” songs you sang. Invite the children to suggest ways our feet take us to serve others in Jesus’ name. Tell them that feet will play an important role in the story today.



If a child is wearing tights, suggest they remove just their shoes.

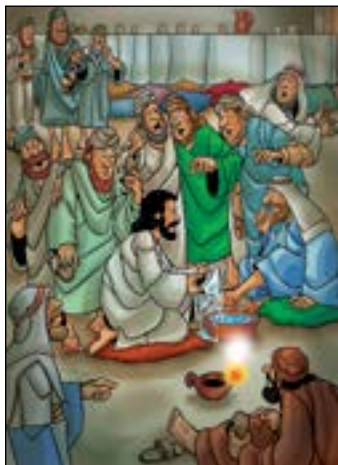
Preparing to Hear the Story

SD A

Remind children that, last week, they heard the story of Jesus celebrating the Passover with his disciples. Today they will hear something else that happened in that upper room. Ask the children to remove their socks and shoes. Ask the children to look at their feet and imagine if they had to walk barefoot or wear sandals all the time on dusty paths and roads. Wonder aloud what their feet would look and feel like at the end of the day.

Explain that, in Jesus' day, people walked almost everywhere they went, and the roads were very dusty. Since people wore sandals, their feet got hot and dirty. When they went to someone's house, it was a servant's job to take off the guest's sandals and wash their feet with cool water. Since they didn't have washcloths, the slave had to use his or her hands to rub off the dirt.

SD *Some children with sensory issues have difficulties with socks. While parents and caregivers may provide seamless socks to lessen the sensitivities, how socks are put on or taken off may also affect these children. If they wish to leave socks on, suggest that just taking shoes off will be fine.*

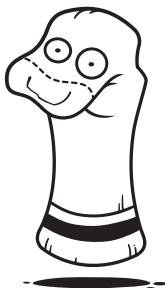


Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find John 13 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Ask the children to use their imaginations and see the story like a movie in their mind. Read **SCM 2**. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story lively and engaging. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Give each child a white sock and ask them to use markers to add eyes and a mouth to create a sock puppet. Invite the children to form two groups. Have each group select who will act out the parts of Jesus, Peter, and the other disciples as you read the story again or use the story audio.



Reflecting on God's Grace

C

Offer appreciation for the children's creativity. Discuss:

- ▼ I wonder, "What do you think was confusing for Peter?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did the other disciples react?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What do you think Jesus wanted the disciples to learn about serving others?"



Singing

MS

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing “I Have Washed Your Feet”—**MM 30; SCM 27**. Invite the children to make the following motions when they hear the corresponding words:

- ▼ “washed” (*washing hands*)
- ▼ “love” (*cross arms over chest*)
- ▼ “follow” (*march in place*)

As the song closes, have them sway together. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

LG

Remind the children that Jesus modeled how to serve others. Jesus served his friends by washing their feet, showing them that no one is better than anyone else.

Ask each child to get a footprint from the worship table and consider ways that they can serve others. Invite them to write or draw their ideas on the foot. Tape the feet on string or yarn. Display the pennant of feet on a wall or in the sanctuary to serve as an inspiration of how we may serve others.

Invite the children to trace their foot on a piece of construction paper and cut it out. Ask them to write or draw their same idea on this footprint and take the footprint home as a reminder to serve others.



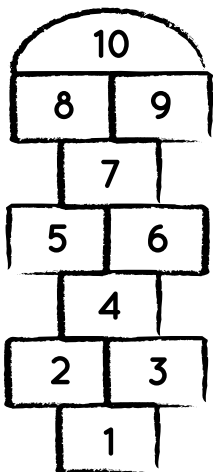
Celebrating God’s Grace

F LG A MS C

Before the session, use tape to mark a hopscotch court in a large open area on the floor (see sidebar). Make a court for every three to five children. Play the game outside, if possible, using sidewalk chalk.

Invite children to form groups of three to five children. Gather them around the hopscotch court to play a game celebrating serving others.

- ▼ Allow each group to determine an order of play—youngest to oldest, shortest to tallest, and so forth.
- ▼ Give each player a different small object such as an eraser, coin, or crayon to toss onto the court. The item needs to land in one of the spaces. If it lands outside the court, they toss again.
- ▼ The players take turns hopping with one foot in each single space and with both feet in a double space until they get to the marked space.





- ▼ When a player lands on a single space (1, 4, 7, or 10), they tell a way they can be a servant. If a player lands on a double space (2-3, 5-6, or 8-9), they recall a way Jesus served others. Players leave their markers where they land until their next turn.
- ▼ The play continues with each person trying to get to 10. Once they have landed their marker on 10, they tell a way they can be a servant and hop back to the beginning.
- ▼ Play again, if desired.

Children who cannot hop may want to toss their marker and clap, single or double, to the space they have landed on.

After the first few turns, it may be difficult for some children to come up with an answer. Encourage the group to help or allow answers that were already given to be repeated.

F *Ensure every child feels welcomed and successful. Fairness is not every child getting the same thing; it is every child getting what they need.*

Praying God's Grace

C

Imagine together the ways Jesus' disciples may have served others after that night when Jesus washed their feet. Ask the children to identify people who offer services to them. Give an example of your own, such as, "My spouse unloads the dishwasher because he/she knows I dislike that chore," or "My co-worker covers my work when I have to leave early," and so on. Encourage the children to offer their own examples.

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for people who serve them. Invite the children to continue thinking of people who serve them in various ways: parents or other family members, coaches, teachers, and so on. Invite the children to offer a popcorn prayer of thanksgiving for these people, calling them by name, profession, or activity, whenever they are ready. With each prayer said, invite the rest of the group to respond, "Thank you, God, for people who serve."

Extra Activity

LD

Cut apart the cards on **GN 2** and place in a pile. Invite the children to play a game of charades, drawing a card from the pile and acting out what is described on the card. Assist with reading as needed. Have the other children guess.



Some children may be uncomfortable with having their feet washed or they may be wearing tights. Offer to wash their hands.



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. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

TD

Use the pitcher, towel, and bowl from the worship table to wash the children's feet. Some children may prefer to have their hands washed; others may simply prefer to watch. Be prepared for someone to offer to wash your feet too. As you wash the feet or hands of the children in your group, say to each of them, "*(Name)*, we love God by serving others."

Invite the children to put their shoes and socks back on, and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Invite the children to join you in praying for opportunities to serve others as Jesus served his disciples. Ask them again to consider ways that they can serve others, and let them know that they will have a chance during the prayer to voice their ideas.

Pray the following prayer:

Loving God, thank you for giving us the chance to serve others in your name. We know we can serve by (*prompt children's ideas*). Help us to see the many ways we are served too. Thank you for the people who offer their service to us. Amen.

As children leave, give each child a blessing. Say: "*(Name)*, serve one another. May the grace of God be with you always."



fast
feet

slow
feet

happy
feet

sad
feet

tiptoe
feet

dance
feet

excited
feet

shy
feet

elephant
feet

bird
feet

