



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

Responding

Claiming

footprints from
“Welcoming and
Preparing”

Offering

empty box

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.

Pay attention to time in today’s session. Choose “Responding in Gratitude” activities appropriate for your time frame.

“Offering 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. Invite a couple of volunteers to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

Finish this time with a fun medley of “foot” songs. Lead children in singing:

- ▼ “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.



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 guests' 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. Have volunteers read John 13:1–17. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship center.

Ask for a volunteer to pass out paper and drawing materials. Ask the children to choose a scene to draw as you read the story again using **SCM 2** or the story audio (more than one child may choose a scene):

- ▼ Jesus got up, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.
- ▼ Jesus poured water into a basin.
- ▼ Jesus began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel.
- ▼ Simon Peter said, “Are you going to wash my feet?”

After the story, have the children hang their drawings on the wall in story order (*group multiple versions together, so all are visible*). Review all the pictures.



Reflecting on God's Grace C

Offer appreciation for the children's creativity. Ask them to identify the most common scene depicted. Discuss why that one was favored.

Ask them if any scenes were left out. If so, discuss why that might have been. Wonder together, "Where do we see grace in this story?"

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 MS

Tell the children that you are going to tour the church and identify ways people can serve one another in each of the rooms. Ask for a couple of volunteers to take notes on your tour. Explain that you will need to be quiet and respectful of groups meeting in some rooms.

Go from room to room and identify ways of serving in each room. Be sure to have some suggestions to get them started if necessary. Some of the rooms will be easy, and some will present quite a challenge to come up with ideas, but don't shy away—young people can come up with surprising ideas.

When the tour is completed, encourage the children to work together to create a service mural. Explain to the children that, on sheets of light-colored construction paper, they will list a room and the service ideas for that space. Let the children devise a plan to cover all the rooms you visited and then use the papers to create the mural. Work together to come up with a title and add it to the mural. Display the mural on a wall or bulletin board.



Celebrating God's Grace

F LG A MS C

Spend some time with the children making a list on newsprint or a chalkboard of ways people can serve one another in the church and beyond the church. Try to phrase their suggestions in just a few words for all to see and read.

Ask for a volunteer to be the leader and stand in front of the group. Have the rest of the children stand side by side in a line. Explain that the leader will announce one act of service from the list as either "Simon Peter says, 'Feed the hungry,'" or just "Feed the hungry." When the leader says, "Simon Peter says," the children are to shout out the phrase and take a step forward. If the leader simply says the phrase, the children are to whisper the phrase and take a step backward.

There aren't any losers in this game, just laughter. Allow each child to have a turn being the leader if he or she wants to.

F *Ensure every child feels welcomed and successful. Fairness is not every child getting the same thing, it is every child getting what she or he needs.*



The Good Matters™ Blog at bit.ly/SockDriveIdeas offers great suggestions for organizing a sock drive.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.

Another way to do this activity would be to gather shoes (or photos of shoes) that represent people who serve.

Offering God's Grace

People who are homeless and people who have had to leave their homes in urgent situations need socks to keep their feet warm and healthy. Help your group coordinate a sock drive. Together, decide who will receive the donated socks, such as a local homeless shelter or a center for women and children. Discuss what is needed and assist the group in setting dates for the collection. Allow several weekends for people to bring in new, unused socks.

Have the children make creative posters with drive details. Provide an empty box and craft supplies for the children to work together to make a donation box. Place it in a central location in your church building.

Ask the church office staff to put announcements in the church newsletter, website, and worship bulletins. Ask the pastor or worship leader if a child or a group of children may give an announcement about the sock drive during worship.

When you are finished collecting the socks, ask the pastor or worship committee if the socks can be presented and dedicated with the offering during a Sunday worship service.

Check on the progress of the drive with children in the following weeks. Plan to wind up the drive on Easter, March 31, or before. Arrange to deliver the socks to the collection point. Pray this prayer:

God, thank you for socks to keep our feet healthy and warm. Thank you for those who made them. Bless the people who will wear them. Amen.



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

