

Session 2: John 13:1–38

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Mature disciples teach the truth of Jesus primarily through our love for others, manifested in our servanthood.

Head Change

To know that disciples who humbly and authentically love one another best represent Jesus.

Heart Change

To feel inspired to mimic the humility and love of Christ through practical service to others.

Life Change

To show others who Jesus is by loving them in practical, tangible ways.

OPEN

If you had to choose, would you prefer to hear “I love you” or experience acts that express love toward you?

We hear a lot about love in our culture. We love our spouse, but we also love pizza. In general, “love” is a positive feeling or desire for someone or something. But when the Bible talks about love, it’s not empty talk or a fleeting feeling. Love—true love—is laying yourself down for another person.

In this session, we will see an example of love as Jesus washes his disciples’ feet and gives us a new commandment: to love one another just as Jesus has loved us.

READ

Read John 13:1–38. If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 13:4–11, 21–28, and 34–38.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why did Jesus wash his disciples’ feet?

What was Jesus’s new command?

What is the defining characteristic of a disciple of Jesus?

Show Session 2: *John 13:1–38* (13 minutes).

DISCUSS

Jesus and his disciples gathered to celebrate Passover, the annual feast that commemorated God rescuing his people from slavery. But Jesus knew this occasion would be unique. Read John 13:1–5.

John offers us an inside look at the thoughts and feelings of Jesus and his disciples. We learn that Jesus knew his “hour”—the appointed time for him to be crucified—was near. But he had a few things left to teach his disciples. **How does the text describe where Jesus was going? What did his impending journey inspire him to do for his followers?**

Read John 13:6–15. Jesus surprised his disciples by subverting the social order. He, who was due the most honor, took on the role of the least important person in the house. The master humbled himself to serve his followers.

What was Jesus trying to teach the disciples by performing such a menial service?

***Note:** To learn more about the tradition and meaning of foot washing, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.*

Dr. Evans said Peter was “clean”—that is, saved and righteous in God’s eyes—but walking in a sinful world had left his feet dirty. We live in a sinful world that tempts us—sometimes successfully—to sin. Like Peter, we need Jesus to wash the sin from us. In what ways can the world give us “dirty feet”? **What circumstances have left you feeling in need of spiritual refreshment?**

Christians do not live perfect lives. We all “walk in the dirt” and are called to help one another get cleaned up. Through accountability, encouragement, exhortation, and even rebuke—all done with love—we can spiritually wash each other’s feet. **Who is helping you stay close to Jesus? How do you help one another walk through this sinful world with integrity?**

Read John 13:16–20. Jesus took the role of a servant for two reasons. First, by washing the disciples’ feet he was giving us an example of how to live—in humble service to one another. Leadership according to Jesus was (and is) counter to what our culture expects. **When have you seen leaders humble themselves to serve someone or take on a menial task? How did that experience influence your opinion of the leader?**

In verse 15, Jesus told the disciples to serve one another just as he had served them. We are to imitate Jesus by humbly serving one another. **What does serving others look like for you? In what ways can you “lower yourself” in your daily life at home, work, or the community, to help lift someone else up?**

Second, washing the disciples’ feet revealed God’s character—he is a self-giving God, showing his love through service. He calls us to be like him, sacrificially serving others. **What can make it difficult to show sacrificial love to others? In what ways can you grow in self-giving love toward others?**

Note: To learn more about what Jesus meant when he said he wanted people to believe that “I am he,” go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

Read John 13:21–30. Jesus made it clear that he knew what Judas was planning. Yet Jesus still washed his feet, shared dinner with him, and even offered him bread—all of which were expressions of friendship. He kept loving Judas. He does the same with us even when we are committed to our sin. **When a friend betrays you, how do you react? What could it look like to respond to them in the way that Jesus responded to Judas?**

Judas rejected Jesus’s friendship and left dinner intent on betrayal. Dr. Evans commented, “When we reject Jesus’s friendship, we open up the door to the devil to enter in and take over.” The devil is always attempting to thwart Jesus’s mission. As Jesus’s disciples, we are targets for the devil’s deception. **What are you doing to stick close to Jesus? How do you fight the temptations to go your own way?**

Note: To learn more about the devil, or Satan, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Read John 13:31–35. Love should be the primary characteristic of Christ-followers. As Dr. Evans elaborated, “Your discipleship will not be primarily known by your biblical knowledge. Your success will not be known by size, reputation, riches, but by love for one another.” **What do you generally look for when trying to identify who might be a Christian? How far up on your list of characteristics is “loves well”?**

What do you think makes Christians stand out in our culture today? What do we need to do to be known by our love?

We tend to prioritize knowledge, positions, platform, and financial success to gauge spiritual credibility. But Jesus says our discipleship can only be measured by our love for one another. **How do you judge your own “success” in God’s kingdom? What could you do to be more known by your love?**

Dr. Evans defined Jesus’s love as, “the decision to compassionately, responsibly, and righteously seek the wellbeing of another.” **In what ways is Dr. Evans’s definition similar or different from your idea of love?**

The kind of love Jesus commands us to practice is costly. It can be exhausting. But it is not a suggestion. Jesus actually commands us to sacrificially love the people around us. **In which relationships do you find it easier to love sacrificially? Which relationships are more difficult?**

Read John 13:36–38. Peter’s enthusiasm for following Jesus was well-meaning but, as we will learn, founded on emotion more than anything else. Jesus warned him that his pride would lead to repeated failure. We, like Peter, can let emotions determine the way we live out our faith. **What can we admire about Peter’s passion? In what ways can pride or enthusiasm blind us to our weaknesses?**

We are called to show everyone we meet the love Jesus demonstrates in John 13. His love is more than a feeling—it is a choice to serve. **Whom has God put in your path that you can serve? Who around you needs you to show them the love of Christ?**

LAST WORD

We respect and honor our leaders because of their presence, their accomplishments, and their position. But true leaders humble themselves as servants, giving their lives for the benefit of others. Jesus did not come as a stereotypical CEO or power broker; he came as a loving servant.

Love is not glamorous—in fact, it is hard work. But love, real love, is a requirement for all Christians. Our God is a self-giving Lord, and all disciples mimic their master. As Dr. Evans put it, “Fake Christian or plastic saint? We’ll know by the love you show.”

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and deepen your study of the Gospel of John.

1. Foot Washing

During Jesus's time, roads were rocky and occasionally steep and pack animals could be expensive. The average person walked everywhere they needed to go in sandals or barefoot. As a result, their feet were always dirty—caked with mud, cut and bruised by stones, and dirtied by dung.

Jewish culture prized hospitality. A Jewish host was expected provided their guests with water so they could wash their own feet upon arrival (see Genesis 18:4; Judges 19:21). To show a higher level of honor, a host might even provide a servant to wash his guest's feet. **How do you offer hospitality? What makes you feel welcome in someone's home?**

What might be the equivalent of foot washing today?

Read Luke 7:36–47. A woman interrupted dinner to pour perfume on Jesus's feet. She washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Though horrified that Jesus would allow a sinner to touch him, Simon, the host, had neglected to offer even the basic courtesy of water for Jesus's feet.

The woman, a sinner, served Jesus in a greater way than his host, Simon, who felt his status made him worthy of Jesus's presence. When we forget the debt Jesus paid for us, we can become like Simon, feeling like we deserve Jesus's presence and service while withholding service from others. **In what ways can we take God's presence and forgiveness for granted?**

Just as we saw in this session, godly love lays down its reputation, honor, status, comfort to serve others. Jesus showed us how to serve one another. By following his example, we both remind ourselves of how much he has forgiven us and show others how he serves sinners. **What**

motivates you to serve others? Where in your life are you regularly showing love to those without the ability to serve you back?

In God's kingdom, humble service is essential. We do not only serve those who are important but—like the woman—those whom society sees as unlovable and unworthy of our attention. **Who has God put in your path that you can sacrificially and humbly serve today?**

2. "I Am He"

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus makes several "I am" statements in his teachings, calling himself things like the bread of life, the light of the world. But these statements are more than simple metaphors. They are markers of Jesus's true nature and mission.

In our series *The Gospel of John: Part 1*, Dr. Tony Evans highlighted Jesus's "I am" statements:

John 6:48 *I am* the bread of life.
John 8:12 *I am* the light of the world.
John 8:58 Before Abraham was born, *I am*.
John 9:5 *I am* the light of the world.
John 10:7, 9 *I am* the gate
John 10:11 *I am* the good shepherd.
John 11:25 *I am* the resurrection and the life.

In John 13:19, Jesus predicted Judas's future betrayal so that, when it happened, the disciples would believe "I am he." This statement is our translation of God's Hebrew name, Yahweh. Jesus was equating himself to the God of Israel.

What was it that convinced you Jesus was God?

Jesus revealed himself as "I am" knowing he would soon be crucified for the sins of the world. He was about to do more than wash feet; he was about to lay his life down to save his people. **What does it mean to you for Jesus to love you so much that he would lay his life down for you? How does his humble, sacrificial love cause you to worship him more?**

3. Who is Satan?

In John 13:2, we read that "the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him [Jesus]." And later in the chapter, during supper, "After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him" (13:27).

Who is this devil, also called Satan? What do we know of his motives and strategies? What is his end? The Bible reveals him to us progressively as Scripture unfolds from Genesis to Revelation and is very clear that he is our supernatural opponent. **What is your understanding of Satan? How has he been described to you?**

In the New Testament, many supernatural adversaries are called demons (daimon). They are corrupt and hostile to God, dedicated to thwarting his will, sometimes causing death or anguish (Mark 5:2–13), and overpowering people physically and mentally (Matthew 17:18). Second Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 describe them as beings cast out of heaven and awaiting their final judgment.

Their leader is called Satan, a Hebrew title meaning “adversary” or “accuser.” Two prophets give us more background on Satan. Read Ezekiel 28:1–19 and Isaiah 14:12–15.

These passages are laments, primarily about human kings (Tyre and Babylon). But many scholars believe the prophets are comparing these tyrants to a divine rebel—the evil being who spoke through the serpent in Eden, tempting Eve to disobey God.

Putting all the texts together, we conclude that the serpent of Eden is the same devil that tempted Jesus and the one who influence Judas to betray his Lord. He is the one we fight against even now, as the apostle Paul encourages us in Ephesians 6:11–12, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.”

Thinking too much about the devil can scare some people. **How do you deal with thoughts and discussions about supernatural evil? In what ways has your perception of Satan changed since you became a Christian?**

While he is a tempter, deceiver, accuser, and adversary, Satan will not win. He will be defeated once and for all and evil will reign no more. Revelation 12:9 says, “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

We do have a spiritual opponent, but God is greater than he is. We don’t have to worry about Satan or his demons

because we have been saved by the sovereign God who holds our life and hope in his hands. **What can you do to balance the tension of the reality of Satan's presence in the world today with the knowledge that Christ is superior to him in every way? How does knowing that Jesus has already planned out Satan's defeat give you hope for today?**