

*Note: Lines that begin with words in all caps indicate instructions. All other lines indicate points to make, things to say, or questions to ask.*

## **NT 32 Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet**

**Passage:** John 13:1-17

**Big Idea:** To be great, serve others.

**Verse:** Mark 9:35b - If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

\*Note: The resources to be used with this lesson are found in the corresponding Resource file.

### **A. INTRODUCTION (5-10 min.)**

#### **MATERIALS:**

Newspaper (or laptop navigated to a news website)

#### **1. DO the follow with the newspaper:**

- a. Have the children gather around the newspaper.
- b. With their help, identify the names of any famous people mentioned.
- c. Record each name on the board.
- d. Continue until you've flipped through the front page of each section of the paper together.

**2. ASK, "Why is this person famous? What did they do to become so important and end up in a newspaper?" for each name written on the board.**

#### **3. EXPLAIN that today's Bible story is about being great and important:**

- a. These people became important by being good at sports, being really smart, making lots of money, etc.
- b. As we'll see in this story, the way we become great or important in God's kingdom is a lot different than the way these people became important.

## B. LESSON (20-25 minutes)

### MATERIALS:

NIrV Bible\*, chair, empty plastic tub or cookie sheet, another large plastic tub filled halfway with water, hand towels, large beach towel, half-filled pitcher of water, old pair of light-colored sneakers, bowl of dirt

*\* This lesson was written using and designed for a NIrV Bible.*

### SETUP:

- a. Place chair to the side of the teaching area.
- b. Take some dirt and rub it on the sneakers. Do it enough so that they look dirty, but are able to be quickly cleaned by a wet towel.

### 1. EXPLAIN where today's story is from:

- a. Today's story is from the book of John in the New Testament.
- b. What is the New Testament about? (Jesus and his followers.)
- c. Who is Jesus? (God's Son who came to live with us, teach us, and save us from our sins by dying on a cross.)

### 2. READ John 13:1a, stopping at 'Passover Feast.' Before you read, ask the children to listen for the following words and do the following motions when they hear them:

Feast = pretend to spoon a bunch of food into your mouth

### 3. EXPLAIN the Passover:

- a. The Passover Feast was a special meal God's people ate together, sort of like Americans do on Thanksgiving.
- b. At the Passover Feast, the people of Israel, which included Jesus and his disciples, ate and remembered a time long ago when God rescued them. They were slaves in Egypt and God set them free.

### 4. READ John 13:1b, starting with 'Jesus loved his disciples...' Words for the children to listen for:

Loved = place both of your hands over your heart

world = trace a large circle in the air with your index finger

### 5. EXPLAIN Jesus' goal during the Passover feast:

- a. What did the verse we just read say Jesus wanted to do? (Show the disciples how much he loved them.)
- b. Who were the disciples? (A group of men who followed Jesus and tried to learn to live like him.)
- c. What do you think Jesus is going to do to show this to his disciples? (Various responses.)

### 6. EXPLAIN that, before you can continue the story, you need to talk a moment about how dirty a person's foot became back then.

### 7. DO a quick footwashing demonstration as you EXPLAIN the following:

- a. SELECT a child to come forward and sit in the chair. He/she must be willing to get their feet dirty, wet, and clean again.
- b. How did people travel in Jesus' day? (Walking or riding an animal.)
- c. What were roads like in Jesus' day? (They were dirt or rocky paths.)
- d. What kind of shoes did they wear in Jesus' day? (Sandals or barefoot.)
- e. ASK the child to remove their shoes and socks and pull the bottom of their pants up above their knees.
- f. What would happen to your feet if you walk in dirt all the time with sandals on or in your bare feet? (They would become dirty and smelly.)
- g. PLACE the empty tub or cookie sheet under the child's feet. Grab a handful of dirt and sprinkle it over the child's feet. The tub should catch any falling dirt.
- h. If you had dirty, stinky feet, what would you have to do to make them clean? (Wash them in water.)
- i. SLIDE the empty tub out of the way and replace it with the tub of water. Ask the child to dip their feet in the water and splash them around until the dirt comes off.
- j. HAND the child a towel or two to dry off their feet. Ask them to return to their seat and put their shoes and socks back on.

**8. EXPLAIN that washing someone's dirty feet was not a fun job and often left for a servant:**

- a. Do you think you would enjoy washing someone's dirty feet? Why not? (Various responses.)
- b. In Jesus' day, people usually had to wash their own feet. Sometimes, the person who owned the house would wash their guests' feet. If they had a lot of money, a servant would do it for them.
- c. What is a servant? (Someone whose job it is to serve another person.)

**9. REMIND the children:**

- a. This story takes place during the Passover Feast.
- b. Jesus wanted to show the disciples how much he loved them.

**10. READ John 13:4. Words for the children to listen for:**

- Meal = rub your belly as if you're stuffed
- wrapped a towel = pretend to wrap a towel around your waist

**11. WRAP the beach towel around your waist.**

**12. ASK, 'Why do you think Jesus got up and wrapped a towel around himself?' (Various responses.)**

**13. READ John 13:5, stopping at '...a large bowl.' Words for the children to listen for:**

- Poured = pretend to pour water from a pitcher

**14. POUR the contents of the water pitcher into the tub of water.**

**15. DO and EXPLAIN the following:**

- a. ASK another child to sit in the seat. Ask them to take off their shoes, but leave on their socks.
- b. PLACE the pair of large, dirty shoes on their feet.
- c. These dirty shoes will represent the disciples' dirty feet.
- d. The Bible says Jesus washed the disciples' feet.
- e. DIP a hand towel in the water and use it to clean off the shoes. Dry the shoes with the towel around your waist.
- f. How do you think the disciples felt when their teacher, Jesus, God's Son, bent down and started washing their dirty, smelly feet? (Various responses)
- g. But one of the disciples had a problem with what Jesus was doing.

**16. READ John 13:6-7. Words for the children to listen for:**

Wash my feet = pretend to wash one foot      Understand = tap your temple

**17. EXPLAIN that Peter was confused about what Jesus was doing:**

- a. What was the name of the disciple who said something to Jesus? (Simon Peter)
- b. Why do you think Peter asked Jesus what he was doing? (Various responses.)

**18. READ John 13:6-10, asking the child in the chair to repeat Peter's dialogue after you read it. When finished, have the child return to their seat.**

**19. EXPLAIN that Peter didn't understand at all what Jesus was doing:**

- a. What did Peter do when Jesus started to wash his feet? (Told Jesus to stop.)
- b. When Jesus told Peter he needed to wash his feet, what did Peter ask Jesus to do? (Wash his entire body.)
- c. What did Jesus say about this? (Only your feet are dirty. You don't need a full bath.)
- d. Do you remember what we read at the beginning of the story, about what Jesus wanted to show his disciples? (How much he loved them.)

**20. READ John 13:12,14-15. Words for the children to listen for:**

Put on his clothes = pretend to put on a shirt      understand = tap your temple  
Washed your feet = pretend to wash one foot      You should = wag your index finger

**21. EXPLAIN that Jesus washed the disciples' feet to teach them to serve others:**

- a. Even though Jesus was the disciples' teacher and the Son of God, he served his disciples by washing their dirty and smelly feet.
- b. What did Jesus tell his disciples to do? (The same thing he did.)
- c. Do you think that Jesus meant the disciples needed to run around and wash the feet of every person they met? (Various responses.)
- d. Jesus washed the disciples' feet to teach them that they needed to serve other people.
- e. Even though Jesus is the most important person who ever lived, he still served the disciples.

**22. EXPLAIN that today's big idea is, "To be great, serve others":**

- a. Today's Bible verse is Mark 9:35b 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'
- b. To be a great and important person in God's kingdom, we need be willing to go last and to serve others, just like Jesus was willing to be last and serve his disciples.
- c. SAY, 'To be great, serve others,' and have the children repeat it after you.

## C. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

### **MATERIALS:**

Resource: Feet, one large boot/shoe

### **SETUP:**

Cut out all of the paper feet from Resource: Feet.

Place them all into the boot and set the boot on the table.

**1. ASK, 'What's today's big idea?' (Answer: To be great, serve others.)**

**2. ASK, 'What does it mean to serve others?' (Answer: To do nice things for them.)**

**3. SHARE briefly about serving:**

- a. It isn't always easy to serve others and it takes hard work.
- b. It's easier to serve some people than others, especially those who are mean to us or annoy us.

**4. EXPLAIN to the children that you'll help them talk about a few different types of people and what it would be like to serve them.**

**5. REPEAT the following until all the paper feet have been removed from the boot:**

- a. ASK a child to reach into the boot and remove one of the feet from the boot.
- b. READ what is written on the foot.
- c. Why would it be hard to serve this person? (Various responses.)
- d. To be great, Jesus said we need to serve others. How could you serve this person? (Various responses.)

## D. VERSE ACTIVITY

**Verse:** Mark 9:35b - If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

### **MATERIALS:**

Resource: Verse Words, Deck of cards

### **SETUP:**

- a. Place the verse words in order on the table (or floor) in one long line.
- b. Place one card face down on the table above each word.
- c. Place one card face down on the table below each word.

### **1. WRITE the verse on the board and read it through as a group.**

### **2. EXPLAIN the verse:**

- a. To be first (or important) in God's Kingdom, we must be willing to be last or least important.
- b. Like our big idea, to be great, we need to be the servant of all.

### **3. EXPLAIN that you'll be playing the card game of war as we learn the verse:**

- a. Normally, the person with the higher card wins in war, but to remind us that we need to become last if we want to be first, the person with the lower card will win.

### **4. DIVIDE the children into two teams:**

- a. HAVE them sit on opposite sides of the table.
- b. THE VERSE WORDS and two lines of cards should be a dividing line between them.

### **5. REPEAT the following until all the words of the verse have been erased from the board:**

- a. ASK a child to erase a word from the verse from the board. Replace that word with a blank line.
- b. READ the verse as a group, making sure the children say the word(s) that have been erased.
- c. ASK a member from one team turn over a card above or below the word that was just erased. They may turn over the card closest to them or the one on the other side.
- d. ASK a member of the other team turn over the other card. In keeping with the idea of becoming last to be first, the team with the lower card wins.
- e. REMOVE the verse word from the table and give it to the team that won.
- f. WHEN FINISHED, TALLY up the amount of cards each team won.

## E. REVIEW ACTIVITY

### MATERIALS:

Large plastic tub, two large bowls, dish soap, dish sponge, bath towel, hand towels, dirty cups (one for each question)

### SETUP:

- a. Place the dirty cups in the large tub. A quick way to dirty them up would be to pour some syrup over them the night before and let them sit out.
- b. Spread the bath towel on the table.
- c. Fill one bowl with warm water and mix in some dish soap. Place the dish sponge in the bowl.
- c. Fill the other bowl with warm water.
- d. Place the tub of cups, the soapy water, and the clean water in a row on the bath towel to catch any spills.
- e. Place the pile of hand towels at the end after the clean water.

### 1. EXPLAIN the activity:

- a. The children that they will be cleaning these dirty dishes as they answer review questions.
- b. This is to remind them that Jesus washed his disciples' dirty feet.

### 2. REPEAT the following until all the words of the verse have been erased:

- a. ASK three children to come forward. Have one stand in front of the soapy water, one in front of the clean water, and one in front of the hand towels
- b. ASK the children to clean one dirty cup in an assembly-line fashion:
  - i. The first child scrubs the cup with the sponge in soapy water.
  - ii. The second child rinses the cup in clean water.
  - iii. The third child dries the cup with a towel and sets it on a table.
- c. ASK one question from below while the children are washing the cup.
- d. INSTRUCT the first child to answer and the other two to indicate whether they agree with that answer.
- e. REVEAL the correct answer.

### Questions (Answers)

1. What was the name of the special meal Jesus and the disciples were celebrating? (The Passover)
2. What did Jesus want to show his disciples? (How much he loved them)
3. What did Jesus do to show his disciples that he loved him? (Washed their feet)
4. Why did people need their feet washed back then? (They wore sandals/were barefoot. The roads were dirt.)
5. Was washing dirty feet a job for someone important or a servant? (A servant)
6. Which disciple told Jesus to stop washing his feet? (Simon Peter)
7. When Jesus said he needed to wash their feet, what did Peter say? (Wash my whole body.)
8. What lesson was Jesus trying to teach the disciples by washing their feet? (They need to serve others.)
9. What is today's big idea? (To be great, serve others.)
10. What is today's Bible verse? (Mark 9:35b - If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.)