

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Forging Faith, Following Jesus

Session #4 Jesus the Perfect Servant

John Chapter 13 Verses 1-17

“Come, follow me, Jesus said...” – Mark 1v 17

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

We are followers of “*The Way*” (Acts 9v 2; 22v 4; 24v 14). Being Christian is not about adhering to strict rules or attaining some kind of spiritual superiority, nor is it about anything particularly religious. Following Jesus means exactly that. He simply says, “*Follow me*” (Mark 1v 17) offering us an invitation to go God’s way instead of our own. In order to do this, we look to the Lord and, by faith, seek to walk in the Way marked out by Christ Himself. However, Jesus never expected anyone to attempt what He would not do. So, as we trust His lead and look to His example, we can begin to make spiritual strides on the roads to maturity.

By following in the footsteps of Jesus, we discover more about who He is and what He would have us do. *How did Jesus act? What motivated Him? What are the priorities He wants us focus on?* One thing is for sure, there can be no standing still in the Christian life! If someone seeks to walk with you and you lag behind, steam on ahead, or even attempt an alternative route, you no longer walk together!

In this short series, we will attempt to look at some lessons from the life of Christ: Each week studying Christ’s own example to see how He exemplified what He now calls us to do. For us to grow as a church, we will need to go beyond the sermon, seeking to apply these principles in our own lives. To help in this, there are some discussion questions and practical opportunities to explore further in these notes.

The only evidence of Christian growth in our lives is how much we are becoming like Jesus. This challenge should be one that continues to inspire our Christian walk through life until, in a coming day, we present all that we have done before Christ Himself. So may these life lessons from Jesus help us to forge faith, by following Christ.

Lessons from the Life of Christ #4: Jesus the Perfect Servant

The Christian's high calling requires, in fact, that we take a low road. The Kingdom of God is not characterised by worldly standards. Indeed, according to Jesus, "The greatest among you will be your servant." (Matt. 23v 11) Jesus also came saying "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve." (Mark 10v 45) We are, in fact, saved to serve.

In John 13, Jesus shocked His disciples at the dinner table. He didn't do it by flouting of cultural norms, there were no controversial statements that led to discussion and there was no supernatural miracle that left the disciples amazed. No. Instead, here is Jesus, taking a towel, rolling up His sleeves and washing the feet of those who sought to follow Him. According to John, in this incredible act, Jesus showed the "full extent of His love." (13v1) We need to remember the force of this beautiful gesture: Here is the Messiah, God's Son, worthy of the praise of all eternity and yet He squats at the dirty feet of His disciples, including Peter, the one who was about to deny Him and even Judas, the one who would ultimately betray Him to perform this humble act of service.

In this humble gesture, Jesus revealed God's heart for humanity and the lengths He was willing to go to demonstrate it. (Remember, not long after this, Jesus would allow Himself to be crucified – something John no doubt was also alluding to) But He also issued a clear call to all who would follow after Him: "... no servant is greater than his master... now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (13v17)

Read: John Chapter 13 verses 1-17

- **In Anticipation: the Perfect Servant in prophecy**
- **In Attitude: the Perfect Servant in preparation**
- **In Action: the Perfect Servant in practice**

Jesus is the perfect servant. His long anticipated arrival on earth ushered in a new and living way. Among other things, this way realigns our priorities with those of Christ Himself, and sets us on a selfless road to serve Him and others. Jesus' example is one that He calls us to follow: as Peter puts it: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Pet. 4v 10) Rather than enjoying short-lived status in the present, this sacrificial road leads to future recognition of all that we have done for Christ, in the light of all that He has done for us.

Jesus: The Perfect Servant

Jesus never asks of us anything He Himself did not model. He is the Perfect Servant at the heart of the Gospel. Paul famously reminds us in Philippians 2 that, *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."* We must truly learn this powerful lesson from the life of Christ and seek to serve Him with all of our hearts in the whole of our lives.

Serving Christ requires:

- Obedience: am I willing to serve?
- Sacrifice: does it cost to serve?
- Endurance: do I continue to serve?

Forging Faith by Following Christ:

- *Try and imagine yourself in John 13. What would you think of Jesus donning a towel to wash the feet of His followers? How do you think they felt? How would it have made you feel?*
- *What motivates you to serve God?*
- *What excuses do Christians make for not serving Christ? What would you say to the Christian who is doing nothing in the local church? What would you say to the Christian who is doing too much in the local church?*
- *What service are you involved in for Christ which you wouldn't be if you were not a Christian?*
- *Do you think you've ever served for the wrong reasons? Why might people serve Christ for the wrong reasons?*
- *How would you encourage someone to "take a towel" and develop an attitude of service?*
- *Within the culture, foot washing was a commonplace and necessary service to render your guests. Can you think of an equivalent act of service we could render within our culture?*
- *Jesus shocked his disciples in His humble act of service. How should our service "shock" others in a radical, Gospel-shaped way?*
- *Think of some ways you can exemplify the life of Christian service this week and seek to apply them in your life.*