

Love That Serves

Key Verse: *“I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”*
—*John 13:15, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
John 13:1-15, 34, 35

JESUS EXHORTS US IN today’s Key Verse to imitate his example of service. This lesson came at the most crucial moment of his earthly ministry. Our Lord was preparing for the Feast of the Passover. He and his disciples had gathered together in the upper room. “Then He said to them, With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15, *NKJV*) This was to be their last Passover together. One of his own would betray him that very night, and he would be crucified. The disciples would be deprived of his day-to-day leadership, and the Holy Spirit would now be their guide and comforter. (John 14:16,26) This was indeed a significant moment, not only in the history of the church, but also for the entire human family. The atonement between God and man was now to be laid down, eventually bringing all mankind back from the grave with the opportunity to come into harmony with their Creator.

Knowing that this would likely be the last opportunity to give an all-important lesson to his disciples, Jesus “rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” (John 13:1-5, *NKJV*) The Master was teaching them by his own example that service, even as menial as washing

others' feet, was essential to discipleship.

When Jesus came to Peter, "Peter said to Him, Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Puzzled, Peter responded, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered again, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Jesus did not deride Peter, but with love and tenderness he calmly stated the facts of the case to him. The Master's loving reply facilitated Peter's immediate and hearty response, to wash "also my hands and my head." (vss. 6-9, *NKJV*) Had Jesus harshly criticized him, the result would likely not have been as blessed. We pray that all of us, as God's people, may exercise that same sweetly reasonable spirit of Jesus to all who may challenge us.

Jesus had earlier told his disciples, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45, *NKJV*) The epitome of leadership in the Church is not manifested by domineering but through service. Many of the difficulties in the Early Church arose from those who erred along this line.

Each of us has something to offer our brethren in Christ, and we must look for opportunities to serve them for their edification, encouragement, comfort and consolation. The Holy Spirit has been given to us for that purpose. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ... Let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 4:10,11, *NKJV*) Desiring to please God and bless the brotherhood, may we possess love that serves. ■