

The Discipleship Project-Winter 2018–2019

Series 3: Living Unselfishly

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Series Big Idea: Because Jesus, as our example, chose to live His life unselfishly, we must choose to do the same.

Lesson 3.1: The Attitude of Jesus

Lesson Big Idea: We must have the attitude of Jesus in order to model Jesus Christ and live unselfishly.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: Philippians 2:5–8 (PPT)

He knew the time was short. In fact, in just a few days the disciples would be scattered, and Jesus would be hanging on a cross, suspended between heaven and earth, dying to save humanity from their sins. But for that night, while gathered with a ragtag group of misfits, Jesus taught a powerful lesson. It became a lesson the apostles would preach and teach for years to come.

It was the last supper Jesus would eat with the twelve who had followed Him for the past three years. It was not just any supper, it was the Feast of Passover, which each of the four Gospel writers attempted to depict. However, only the apostle John recorded the moment Jesus humbled Himself and took on the role of a servant by washing the feet of His disciples.

Grabbing a wash basin and towel, Jesus began washing the feet of the twelve, one by one. No doubt an awkward silence filled the room as He went to each of His followers in this unusual act of servanthood. Stooping down to wash the dusty grime of the streets of Jerusalem from their feet, Jesus revealed the true nature of humility. And even though these disciples were unaware of the significance of this moment—even Peter tried to stop his Master from washing his feet—Jesus continued until each foot had been cleansed. Jesus fully understood that in just a few short hours, each of His followers would in one way or another abandon Him during the hour of His greatest need. Still Jesus continued.

At first the disciples were uncertain as to Jesus' intent. They were so caught up in the events of recent days that they mistook this act of servanthood as being somewhat of an insult to their intelligence. As Jesus approached Peter, the obstinate disciple drew back quickly and declared he would never allow Jesus to wash his feet. Jesus' reply shocked Peter as well as the other disciples: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8, NKJV). Peter swiftly recanted: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9, NKJV).

Although at this time they did not understand the reason Jesus humbled Himself, He did tell them that after His death they would come to a full understanding of why He was doing what He was doing.

By humbling Himself and washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus taught a lesson to not only His disciples but also to us. We must recognize how vital it is to fulfill the role of a servant and humble ourselves as Jesus portrayed in John 13. It is not enough for us to profess we are Christians; we must also show the world and each other the impact Jesus is making in our lives.

- **Do humans have the tendency to put more emphasis on what people do as opposed to what people say? Why or why not?**

FRAME

In Philippians 2:5–8, Paul began a discourse on the importance of having the mind of Christ. This was more than just a good thought Paul had; it was an intense desire this would become a lifestyle lived out on a daily basis in the community of disciples as well as in the world.

What is the “mind of Christ” Paul was attempting to describe? **Having the mind of Christ is the ability to see life from the same perspective as Jesus. (PDG, PPT)** It is not enough that we profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ; we must also daily practice the lifestyle Jesus exemplified. Perspective is a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something—a point of view. We must consistently and passionately desire to be like Jesus in every area of our lives. We need to acquire His point of view.

- **How do we get the mind of Christ?**
- **Why do you think it is important for us to have the mind of Christ?**

What is Jesus’ point of view? By closely examining the life and ministry of Jesus, we can discover the Messiah’s intent in how He lived. Paul wrote that Jesus Christ emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:7–8).

“Though possessing full deity (John 1:14; Colossians 2:9), Christ did not consider His equality with God (Philippians 2:6) as something to be grasped or held onto. In other words Christ did not hesitate to set aside His self-willed use of deity when He became a man” (Philippians, R. P. Lightner). This is how we should live. Paul was expressing a desire that each believer possess this same attitude in their lives, specifically in their relationships with others.

Having the mind of Christ means possessing the same attitude Jesus had in at least three distinct areas. (PPT) These areas are humility, compassion for the lost, and a total dependence upon God. Let us examine them a little closer to see if we might begin placing them into our daily walk with God.

When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples (John 13), He took on the role of a servant, humbling Himself before His followers. This act of servanthood was something the disciples did not fully understand. Jesus attempted to reveal to His disciples how important the act of **humility (PPT)** was in the kingdom of God. His unselfish act provides a window the followers of Jesus can look through, revealing how vital it is to

humble ourselves and serve others.

- **What is your definition of humility?**

In Luke 19:10 we are introduced to the mission of Jesus Christ: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (KJV). (PPT) Jesus’ **compassion for the lost (PDG, PPT)** was the central focus of His ministry (Matthew 9:36). Jesus was willing to commit the most unselfish, humble act of all time by laying down His life for others. We are reminded in John 15:13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (KJV). (PPT)

- **What are some present-day examples of compassion on display in our society?**

The third way we can possess the same attitude Jesus had while having the mind of Christ is to have a **total dependence upon God. (PPT)** Examine John 5:19 and you will discover Jesus was clear that He could not do anything without first the Father revealing to Him what needed to be done. Our lives will be meaningless without a complete reliance upon God to reveal to us what we must do with our lives. Fulfilling the mission of Jesus, by humbling ourselves and reaching out to others in serving and saving, can only be conducted by a total dependence upon the Spirit of God.

Becoming someone who lives to **serve others (PPT)** is a noble pursuit. The role and purpose of a servant has many dimensions, but for the sake of our study, we will closely examine four of them. First, **servants think of others before thinking of themselves. (PDG, PPT)** Philippians 2:3 tells us, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (KJV). (PPT)

Second, **servants lower themselves to lift others up (PPT)** This is exactly what Jesus did by giving up the splendor of Heaven in order to die on a gruesome cross for the sins of humanity. You and I may never go to that extreme, but we must lower our view of ourselves, so we can spend our lives serving those around us. We can never think some task or service is beneath us. To do so is to reveal our pride.

The third role and purpose of a servant ties closely with that of our previous description. **Servants recognize the importance of furthering the cause of another. (PPT)** Again, by examining the life of Jesus, it is safe to say this was His primary focus.

Finally, **servants are willing to lay down their lives for others. (PDG, PPT)** Again, we are reminded in John 15:13, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (KJV). (PPT) This selfless act of Jesus, giving His life so others could have abundant life, is the greatest act of humility ever revealed.

- **How can we follow the pattern of Jesus?**

Servanthood is the attitude God desires of His children in order to fulfill His purpose upon the earth. There truly is no greater purpose than the purpose of the kingdom of God. Jesus declared that we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

(Matthew 6:33).

This is primarily accomplished in three distinct manners. First, **by being servants, we give glory to God.** (PDG, PPT) “Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him” (John 13:31–32, KJV). (PPT)

We must also understand that **by being servants, we identify with our Master and seek to fulfill the purpose He came to fulfill by helping to seek and save the lost.** (PPT) The entire mission of Jesus can be summed up in Luke 19:10. It behooves us to put on the same attitude by investing our lives in the work of serving and discipling others.

- **What was the primary mission of Jesus?**
- **How do we share in that same mission?**

Finally, **by being servants, we follow the pattern Jesus set forth by being obedient and humbling ourselves.** (PDG, PPT) The entire ministry of Jesus was spent training and leading His disciples, teaching them the importance of being obedient to God and serving others in such a way it revealed they were disciples of Jesus.

Paul wrote:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5–8, KJV)

Fully becoming a servant does not happen overnight. We must constantly be fighting against the spirit of this age that promotes the elevation of self. How then can we take on the role of a servant? Primarily Jesus revealed two distinct paths we must traverse in order to fulfill the role of a servant. Path number one is found in Matthew 20:25–28 and instructs us that **those who will be great must first learn to serve.** (PDG, PPT)

Each of us has dreams of greatness. We want to be great parents, great employees, great leaders, great men, or great women. The idea of *average* hardly appeals to anyone. Instead, we all have a little bit of James and John in us. “Lord, we want a place of prominence. We want to be great!” Though their request was completely out of line, the deep underlying motive—the desire for greatness—is something with which we all can identify.

However, Jesus’ response was clear. Though He did not correct their desire, He redirected their hearts to the proper path: servanthood. “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant . . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26, 28, NIV). (PPT)

- **Do you think the desire to be great is innate in all humans? Why or why not?**

The second path is found in Matthew 23:11–12 where Jesus proclaims **that those who will be exalted must humble themselves. (PPT)**

While warning people about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus instructed His listeners to put on humility. Again, the desire to be lifted up is in all of us. Our nature is to want people to recognize us. Some desire public recognition, while others—perhaps those who do not prefer crowds or public affection—still wish for recognition, even if done more subtly.

Recognizing our human tendencies, Jesus addressed the dangerous path of exalting oneself. His sermon hinted at the ancient proverb: “Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18, NLT). **(PPT)**

According to Jesus, the kingdom of God has little room for those who wish to elevate themselves. “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled,” but “those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12, NIV). **(PPT)**

These two approaches may be foreign to the thinking of our culture, but each possesses the proper pathway of servanthood in the kingdom of God.

To show forth the love of Christ in today’s world, we must strive to be more like Jesus by humbling ourselves and serving others, within and without the church. This is how people know we are truly disciples of Jesus.

- **Do you think saints focus more on serving those who are inside the church or those who are outside the church? Why do you think that is?**
- **Is that the way it should be? Why or why not?**

FINISH

The tragic end of the doomed sea vessel *Titanic* is one of the most horrific events in history. Yet it reveals something important this lesson also portrays. “According to survivors’ accounts, the ‘women and children first’ convention was observed with almost no dissension, particularly among the upper classes. The statistics make this plain. In first class, every child was saved, as were all but five (of 144) women, three of whom chose to die with their husbands. By contrast, 70 percent of the men perished. In second class, 80 percent of the women were saved but 90 percent of the men drowned.

“The men on the first-class list of the *Titanic* virtually made up the Forbes 400 of the time. John Jacob Astor, reputedly the richest man of his day, is said to have fought his way to a boat, put his wife in it and then stepped back and waved her goodbye. Benjamin Guggenheim similarly refused to take a seat, saying: ‘Tell my wife . . . I played the game out straight and to the end. No woman shall be left aboard this ship because Ben Guggenheim was a coward.’ In other words, some of the most powerful men in the world adhered to an unwritten code of honor—even though it meant certain death for them” (*A Thread of Years*, John Lukacs).

What a powerful lesson in how we must also give our lives for others. The kingdom of God requires that each of us endeavor to submit to the ways of Jesus and become what He desires of us in order to impact our world. By taking on the role of a servant and

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humbling ourselves, others will see the image of Christ that is being formed in us on a daily basis. Let's search our hearts and ask God to help us in taking on this necessary attitude that Jesus so well exemplified for us.