

Storyteller

JOHN

PART 2 | SUFFERING OF THE SAVIOR

Storyteller

JOHN

SUFFERING OF THE SAVIOR

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THE STORYTELLER SERIES

God could have chosen to reveal Himself in any way that He desired, yet in His wisdom, He chose to reveal Himself in the context of a story. We come to know and understand this reality as we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures and begin to see the entirety of Scripture as one interconnected story. By becoming familiar with the individual stories of Scripture, we train ourselves to see each as one part of God's big story.

Storyteller is a series of devotional and group Bible study experiences designed to take people through Scripture in a way that is beautiful, intuitive, and interactive. Each volume uses a book of the Bible or a portion of Scripture from within a book to examine a key theme. This theme guides the Bible study experience and gives readers handles to help understand and digest what they're reading.

At the end of each study, you should have a deeper understanding of God, His Word, the big themes of Scripture, the connectedness of God's story, and His work in your life.

Let's enter the story together.

ABOUT JOHN

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than 90 percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to His teachings.

AUTHOR

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10). The early church also held that the apostle John was the author of this Gospel.

DATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING

John’s Gospel was likely written in the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80’s, most likely. The testimony of the early church also favors a date after AD 70.

The most likely place of writing is Ephesus, one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire at the time, though the envisioned readership of John’s Gospel transcends any one historical setting.

John’s original audience was probably composed of people in the larger Greco-Roman world, in Ephesus and beyond, toward the close of the first century AD. This is likely why John frequently explained Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translated Aramaic terms into Greek.

MESSAGE AND EMPHASIS

The purpose statement in 20:30-31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, when the Jerusalem temple was destroyed, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people, in replacement of the old sanctuary.

John emphasized the deity of Jesus from the beginning of his Gospel. Jesus used the significant phrase "I am" seven times in John, claiming the personal name of God as His own. In John's Gospel, Jesus is always in charge and knows what will happen in advance.

Knowing and *believing* are key terms for John. Both occur more than ninety times in this Gospel and are always used as verbs. Jesus's teaching in John reminds us that knowing God and believing in Jesus are expressed in action.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

Of all the Gospels and other New Testament books, the Gospel of John most clearly teaches the deity and preexistence of Christ (1:1-2,18; 8:58; 17:5,24; 20:28). Together with the Gospel of Matthew, it provides the most striking proofs of Jesus's messiahship. Jesus's messianic mission is shown to originate with God the Father, "the One who sent" Jesus (7:16,18,28,33; 8:26,29; 15:21), and to culminate in His commissioning of His new messianic community in the power of His Spirit (20:21-22).

WHY STUDY JOHN?

The Gospel of John is one of four books that describes the life of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as Synoptic Gospels because they use many of the same events and lay them out much the same way. John's Gospel follows a different outline and includes much material that is not covered in the other three Gospels. John's thesis statement is recorded near the end of the book:

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

JOHN 20:30-31

John's Gospel is organized in two big sections: the Book of Signs and the Book of Exaltation. Both ask us to examine the evidence about Jesus, believe, and find life in His name. The Book of Exaltation is the focus of this study, and it looks at the last few days of Jesus's life. Jesus begins by demonstrating sacrificial service to and for His disciples, then imparts His wisdom to them over the next four chapters in the form of teaching and prayer. Through these chapters, we get a glimpse into the relationship between the Persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit. We see their eternal community pouring out in the teaching. From there, Jesus is betrayed, arrested, tried, beaten, mocked, and killed. Finally, we experience His resurrection through the eyes of the first witnesses and learn to participate in His resurrection and the life that comes from believing in His name.

Learn from Jesus. Participate in His resurrection.



OUTLINE OF JOHN

I. Prologue (1:1-18)

II. Book of Signs (1:19-12)

III. Book of Exaltation (13-20)

A. Cleansing the Community (13:1-30)

1. The Footwashing (13:1-17)

2. The Betrayal (13:18-30)

B. The Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33)

1. Jesus's Departure and Sending of the Spirit (13:31-14:31)

2. Jesus the True Vine (15:1-17)

3. The Spirit and the Disciples' Witness to the World (15:18-16:33)

C. Jesus's Parting Prayer (17)

D. The Passion Narrative (18-19)

1. The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus (18:1-11)

2. Jesus Questioned by the High Priest and Denied by Peter (18:12-27)

3. Jesus Before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)

4. Jesus's Crucifixion and Burial (19:16b-42)

E. Jesus's Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1–29)

1. The Empty Tomb (20:1-10)

2. Jesus's Encounter with Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)

3. Jesus's First Appearance, to His Disciples (20:19-23)

4. Jesus's Second Appearance, to Thomas (20:24-29)

F. Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)

IV. Epilogue (21)

A. Jesus's Third Appearance, to Seven Disciples in Galilee (21:1-14)

B. Jesus and Peter (21:15-19)

C. Jesus and the Disciple Jesus Loved (21:20-25)¹

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each week follows a repeated rhythm to guide you in your study of John and has been designed with lots of white space and photographic imagery to facilitate a time of reflection on Scripture.

The week begins with an introduction to the themes of the week. Throughout each week, you'll find Scripture readings, devotions, and beautiful imagery to guide your time.



WEEK 4
ENTER
COMMUNION

JOHN 13:1-11

13 Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to part from the world and the Father. Having loved those who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

"How often it has been for me, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, whom Jesus loved, to betray him. "Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from the Father and had returned to the Father. He got up to the supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. "Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel that was around him.

"The man who had been who washed him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?'"

"Jesus answered him, 'What I'm doing you don't understand now, but afterward you will understand.'

"The man whom he was washing said, 'Lord, how can I?'"

Jesus replied, 'I don't wash you, you have to part with me.'

"Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!'"

"Jesus who had washed him, 'Simon, since you want to wash everything except his feet, let him be completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you.'" "That he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

20 JOHN

DAY 1 SERVANT LOVE

The second half of the Gospel of John begins in chapter 13, around a dinner table. In chapters 1-12, John establishes Jesus's identity as God through seven signs—miracles—His power. The second half takes a deeper gaze and focuses on Jesus's work as a suffering servant who would redeem His people from their sin and on His love for His disciples. In these opening verses, these two themes come together.

The verb "knew" is used three times to denote Jesus (vs. 1, 3, 11). Each instance highlights Jesus's complete knowledge and control of all that follows. In a few short verses, we see the maturity of Jesus and love to the humanity of Jesus. He "knew that His hour had come" (v. 1). Throughout John, "knew" refers to the time when Jesus would give His life. He knew that God had given Him all power. And he knew that one of His own would betray Him.

What would Jesus do with this knowledge? We might expect Jesus to overwhelm the devil and assert His dominance. But Jesus opens our expectations. He gets up from the table, goes on the other side of a servant, and washes the disciples' feet. In a typical household, this would have been done by the lowest servant, in the most inconspicuous manner.

Verse 4's simple multiple verbs to draw attention to Jesus's actions: He got up from the table, laid aside the outer garment, took a towel, tied it around the waist, poured the water, and washed and dried the disciples' feet. Everything about the process drew attention to Jesus and what He was doing.

The disciples were shocked—and some more so than Peter. But this is a great object lesson for the disciples and for us. Cleaning comes from Jesus's humble service on our behalf. The cleaning of the disciples' feet points to the cleaning of sin on the cross and gives us a glimpse of service to all who follow in Jesus's footsteps.

Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Remember a Servant 21

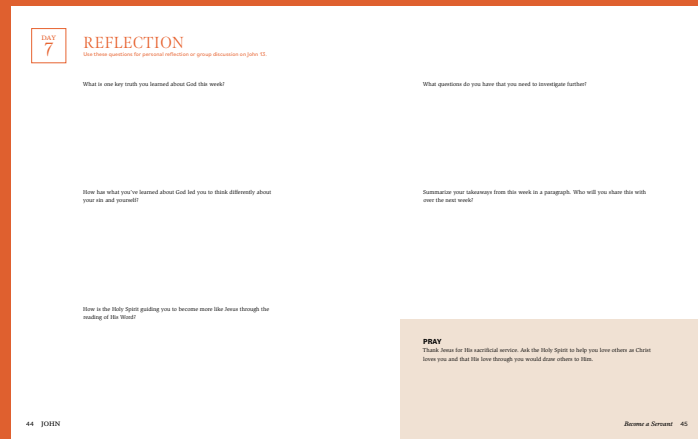
Each week includes five days of Scripture reading, along with a short devotional thought and three questions to process what you've read.

The Scripture reading is printed out for you with plenty of space for you to take notes, circle, underline, and interact with the passage.



The sixth day contains no reading beyond a couple of verses to give you time to pause and listen to what God has said through the Scriptures this week. You may be tempted to skip this day altogether, but resist this temptation. Sit and be quiet with God—even if it's only for a few minutes.

The seventh day of each week offers a list of open-ended questions that apply to any passage of Scripture. Use this day to reflect on your own or meet with a group to discuss what you've learned. Take intentional time to remember and reflect on what John is teaching you.



Throughout each week of study, you will notice callout boxes or supplemental pages provided to give greater context and clarity to the Scripture you're reading. These features will help you connect John to the bigger story of Scripture.

LEADING A GROUP

Each week of study contains a set of questions that can be used for small group meetings. These open-ended questions are meant to guide discussion of the week's Scripture passage. No matter the size of your group, here are some helpful tips for guiding discussion.

PREPARE

REVIEW the Scripture and your answers to the week's questions ahead of time.

PRAY over your group as well as the Scriptures you've been studying. Ask God's Spirit for help to lead the group deeper into God's truth and deeper in relationship with one another.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

We live in a time when our attention is increasingly divided. Try to see your group time as a space of respite from the digital clutter—from scrolling, notifications, likes, and newsfeeds. Commit to one another to give focused time and attention to the discussion at hand and minimize outside distractions. Help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

ENCOURAGE DISCUSSION

A good small group experience has the following characteristics.

EVERYONE IS INCLUDED. Your goal is to foster a community where people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES. Even though you may be "leading" the group, try to see yourself as a participant steering the conversation rather than a teacher imparting information.

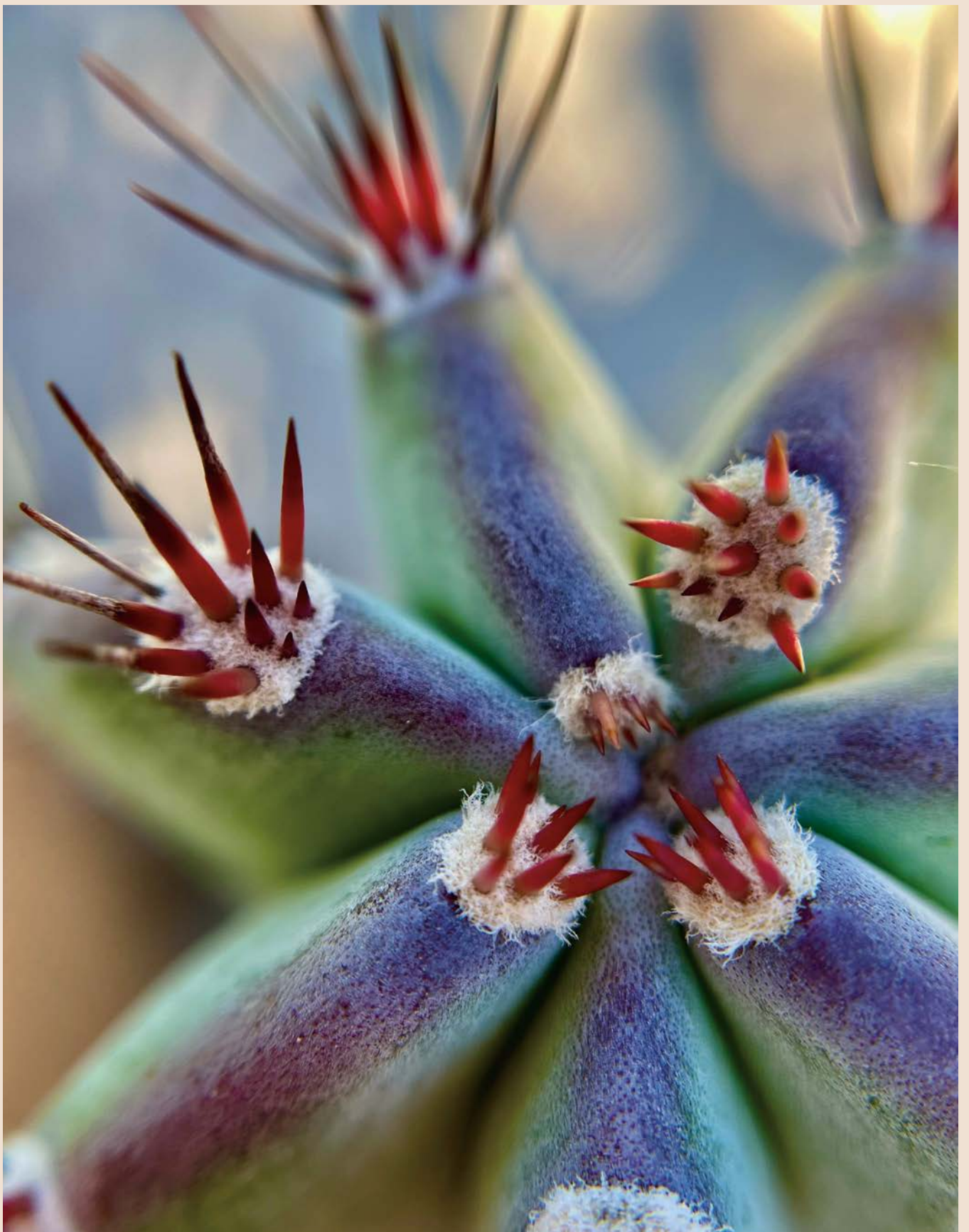
DON'T RUSH. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People may need time, and we should be glad to give it to them. Don't feel like you have to ask all the questions or stay away from questions that aren't included. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to one another. Take your time.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking other people to share when they have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. Conversation stalls when people feel that you don't want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer. Engagement and affirmation keep the conversation going.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. The questions in this study are meant to steer the conversation back to God, His Word, and the work of the gospel in our lives. Opinions and experiences are valuable and can be helpful, but God is the center of the Bible, the center of our story, and should be the center of our discussion. Trust Him to lead the discussion. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

KEEP CONNECTING

Spiritual growth occurs in the context of community. Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Your group will be more enjoyable the more you get to know one another through time spent outside of an official group meeting. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending. Reserve time each week to touch base with individual group members.



WEEK 1

BECOME
A SERVANT

Jesus knew that His hour
had come . . .

What would you do if you knew it was the last weekend of your life? Take a few moments to consider that question. We know what Jesus would do.

John 13–21 takes place from one Thursday to the following Sunday. Jesus is beginning the last weekend of His earthly life. And Jesus knows it (13:1). What does He do with the time He has left?

He pulls back from the crowds, has a meal with His closest friends, and tells them all the things He wants them to remember when He is gone. Every word and action is deliberate. The content found in these chapters is unique to John’s Gospel and reveals the heart of Jesus for His disciples

As you read, lean in and attune your heart to what Jesus has to say. He wants you to hear it. This teaching is as much for you as it was for the disciples sitting in that upper room.

JOHN 13:1-11

13 Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

² Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God. ⁴ So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. ⁵ Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."

⁸ "You will never wash my feet," Peter said.

Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

¹⁰ "One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you."¹¹ For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

DAY
1

SERVANT LOVE

The second half of the Gospel of John begins in chapter 13, around a dinner table. In chapters 1–12, John establishes Jesus’s identity as God through seven signs—or miracles—He performed. The second half takes a slower pace and focuses on Jesus’s work as a suffering servant who would redeem His people from their sins and on His love for His followers. In these opening verses, these key themes come together.

The verb “knew” is used three times in eleven verses (vv. 1,3,11). Each instance highlights Jesus’s complete knowledge and control of all that follows. In a few short verses, we see the majesty of Jesus laid next to the humility of Jesus. He “knew that His hour had come” (v. 1). Throughout John, “hour” refers to the time when Jesus would give His life. He knew that God had given Him all power. And He knew that one of His own would betray Him.

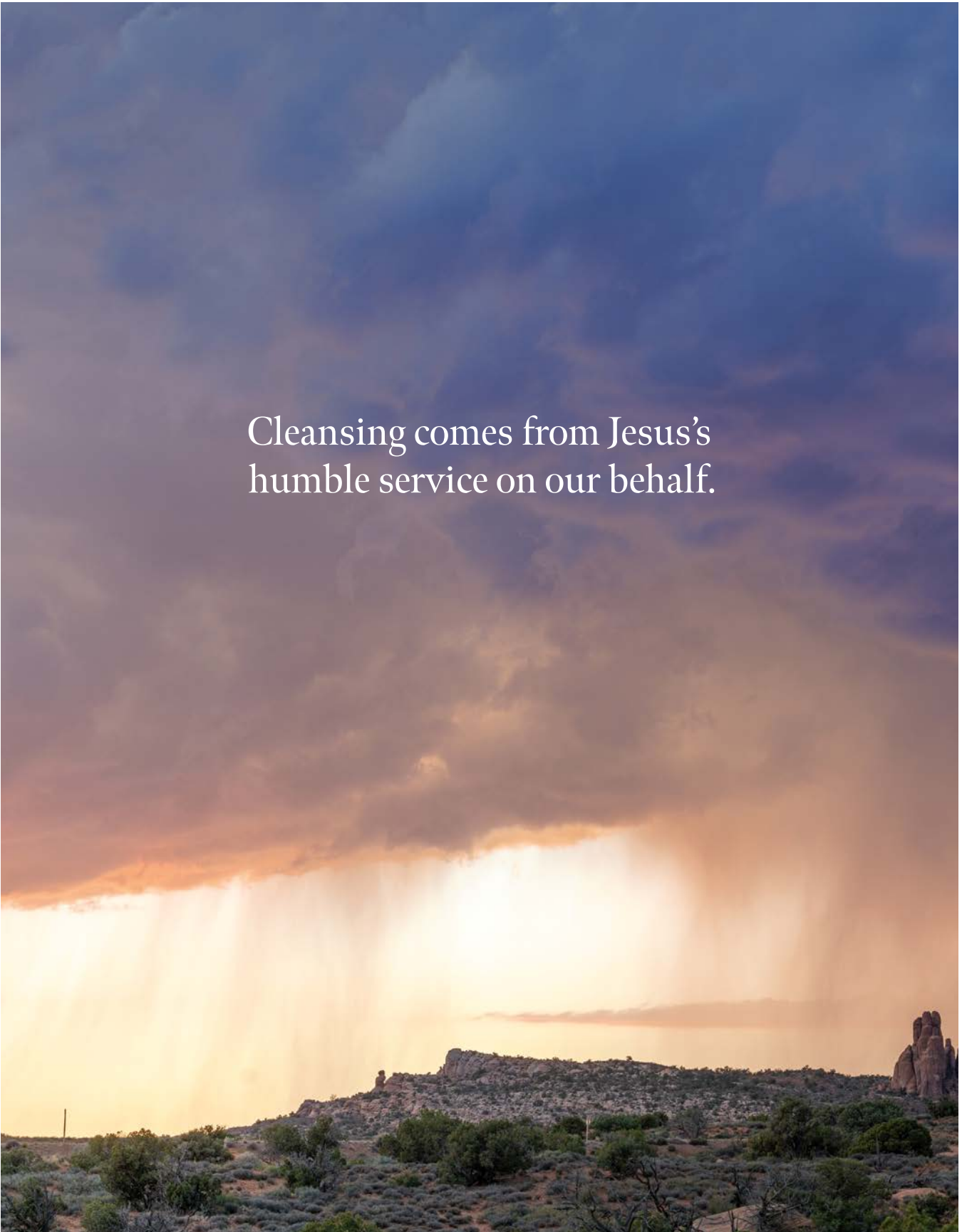
What would Jesus do with this knowledge? We might expect Jesus to overwhelm the devil and assert His dominance.² But Jesus upends our expectations. He gets up from the table, puts on the attire of a servant, and washes His disciples’ feet. In a typical household, this would have been done by the lowliest servant, in the most inconspicuous manner.³

Verses 4-5 employ multiple verbs to draw attention to Jesus’s actions: He **got up** from the table, **laid aside** His outer garment, **took** a towel, **tied** it around His waist, **poured** the water, and **washed** and **dried** His disciples’ feet. Everything about the process drew attention to Jesus and what He was doing.

The disciples were shocked—and none more so than Peter. But this is a great object lesson for the disciples and for us. Cleansing comes from Jesus’s humble service on our behalf. The cleansing of the disciples’ feet points to the cleansing of sin on the cross and gives an example of service for all who follow in Jesus’s footsteps.

Jesus “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Cleansing comes from Jesus's
humble service on our behalf.



REFLECTIONS

Underline all the action words associated with Jesus in this passage. Why must belief always be accompanied by action?

Why would John highlight Jesus's divine knowledge and humble service side by side in this way?

What about Jesus's example of service challenges or encourages you?

CONNECTING THE STORY

In John 13:2, we read that the devil has put it into Judas's heart "to betray [Jesus]." The word translated *betray* literally means "to hand over" and is the same word used in Romans 1:24,26, and 28 to describe God handing sinful people over to their sin. The word is frequently used regarding Judas in John's Gospel (6:64,71; 12:4; 13:2; 18:2,5).

JOHN 13:12-20

THE MEANING OF FOOT WASHING

¹² When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, “Do you know what I have done for you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord — and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

¹⁶ “Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

¹⁸ “I’m not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: **The one who eats my bread has raised his heel against me.** ¹⁹ I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me.”

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

After washing the disciples' feet, Jesus dressed, resumed His place at the table, and reclined back into the conversation. Having seen their confusion at His act of service, Jesus posed the question, "Do you know what I have done for you?"

Jesus explained His service was an example for His disciples (v. 15). The word for *example* refers to a model or pattern for moral behavior.⁴ In other words, it wasn't merely a kind thing Jesus did for His friends. He was showing them what it looks like to be a servant like Him. He was instilling a foot-washing ethic for His disciples.

Jesus wasn't making foot washing an ordinance or sacrament for the church, like baptism or the Lord's Supper. He does not demand foot washing from all who follow Him. But He commands and commends this kind of humble service from those who follow in His footsteps. If He, our teacher and Lord, is not above such a position of service, we shouldn't be either.

Throughout Jesus's time with the disciples, they frequently debated who was the greatest (Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46; 22:24-26). Jesus knew their (and our) hearts (John 2:25). Embracing the kind of service reserved for the lowliest servant drove home the lesson that no service is too menial in Christ's kingdom. If Jesus's teachings had not rooted this truth in the disciples' hearts, His willingness to pick up a rag and scrub the dirt off their feet should.

Yet we are all prone to forget—to think of ourselves as higher than our Master. John preserves this moment for us to see the depths to which Jesus was willing to humble Himself to set us free of the sin and selfishness He knows are in our hearts.

Jesus knows that if we put ourselves aside and serve, we will find the same kind of blessed wholeness that He embodies.

The image features a green, textured background, possibly a book cover or a piece of fabric. Scattered across this background are numerous small, brown, spiky objects. Each object has a central, rounded, brownish core from which several thin, light-colored, needle-like spikes radiate outwards. The objects are distributed in a somewhat random pattern, with some appearing more prominent than others. The overall effect is one of a dense, prickly surface.

Jesus was willing to humble
Himself to set us free.

REFLECTIONS

What is a contemporary equivalent to foot washing?

Why might we look at Jesus's act of service and see it as "nice for Him but not for me"?

In what ways do sin and selfishness restrict your willingness to serve as Jesus served?

JOHN 13:21-30

JUDAS'S BETRAYAL PREDICTED

²¹ When Jesus had said this, he was troubled in his spirit and testified, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

²² The disciples started looking at one another — uncertain which one he was speaking about. ²³ One of his disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was he was talking about.

²⁵ So he leaned back against Jesus and asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶ Jesus replied, “He’s the one I give the piece of bread to after I have dipped it.” When he had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son. ²⁷ After Judas ate the piece of bread, Satan entered him. So Jesus told him, “What you’re doing, do quickly.”

²⁸ None of those reclining at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Since Judas kept the money-bag, some thought that Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ After receiving the piece of bread, he immediately left. And it was night.

DAY
3

BETRAYAL

John devotes more than half of the verses in chapter 13 to Judas's betrayal of Jesus (vv. 2,10-11,18-19,21-30). Jesus's service is the primary theme, but it runs on a parallel track with the betrayal of His disciples (Judas here and Peter in the closing verses).

Most Bible readers, even those who didn't grow up in church, come to the Gospel accounts with some understanding of what's going on here. Today, "Judas" is a cultural shorthand for someone who turns on their friends. But to the original disciples, Jesus's words were startling and unsettling. They had no idea who Jesus was talking about (v. 22). In verse 23, "one of his disciples" (this is likely John) discreetly asked Jesus for clarity on what He meant, and he was still confused after Jesus answered (v. 28). No one suspected Judas.

Judas was a friend and companion to both Jesus and the disciples. He lived with them and spent all his waking hours serving and learning with them. But what was unknown to the disciples was clear to Jesus: Satan and selfish desires had won the battle in Judas's heart. His betrayal was only unsurprising to Jesus. Jesus's repeated references to the event make this clear. Even so, Jesus was troubled by what was about to occur (v. 21).

Judas was Jesus's friend, and Jesus loved him. He repeatedly offered Judas a chance to turn back and not do what his heart was pulling him to do. Handing Judas the bread was personal—Jesus lovingly confronted the war in Judas's heart. But Judas's mind was made up, so Jesus urged him to move quickly (v. 27).

The moment ends with the ominous phrase, "And it was night," which marks the time as well as the spiritual darkness of the scene (v. 30).

A photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color. In the foreground and middle ground, several Joshua trees are silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun. The trees have their characteristic spiky leaves and branching forms. The sun is positioned low on the horizon, creating a strong backlighting effect and casting long, dark shadows. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Jesus lovingly confronted the war in Judas's heart, but Judas's mind was made up.

REFLECTIONS

How might you read this passage differently if you put yourself in the disciples' place and did not know that Judas was the betrayer?

When has Jesus offered you a chance to turn back from sin you were pursuing?

Describe the internal conflict you experienced in that moment. How can we make the right choice in those situations?

CONNECTING THE STORY

Verse 21 records that Jesus was “troubled.” John used this word in 11:33 and 12:27. This phrasing is an intentional allusion to King David, who was also betrayed by a close friend. David’s words in the psalms reflect this same kind of emotion (Psalms 55:2-14; 31:9-10; 38:10).

Light & Dark

in John's Gospel

Learning to recognize the patterns that appear in the Bible helps us understand the authors' intentions and the truth of their words more deeply. Just as John 13 places the love of Jesus next to the betrayal of His friend, there is a contrast throughout the writing of John between light and dark. Five times, these themes appear next to one another in the same verse. To John, light symbolizes revelation, life, and freedom, whereas darkness represents sin and death.

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

JOHN 1:4-5

“This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.”

JOHN 3:19

Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”

JOHN 8:12

Jesus answered, “The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going.”

JOHN 12:35

“I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me would not remain in darkness.”

JOHN 12:46

JOHN 13:31-35

THE NEW COMMAND

³¹When he had left, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’

³⁴“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

DAY
4

AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

Now that Judas has departed, Jesus's last moments with the disciples have begun in earnest. His arrest, trial, and execution are on the horizon. With the cross weighing heavily on His mind, Jesus resumes teaching.

In John's Gospel, Jesus's suffering and death on the cross are frequently referenced with the idea of glorification. As Jesus was lifted up, He would draw all people to Himself (John 12:32). An instrument of torture and death meant to shame and embarrass those nailed to it would become a symbol of deliverance because of the Man hanging on it. And after that, Jesus would depart to be with the Father in glory.

For the next several chapters, Jesus focuses on preparing the disciples for His departure. Therefore, the first commandment He gives in this setting is instructive. He gives them a *new* commandment: that they love one another as He has loved them (v. 34). The disciples would have grown up being taught to love God and their neighbors. What made Jesus's command *new* was the qualifying statement at the end—*“as I have loved you.”*

And what does Jesus's love look like? How are we to love other followers of Jesus as He loves?

This chapter provides crucial context. Jesus defined love through His actions and His teaching. His love is servant-oriented and God-glorifying. It humbles itself to wash feet and to die on a cross. It's the kind of love that gives itself away, expecting nothing in return. It is self-sacrificial.

Because this kind of love is so unnatural, it is a sign to the world that we are loved by Jesus. His love shapes and reorients our lives and our community as His followers.

Jesus's love is servant-oriented
and God-glorifying.



REFLECTIONS

How does the context of the whole chapter of John 13 help us better understand what Jesus means in John 13:34-35?

Does your love for other Christians point people to Jesus? Why or why not?

How might you demonstrate the love of Christ to another follower of Jesus this week?

JOHN 13:36-38

PETER'S DENIALS PREDICTED

³⁶ “Lord,” Simon Peter said to him, “where are you going?”

Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow later.”

³⁷ “Lord,” Peter asked, “why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

³⁸ Jesus replied, “Will you lay down your life for me? Truly I tell you, a rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.”

DAY
5

WHY CAN'T I FOLLOW YOU?

After Jesus's teaching, Peter asks a natural question that the others are likely thinking—*Jesus, where are you going?* The resulting conversation shows that Peter does not understand what Jesus has been saying. The meaning of Jesus's words will only be clear to him on the other side of the cross.

Dissatisfied by Jesus's answer, Peter insists that he will follow Jesus wherever He goes, even at the cost of his life. Peter cannot imagine that Jesus will be the one laying His life down for him. Like many disciples since, Peter wanted to make following Jesus about what he could do for Jesus rather than what Jesus would do for Him.⁵

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus reset His disciples' expectations. He reminded them they're not the heroes in the story. Jesus knew Peter's own strength would only take him so far. The resolution in the upper room would dissolve into vapor at the first test; Peter's devotion would not last through the next day.

The Christian life is much more about Christ's devotion to us than our devotion to Him. On our best day, our devotion and our hearts are moments from failing. Focusing on the object of our devotion and His work in us makes our faith vibrant and resilient.⁶

The teachings of Jesus in this chapter and those that follow are as difficult as they are comforting. We cannot process them, let alone obey them, without His help. His work in us yields better and more lasting results than our work for Him. This is part of Christ's self-sacrificial service to us.

The Christian life is much more about Christ's devotion to us than our devotion to Him.



REFLECTIONS

When have you found the limits of your own devotion to Jesus? What did you learn?

How does focusing on Jesus's devotion to you build your faith?

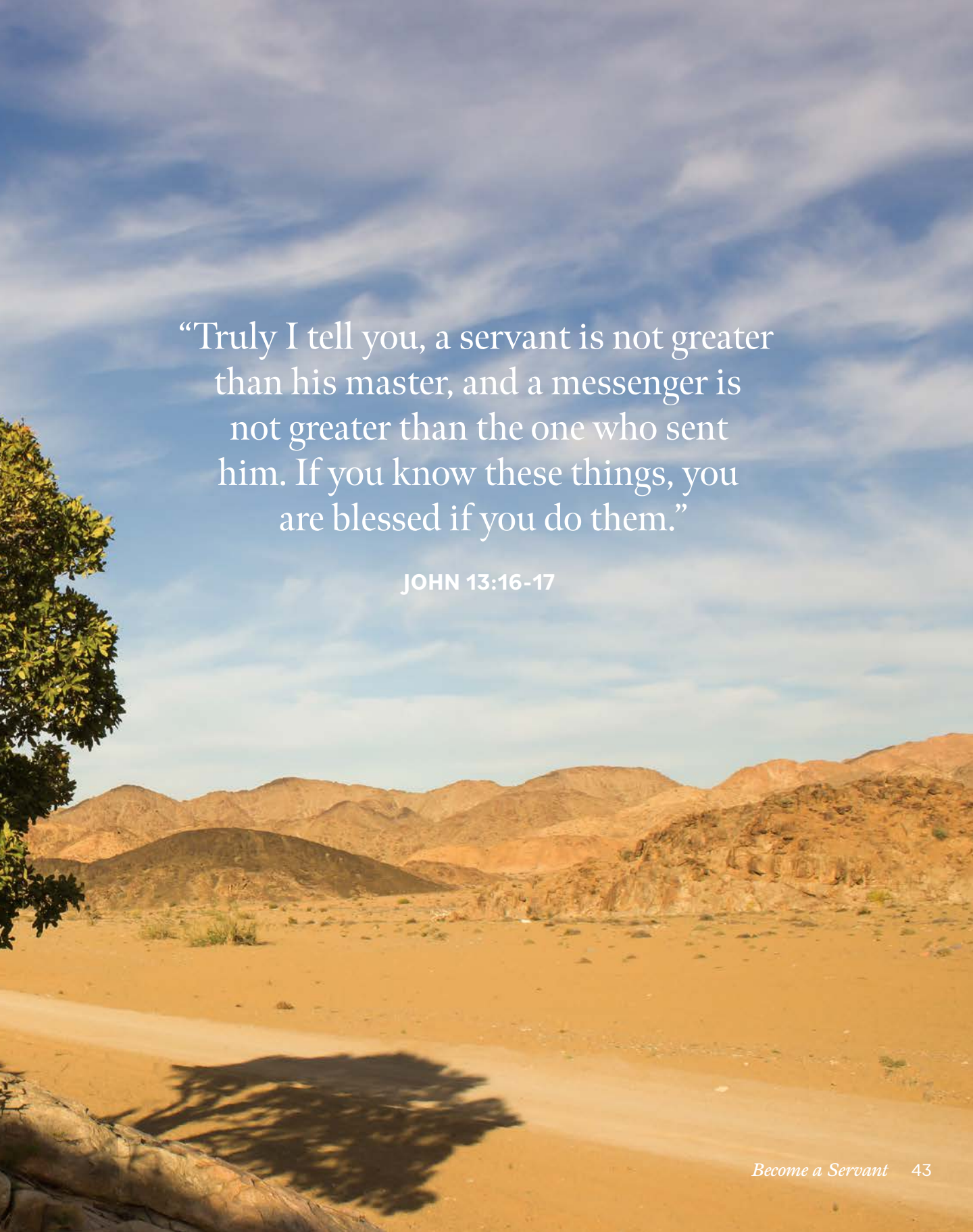
How is trusting Jesus transforming your heart and life?

DAY
6

PAUSE & LISTEN

Spend some time reflecting over the week's reading.



A desert landscape with mountains under a blue sky with clouds. The foreground is a sandy desert floor with sparse vegetation. The middle ground shows rolling hills and mountains in shades of brown and orange. The sky is a deep blue with wispy white clouds. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

“Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

JOHN 13:16-17

DAY
7

REFLECTION

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion on John 13.

What is one key truth you learned about God this week?

How has what you've learned about God led you to think differently about your sin and yourself?

How is the Holy Spirit guiding you to become more like Jesus through the reading of His Word?

What questions do you have that you need to investigate further?

Summarize your takeaways from this week in a paragraph. Who will you share this with over the next week?

PRAY

Thank Jesus for His sacrificial service. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you love others as Christ loves you and that His love through you would draw others to Him.

Step into God's beautiful story.



Jesus gives you better access to God
because He gives you a new heart.

REFLECTIONS

How does the new heart Jesus gives you change the way you relate to God?

In what situation are you struggling to experience the reality of the new heart you have received?

Even when God's law is written on our hearts and minds, we are still prone to sin. How can we continue to orient our hearts and lives toward God, even when our flesh is drawn away?

INSIGHTS

The Greek word *hagiozo* is used twenty-eight times in the New Testament, and is translated into different English words because it conveys several different shades of meaning. In Hebrews 10:14, *hagiozo* is translated as "sanctified," and indicates the dedication of a person in holy service to God.

Better Hope 115

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