AGAPE HOUSE OF WORSHIP - BIBLE STUDY
Study Series: That You May Believe: A Journey Through The Gospel of John

Part 22: Servant Leadership **Wednesday, July 1, 2026**
Text: John 13:1-20 **Teacher: Minister Tomilade Adebari**

Part 1: Jesus *Shows* His Disciples How to Lead
Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. John 13:1 (NLT)

We see a very profound statement being made here in the latter part of this verse.
Food for thought #1: What do we think Scripture means when it says that Jesus loved His disciples to the very end?

There is something so beautiful about that statement "to the very end"- it shows just how unfailing, far-reaching, and never-ending the love of Jesus is for us believers. Despite all that Jesus is about to endure, His focus was on ensuring that he demonstrates His love for His disciples, in other words, He puts Himself, His authority, His status to the side so that the disciples can come to a full understanding of the depth of love that Jesus has for them.

2It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. 4So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, 5and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. John 13:2-5 (NLT)

In the previous verse we read that Jesus loved all his disciples throughout His ministry. Yet, in the very next verse, we learn that Judas had already decided within himself and the devil that he would betray Jesus.

Food for thought #2: What does this reveal about how we are called to love and serve one another, considering that Jesus loved and served Judas even though He knew Judas would betray Him?

This is the ultimate demonstration of servant-leadership and humility in action. Jesus chose to love the one who betrayed him. He chose to wash the feet of the one whose heart was set against Him. This speaks a lot to the kind of heart posture that Jesus had, which we are to emulate.

Food for thought #3: After reading verses 3-5, what do Jesus' actions teach us about humility and true leadership?

It was so evident that Jesus was not concerned with His own position, or status, rather Jesus had a perfect understanding of who He was and is; He laid the glory of who He was aside and positioned Himself in the lowest position of the house and did what none of them would have done for one another. In this way, Jesus demonstrated that His love for the disciples (us believers) is true, actionable and complete.

Food for thought #4: How can we practically wash the feet of our brethren around us? In the church? In our families? In our workplaces? In our communities? Give examples of how we can be like Jesus in our daily lives in this same way.

Part 2: Peter's Response to Jesus' Demonstration

"When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."" John 13:6-11 NLT

Peter probably thought he was demonstrating true humility by protesting when Jesus sought to wash his feet. However, we see here that Jesus flips the culturally accepted understanding of servanthood, humility and leadership, revealing what these truly look like in the Kingdom of God.

<u>Food for thought #5:</u> What do you think was going through Peter's mind during this encounter and do you think his initial response to Jesus was the right one?

After Jesus' response, Peter responded with wholehearted surrender to God- asking Jesus to wash him from top to bottom. This ought to be our response to God daily, to submit ourselves to Jesus and allow Him to continually wash us so that we may remain in Him. As Christ does this for us daily, we are to demonstrate that same level of servant leadership to one another and to those not in the Body of Christ to bring them into the family of Jesus. Jesus does it for us, thus it is our responsibility to be like Jesus in this same way.

"After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them." John 13:12-17 NLT

<u>Food for thought #6:</u> Why do we think this is one of the final demonstrations or lessons that Jesus wanted to show to His disciples before His death on the cross?

Again, we see here Jesus completely challenging the norm of what is acceptable in human culture. Firstly, Jesus reminds them of His ultimate role as Teacher and Lord of their lives, and yet He did not think it beneath Him to serve them. He then gives them this profound charge to attend to the most demeaning aspects of our brethren's lives in the same way He did for us. Jesus is essentially telling us here that this is the kind of Kingdom citizens He is seeking: those who will honor the Lord by serving His people from a pure and humble heart posture.

""I am not saying these things to all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this fulfills the Scripture that says, 'The one who eats my food has turned against me.' I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I Am the Messiah. I tell you the truth, anyone who welcomes my messenger is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me."" John 13:18-20 NLT

<u>Food for thought #7:</u> What was Jesus directly and indirectly telling His disciples in these last 3 verses?

Jesus spent his last few hours showing His disciples that leadership in the Kingdom of God actually begins when you abase yourself and choose the path of servanthood rather than self-exaltation. God is looking for people with such a heart.

<u>Food for thought #8:</u> What will you begin to do differently in your Christian walk after tonight's study?