

CHURCH.

LESSON 30

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> LUKE 18:18 – 21:38
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 18:18 – 21:38).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE]</i> REVIEW SERIES G
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Review two by two the series G: "Christian marriage".

(1) Leave and cleave. Genesis 2:24. For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

(2) Love and lead. Ephesians 5:23,25. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

(3) Love and submit. Titus 2:4-5. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

(4) Resolve conflicts. Matthew 5:23-24. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

(5) Remain faithful. Proverbs 3:3-4. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) <i>[THE GOSPEL OF JOHN]</i> JOHN 13:1-38
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Introduce. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study to study John 13:1-38 together. John 12 to 18 describes the final seven weeks before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (about 15th April to 30th May, 30 A.D.) John chapters 19 to 21 describe his last forty days on earth. With John chapter 13 begins his teaching during the celebration of the Passover. Jesus gives a new commandment to love one another and illustrates this by washing the feet of his disciples.

Luke does not give the impression that he writes his gospel in chronological order. But John seems to write his gospel in chronological order (cf. John 13:2,21,30,31). The following events took place during the celebration of the Passover feast:

- The question about who of the disciples was the most important (Luke 22:24-27).
- The washing of the feet (John 13:1-17; cf. Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17-18a; Luke 22:14-16).
- The prediction about the betrayer and the vehement reaction of the disciples on that (John 13:18-30; Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18b-21; Luke 22:21-23).
- The new commandment (John 13:31-35).
- The prediction about the denial (John 13:36-38; Matthew 26:34-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:33-34).
- The institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20).
John omits this because the other three Gospels relate that.
- The farewell address and high priestly prayer (John chapter 14 to 17).

STEP 1. READ. GOD'S WORD
Read. LET US READ John 13:1-38 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.

STEP 2. DISCOVER. OBSERVATIONS
Consider. WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART?

Record. Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share).

Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered.

(Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)

Discovery 1. The relationship between Jesus and Judas.

(1) Judas was a pretender.

In John 6:66-71, many of the disciples of Jesus turned back and no longer followed him. But Judas, by remaining with Jesus, pretended to be a true disciple of Jesus. Already at that time Jesus said, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" "Devil" means "slanderer", "false accuser". Jesus said that this man was a servant or instrument of the devil. His devilish character appears especially from the fact that he falsely pretended to be a true disciple of Jesus. While many others had deserted Jesus Christ, because they felt that they could not agree with Jesus and the spiritual nature of his teaching, this man remained as if he fully agreed with Jesus. Jude was a hypocrite (he played a dangerous comedy). Jesus knew all the time what Judas would do in the future. This is a warning for people who hate the distinctive doctrines of the Christian Church, but prefer to remain in the Christian congregation to which they belong and drag it along with them to utter ruin. When John wrote his Gospel many years later, he added a note explaining that this individual was Judas Iscariot.

(2) Judas was greedy and a thief.

John 12:4-6 describes Judas as a greedy person and a thief. While Mary spent much money to buy expensive ointment to anoint Jesus, Judas criticised her action as a waste of money. He said, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages! (about 300 denarii)" John commented, "Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." The generosity of Mary and the selfishness of Judas were striking!

(3) Judas was a betrayer.

John 13:2 describes the manner in which Judas was going to deliver Jesus up. It says, "The devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus". Among the twelve disciples of Jesus, there was one man who was so indescribably low in character, that he was fully determined to betray Jesus Christ. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him (John 11:57). Judas was fully resolved to actually deliver Jesus up by treachery into the hands of Jesus' enemies. He had agreed with them to do it for thirty pieces of silver. Not one of the other disciples knew about this or even suspected this. It was the devil that had injected this vile plan into the mind of Judas (cf. Ephesians 6:16). After some time of following Jesus as his disciple, Judas discovered that being a disciple of Jesus would not be worthwhile. He was a greedy person and loved money more than Jesus. He was a calculating person, determined not to be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22), but instead to cultivate the favour of the Jewish authorities by showing them when and where they could arrest Jesus.

(4) Judas was chosen, but not blessed.

In John 13:17-18, Jesus said to his disciples that they would be blessed if they did the things he had taught them. Then he continued saying, "I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me'."

When Jesus had prayerfully chosen twelve disciples in Luke 6:12-13, he had made no mistake with Judas. Jesus literally said, "I know what kind of men I have chosen". He knew the ones he had chosen for himself to become his apostles, whom he would send into the world to be his witnesses. But he also knew the heart and mind of Judas. He had chosen Judas for a very special purpose. He had not chosen him for salvation. He knew all the time that Judas was a pretender and could not be trusted. He had chosen Judas in order that a prophecy in the Old Testament might be fulfilled.

This prophecy is written in Psalm 41:9. In it David refers to his counsellor, Ahitophel, or a person similar to him, who had conspired a plot against him. In 2 Samuel 15-17 we read how Ahitophel plotted together with Absalom to kill David. In Psalm 55:12-14, David said that it was not an enemy who insulted him and rose against him, but it was his friend and counsellor who betrayed him. "My companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God." David was this man's benefactor. This man had eaten his bread, and yet he suddenly kicked David, just like a horse that attacked its owner without warning and kicked him violently. Therefore David prayed and asked God to confuse the counsel of wicked people like Ahitophel and to confound their speech. In the light of Psalm 55:9-14, any action like that of Ahitophel merited strong disapproval and revulsion! This prophecy was certainly true of Judas. He had kept up appearances of friendship to the very end when he kissed Jesus! Not one of the disciples suspected Judas. Judas was a two-faced, double-crosser, who deserved to be despised. Jesus had chosen Judas to fulfil this prophecy of betrayal.

(5) Judas was fully responsible for his actions.

In John 13:19 Jesus says, "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he." Jesus said this for two reasons: He wanted to warn Judas and he wanted to fortify the faith of his other disciples. Jesus had warned Judas before and now again, that he would not be blessed if he carried out his secret evil

plan. Judas should have pondered the words of Jesus. Jesus said this to fix the responsibility for his act entirely on himself. But Jesus also said this to fortify the faith of his other disciples. He knew that the treachery of Judas would upset the disciples and undermine their faith. They might begin to doubt Jesus and God's plan through Jesus. When they would soon learn that Judas was a betrayer, they would also realise that Jesus had known it all along. They would know that what was happening was not a frustration but a fulfilment of God's plan. Jesus said this to them before his betrayal, trial and crucifixion, so that his disciples would continue to believe that he is whatever he claimed to be. Jesus Christ was the I AM!

(6) Judas became demon-possessed.

John 13:27 says, "Satan entered into Judas". The devil had put an evil suggestion into Judas' mind and heart to betray Jesus for money. Judas did not resist the devil, but acted upon his suggestion. Then the devil put himself into Judas' heart. This usually happens with unbelievers who do not resist the devil. The devil took full possession of the betrayer's soul. Now Judas had become a completely hardened individual. He had hardened himself against the warnings of Jesus. Now warnings will no more be issued. Jesus was through with Judas. Towards the end of the Passover meal, Jesus said to Judas, "What you are about to do, do quickly". In spite of the fact that John and Peter had just been shocked by the news that Judas would be a betrayer, they did not understand what Judas was actually going to do. Judas was such a good pretender, that none of disciples ever suspected him. Judas however, knew that his plot had been discovered and he quickly left to carry it out! (John 13:27-30).

Discovery 2. The relationship between Jesus and Peter.

In John 13:33, Jesus had said, "I will be with you only a little longer... Where I am going, you cannot come". Peter was disturbed by these words and asked, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus explained that he was going to a place where Peter could not come now, but would later come too. Jesus was referring to heaven, but Peter did not understand him. According to God's plan, the exact moment of Peter's death had not yet arrived.

Peter said that even if all the other disciples "fall away" from following Jesus, he would not fall away (Mark 14:29)! He said, "I will never disown you" (Mark 14:31), "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). Peter did not know himself! He was impatient and wanted to follow Jesus in his suffering now! Jesus told Peter that, in spite of his boasting, he would do the very things, which he had boasted he would never do! Because Peter was so sure of himself, he failed to hear what Jesus was saying to him. Peter thought that he would lay down his life for Jesus, but the truth was that Jesus would lay down his life for Peter!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in John 13:1-38 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

13:1-2

Question 1. When did the Jews celebrate the Passover meal?

Notes. Some Christians ask the question: "Was the last Passover meal eaten on Thursday evening (15th Nisan) before Jesus was crucified (on Friday 15th Nisan) as the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12,14; Luke 22:11,14,15) teach or was the last Passover meal eaten on Friday evening (16th Nisan) after Jesus was crucified as the Gospel of John (John 18:28) seems to imply? There seems to be a contradiction between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. Both cannot be right.

Other Christians, including this explanation of the Gospel of John, say that the four Gospels do NOT contradict each other and that therefore all four Gospels teach that the Passover meal was celebrated by all Jews, including Jesus and his disciples, at the regular time on Thursday evening the 15th Nisan and that there is a good explanation for "eating the Passover" in John 18:28.

The Old Testament ceremonial law teaches the following about the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-6).

- Various *preparations* had to be made for the Passover meal on Thursday during the day time (14th Nisan).
- The actual Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated from 15th to 21st Nisan.
- A new day begins at sunset. The actual Passover *meal* was always eaten on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is, at the regular time on Thursday evening the 15th Nisan (Exodus 12:8; Ezra 6:21-22).

The Jews who had condemned Jesus Christ before Annas, Caiaphas and The Sanhedrin during the night between Thursday and Friday, brought Jesus to trial before Pilate very early on Friday morning. They were so busy condemning

Jesus Christ in the night between Thursday and Friday that they had had no time to eat the Passover on Thursday evening. They did not enter the courthouse of Pilate because they wanted to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, which would enable them to eat the Passover on Friday evening (John 18:8). While all other Jews and Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover at the usual time, Thursday evening the 15th Nisan, these Jews waited until Judas had betrayed Jesus and Jesus had been arrested and then they were occupied the whole night to try Jesus before Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

And on Friday early in the morning they dragged Jesus to be tried before Pilate, Herod and finally Pilate again. These Jews refused to enter the Praetorium (the courthouse of the Romans) because they “pretended to keep themselves ceremonially clean” before eating the Passover (one day late) on Friday evening! They regarded their ceremonial uncleanness (Luke 11:39,44; cf. Acts 10:28; 11:3) as something far worse than moral uncleanness (for example, by killing an innocent man, Exodus 20:13)! Their only purpose was to get rid of Jesus Christ (John 11:50,57). Only after they had succeeded in getting Jesus crucified, they ate their Passover (and Passover lamb). These Jews had no idea that the Passover lamb they were eating referred to Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7)!

13:4-17

Question 2. What is the meaning of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples?

Notes.

(1) The washing of the feet was going to be a lesson in servanthood.

Jesus and his disciples had walked from Bethany and their feet were dirty from the dust. Under such circumstances, it was the general practice in Israel that the lowest servant in a household had to do the dirtiest jobs, including washing the dirty feet of the guests before the meal started. Years ago, John the Baptist had regarded himself as unworthy to kneel before Jesus, untie his sandals and wash his feet. But now in the Upper Room there was no servant who was willing to wash the other’s feet! When the disciples came into the room, they must have seen the washbasin and towel, but nobody was willing to be the lowest servant! All the disciples were too proud. In Luke 22, Luke tells how the disciples had argued on the way about who was the greatest among them. This probably continued when they had to decide the order in which they would recline around the table. Thus, all twelve disciples and Jesus reclined around the U-shaped table on couches with their dirty feet sticking out at the end. Although Jesus was fully conscious that he was God’s only begotten Son and that he was the Lord of the whole creation, he still got up, took off all his clothes except the loincloth, which a slave wore, and started to wash the feet of his disciples.

(2) The bathing of the body symbolised justification.

The bathing of the body took place by pouring water with a cup over oneself. Bathing the whole body symbolised Christ’s entire work of salvation during his state of humiliation, which brought complete justification (forgiveness of all sins). Christ’s state of humiliation included his incarnation (becoming a human being like one of us, except for sin); his humble service (Mark 10:45); his rejection by men, his suffering and finally his death on the cross (Philippians 2:8).

The Bible does not say in what order Jesus washed their feet. It only tells what happened when he came to Peter. All the disciples must have felt ashamed and embarrassed that Jesus was washing their feet, but Peter, as impetuous and impulsive as always, reacted in shock. Jesus said to him that what he was doing would only be understood later (John 13:7), that is, after his death, resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. *Only then would the meaning of the washing of the feet become clear to his disciples.*

At first, Peter refused to be washed. Then Jesus answered, “Unless I wash (Greek: niptó) you, you have no part with me” (John 13:8). Jesus meant, that unless he cleansed Peter from his sins by means of his entire work of salvation during his state of humiliation, of which the washing of the feet was only a part, Peter would never share with Jesus in the results of his salvation work. Jesus continued to say, “A person who has had a bath (Greek: louó) needs only to wash (Greek: niptó) his feet; his whole body is clean” (John 13:10). The bathing of the whole body symbolised Christ’s entire work of salvation, called regeneration or justification. The blood of Christ would wash away all sins of the believer (1 John 1:7; cf. Acts 22:16) and thus justify him completely (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18a).

(3) The washing of the feet symbolised sanctification.

The bathing of the body symbolised Christ’s entire work of salvation during his state of humiliation, called justification. The washing of the feet is a symbol of Christ’s continuing work of salvation after a person has been born again or justified. This is called sanctification. After Peter heard the importance of having his feet washed by Jesus, the impulsive Peter jumped to the opposite extreme and wanted Jesus to wash his head and hands as well! Peter thought that the greater the area washed, the more numerous would be the blessings received.

However Jesus did not speak of physical washing, but of spiritual washing!

- In John 3, Jesus spoke about *spiritual rebirth*
- in John 4 about *spiritual water*
- in John 6 about *spiritual bread*.
- Now in John 13, he spoke about *spiritual cleansing*.

Therefore Jesus continued saying, “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.” In Israel, a person who had taken a bath before leaving for a supper

did not need to take another bath upon his arrival at the banqueting-hall. The washing of the feet was all that was necessary.

Jesus was speaking of a spiritual bath (regeneration or justification) and of spiritual washing of the feet (purification of sins or sanctification). All the disciples, except Judas, believed in Jesus and his Word and therefore *they were already spiritually clean* (born again)(John 13:10; cf. John 15:3). *They already shared in the salvation*, which Christ merited for them. Now the disciples only needed “their feet to be washed”. After they have been born-again and justified, only the sins they have committed thereafter need to be forgiven (cf. 1 John 1:9). In this way they are sanctified more and more.

(4) Conclusion. The washing of the feet teaches three important truths.

- The washing of the feet is an essential part of Christ’s state of humiliation and suffering, namely his work as a Servant (Slave) during his life on earth and his crucifixion which marked him as a criminal (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:37; cf. Philippians 2:5-8).
- The washing of the feet is a symbol of the once-for-all time atonement and the ongoing sanctification. It symbolises that the life and death of Jesus once-for-all atones for the guilt of his people and merits for them the ongoing work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit (Mark 10:45; Hebrews 10:10,14).
- The washing of the feet is a lesson in humble servanthood. It was an example that all Christians should follow. The disciples began to understand the third meaning at this time. But they only understood the first two meanings later after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not institute a new sacrament, ritual or command to literally wash one another’s feet. He clearly calls this an ‘example’ of humble service that he had shown under their very eyes. Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured by humble service - not by position, power and fame, but the willingness to do what others do not want to do or cannot do! Humble service is an illustration of the great commandment “to love one another, just as Christ loved us”. I have determined to be a servant. I want to be the first to do the so-called dirty jobs, which no one else likes to do. I want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus!

13:34-35

Question 3. Why is this commandment called a “new” commandment?

Notes. The commandment, to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength and the neighbour as oneself, already existed in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). However this commandment says, “As I have loved you, you must keep on loving one another”. While the original content of the commandment has not changed, the standard of loving has been set. This commandment is new because Jesus requires his disciples to love one another *as he loved them!* His example of constant, self-sacrificial love must be the pattern for their attitude and relation toward one another.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from John 13:1-38.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from John 13:1-38.

13:4-17. Make a commitment to be willing to serve in tasks in which no one else is willing or able to serve.

13:4-17. Make a commitment to be the first to serve where service is required.

13:34-35. Make the new commandment to love God and other Christians as Christ loves you the goal of your life.

2. Examples of personal applications from John 13:1-38.

Like Peter, I sometimes make great plans and big boasts, but in reality I do not know myself! I want to remember that what is important is not what *I* will do for Jesus, but what *he* has done for me! He died for me! This should keep me humble and make me realise my utter helplessness without Jesus!

I am deeply impressed by the fact that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, his unfair trials before his enemies and his innocent punishment on the cross did not frustrate, but actually fulfilled God’s eternal plan! God is in control of all events and nothing can stop him from carrying out his eternal plan in this world! Therefore, whatever difficult things happen to me is never a frustration of God’s plan. Whatever happens to me is a part of God’s good plan for my life!

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in John 13:1-38.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[INTERCESSION]</i> PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the Bible study of John 13 together with another person or group of people.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Luke 22 - 24 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (11) John 11:25. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.