

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Two teachers will do Bible study together from John chapter 13. We will use “the five steps” method of Bible study. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. You may join our Bible study every week by preparing for the next Bible study. You may also gather a few people around you and use this method of studying the Bible together. Doing Bible study together with a few other Christians is one of the best ways to grow to maturity as a Christian.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read John 13:1-38 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read John chapter 13 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in John chapter 13. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) Important truths for us are about the relationship between Jesus and Judas. We will share in turn.

First. 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. 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 to which they belong, but prefer to remain in it 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.

(T) Second. 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!” 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!

(S) Third. 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 (Jn 11:57). Judas was fully resolved to actually deliver Jesus up by treachery into the hands of his enemies. He had agreed with the Jewish religious teachers 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 who had injected this vile plan into the mind of Judas. 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 (Jn 9:22), but instead to cultivate the favour of the Jewish authorities by showing them when and where they could arrest Jesus.

(T) Fourth. 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. In 2 Samuel 15-17 we read how Ahitophel conspired a plot together with Absalom to kill David. In Psalm 55:9-14, 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 as a horse violently kicks its owner without warning. That is why David prayed that God would 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 betrayed Jesus with a kiss! 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.

(S) Fifth. 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 this act entirely on Judas*. 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 of God's plan, 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!

(T) Sixth. Judas became demon-possessed.

John 13:27 says, "Satan entered into Judas". The devil had put an evil suggestion into the mind and heart of Judas to betray Jesus for money. Judas did not resist the devil, but acted upon his suggestion. Then the devil put himself into the heart of Judas. This is his usual method of procedure with people who do not resist him. 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 had finished 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! (Jn 13:27-30).

(S) Another important truth for me is 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. According to Mark 14:29, Peter said that even if all the other disciples fell away from following Jesus, he would not fall away! In Mark 14:31 he said, "I will never disown you"! In John 13:37, he said, "I will lay down my life for you"! *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 that 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 could and would lay down his life for Jesus, but the truth was that Jesus would lay down his life for Peter!

(T) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in John chapter 13 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (13:1-2) Was this the Passover meal and when was it served?

(S) Some Christians are confused about when the Passover meal was eaten. According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover on *Thursday* evening, when most of the Jews including the Pharisees also ate it. This was the *evening before* his crucifixion on Friday. But according to John 18:28, the Jews wanted to eat the Passover on *Friday* evening *after* the crucifixion of Jesus.

There is no contradiction between John and the other Gospels, because *the Passover meal was eaten on two days*: According to the Old Testament law, the Passover meal had to be eaten on the fifteenth of the month Nisan, which was about April. But if this day coincided with the Sabbath, the Pharisees and most Jews would celebrate it a day earlier,

because they were afraid to desecrate the Sabbath day. However, the Sadducees, to which most of the priests belonged, were not so scrupulous and celebrated it always on the fifteenth, even if it was on a Sabbath. Thus, Matthew, Mark and Luke refer to the practice of the Pharisees, just as John 13 does, while John 18 refers to the practice of the Sadducees! Moreover, the name 'Passover Feast' in John 13:29 always applies to the entire seven-day feast (2:23; 4:45; 12:12).

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

(T) 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 washed the feet of the guests before the meal started. Years ago, John the Baptist had regarded himself as unworthy to kneel before Jesus, unstrap his sandals and wash his feet. But now in the Upper Room there was no servant! 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 of Jesus 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 that a slave wore and started to wash the feet of his disciples.

The Bible does not say in what order he 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, meaning, after his death, resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. *Then only would the meaning of the feet washing become clear to the disciples. The feet washing expressed Christ's entire work of humiliation.* Christ's work of humiliation included his incarnation, becoming a human being like us, except for sin; his humble service; his rejection by men, his suffering and finally his death on the cross.

3rd Question. What is the difference between taking a bath and only washing the feet?

(S) At first, Peter refused to be washed. Then Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." Jesus meant, that unless he cleansed Peter from his sins by means of his entire work of humiliation, of which the feet-washing was only a part, Peter would never share with Jesus in the results of his salvation work.

Then 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. But Jesus did not speak of *physical washing*, but of *spiritual washing*!

In John chapter 3, Jesus spoke about *spiritual rebirth*, in chapter 4 about *spiritual water*, in chapter 6 about *spiritual bread*. Now in chapter 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 and of a spiritual feet-washing. All the disciples, except Judas, believed in Jesus and his Word and therefore they had already received the spiritual bath. *They already shared in the spiritual rebirth or salvation, which Christ merited for them.* Now they only needed a spiritual feet washing. *They only needed to be sanctified more and more.*

4th Question. What lessons can we learn from the feet-washing?

(T) My conclusion is that the feet-washing of Jesus teaches three important truths:

One. The feet-washing is an essential part of Christ's humiliation and suffering.

He came to this earth as a Servant and died as a transgressor in our place, as 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 2:5-8 teach.

Two. The feet-washing is a symbol of once-for-all 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, as Mark 10:45 and Hebrews 10:10,14 teach.

Three. The feet-washing is a lesson in humility and an example which 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 the humility he had shown under their very eyes. *Greatness in the*

kingdom of God is measured by humble service, not by position, power and fame! Moreover, 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 have chosen to do what others are unwilling or unable to do. I want to be willing as well as the first to do the so-called dirty jobs, which no-one likes to do. I want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus!

5th Question. (13:34-35). Why is this commandment called a new commandment?

(S) The commandment to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength and the neighbour as oneself already existed in the Old Testament (Dt 6:5; Lev 19:18). But this commandment says, “As I have loved you, you must keep on loving one another”. 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.

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in John chapter 13.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Make a commitment to do Bible study every week. Prepare next week’s Bible study. Use “the five steps” method to prepare John chapter 14.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.