

GRAB A TOWEL

Series: Follow

Good morning and welcome to Fellowship!

At FCC we want you to feel welcome, we want you to feel accepted, and we want you to feel loved. See, we're not about building perfect people, we're all about building a family of imperfect people doing life together. And we believe in one principle, we're stronger together! We're better together! And we want you here!

We're in our 6th week of a series, learning how to be a disciple of Jesus. When you hear the word disciple, you think of the 12 men who followed Jesus around for 3 years, but there were more than the 12. Along with the 12 men, there were lots of other men, and lots of other women who simply wanted to spend time with Jesus, to learn from him, and be more like him!

So, let's do this – together!

< Prayer >

Last night me and Lori went to Six Mile and ate Mexican food at Taco Riendo, sat outside and just enjoyed an amazing evening. Then she made me stop in Pickens for ice cream... the things we do for love...

We're not known for eating early. So, we got to the ice cream place just as they were about to close. We didn't mean to be *those people*... but they were gracious and even if they were closing, at that point Lori would have jumped behind the counter and got her some ice cream.

In almost 31 years, I've learned not to get between a girl and her ice cream! She used to look at me that way...

What if you were closing a restaurant and right about closing time, you walk out, exhausted, ready to leave after a difficult shift, and the place is a wreck. Chairs pushed around, dirty dishes everywhere, drinks spilled under tables, napkins on the floor, trash cans overflowing.

And while you're standing there shaking your head, just wanting to go home, and this one person walks up, without saying anything, and he sees the mess. He doesn't call anyone. He doesn't complain. He doesn't ask who did this, or who's job is it to clean this.

He grabs a trash bag and starts picking up the garbage. Then he grabs a towel and wipes down tables.

A new waitress saw this and assuming he's part of the cleaning crew, says, "When you finish over there, somebody missed the toilet and it's all over the men's restroom." The guy says ok, and he cleans it.

A few minutes later the manager walked out of the kitchen, sees what's happening and in a panic he confronts the new employee. "Do you have any idea who you just asked to clean the bathroom?" Of course she didn't. He said, "It's the owner!"

Crazy thing – picking up the trash isn't remarkable.
Cleaning a restroom isn't mind blowing.
Until you discover who is doing it!

And that's what makes John 13 so powerful.

The world says, if you're important enough, somebody else will pick up the towel. But Jesus teaches us, if you're following me, you'll be the one who picks it up!

Today's message is called *Grab a Towel*.

Teach us Jesus...

John 13:1-17 (NLT)

¹ 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. ² It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. ⁶ When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will." ⁸ "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." ⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" ¹⁰ 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." ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?" ¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

I've always held the leadership premise that I'd never ask someone to do something I wouldn't do myself. Problem is, we get so busy or at least we think we are, we allow people to do the things we should be doing. It's easy to justify because we were busy, buried under Satan's yoke!

Following Jesus means learning to live like Jesus and He shows us that greatness begins with humility and serving others. Everything Jesus does is always about others! Could the same be said about you? (Ouch!)

And that's why we're learning about being a disciple. Because we're still learning. He's still teaching. And we need the practice so hopefully one day it will click and we'll get it right, the first time, without His help! That's when we pour into others and help it click for them, so they can be a disciple of Jesus. Disciples making disciples, that's His plan!

When Jesus called the very first 12, that soon became 24, then 36, then, 48... he gave them a very simple invitation.

Follow me! He didn't say, figure it out, then come with me. He didn't say, learn the Bible first. He didn't say, fix your life first. He just said, follow me! What a great picture of Jesus showing and sewing. He told them, come with me and we'll do life together. I'll pour into you and you will learn from me. Until it clicks!

Here's what you need to know. That's not when discipleship ends. That's when discipleship begins. It's the first steps of faithfully following Jesus.

I've seen it over and over throughout my ministry. People commit to Jesus, they commit to the church, and they are connected, plugged in, and all in. Then one day they're missing. You don't see them anymore. There's an empty seat where they once sat.

Truth is, it didn't click. They were the employee in the story but they never grabbed a towel. They never got it. Following Jesus isn't about just attending church and going through the motions, it's about connecting with the church family, and doing life together. Iron sharpening iron!

Look at this passage in John 13. Jesus is about to go to the cross. His earthly ministry is almost finished. He knows his time physically with the disciples is short. And in these final hours, Jesus gives his disciples one of the greatest lessons and instead of preaching it, he lives it!

Followers **WATCH JESUS**

Doesn't mean butts in a pew. It means up close and personal, watching Jesus! It's not used in this passage, but the Greek word is *paratereo* (παρατηρέω) and it means to watch closely, observe intently, literally to spy!

If I dig deeper, it means to inspect alongside, insidiously, scrupulously. Almost like the enemies of Jesus, the religious leaders, they stood in shadows with binoculars being nosy Nancy's. But that's still not close enough. It's closer than the nosy neighbor. It's the one spending time with a best friend, a spouse... I picture a new doctor, a surgical resident, literally looking over the shoulder of the attending surgeon, hands on learning. That's *paratereo*! That's discipleship!

You can't learn from Jesus if you don't spend time with him, if you don't watch him. Now, we're at a disadvantage because we weren't there physically with him. Recently I told you, the stats are against us. The initial 12 who spent 3 years with Jesus, 1 completely missed the boat and didn't get it. The others 3 years in, still fell on their face, over and over again!

It's hard, but it's worth it! We have to watch Jesus up close and personal. Spend time with him every day, and hopefully throughout your day.

By watching Jesus, you know what catches me by surprise? Jesus knows what's coming. The cross is coming. Betrayal is coming. Arrest is coming. Pain is coming. Death is coming. It was time for Jesus to say – I've poured into you for 3 years, it's time for you to take care of me. But he didn't!

He's still serving his disciples. That's the love of a Savior!

John 1:1 says, "...He loved them to the very end."

Discipleship isn't just talking about love, it's showing love! Religion is about following the rules and that was never Jesus' intent. Discipleship, on the other hand, is asking: How can my life look like his?

Watch how Jesus treats people. Watch how Jesus responds to sinners. Watch how Jesus handles criticism. Watch how Jesus forgives. Watch how Jesus prays. Watch how Jesus loves. Watch how Jesus serves. Discipleship requires us to watch Jesus!

Jesus was having the last supper with his disciples. Even in the last moments before his death, he was serving them. 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.

Followers **USE THE TOWEL**

Jesus didn't just sit back, relax, and enjoy being served, he became the owner cleaning up his restaurant.

Jesus got up without a second thought and served! Don't miss the contrast here. John tells us in passages like 17:2 that Jesus has authority over all people. Matthew 28:18 says Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, over everything!

King of kings and Lord of lords, authority over everything, and what does he do with that authority... He grabs a towel! He gets a water basin. He kneels. The highest person in the room takes the lowest position in the room.

That would seem crazy for us today. But in the first century, everyone wore sandals, the roads were dirt, and feet were dirty, even after a short walk. Washing feet is as dirty as it sounds, it's not a job anyone really wants to do. Washing feet was the job of a lowly servant. Apparently, no one volunteered, so Jesus did.

Our world teaches us to win the game, climb higher, get noticed, build your reputation, make sure people recognize you, get the title, get the position, get the credit. Jesus says, grab a towel!

You see the contrast? The world teaches us that greatness is about how many people serve you. Jesus teaches greatness is about how many people you serve!

That's where most of the teachings on this stops, but it doesn't end there. Most folks just say serve like Jesus, wash feet, and that's important. But there's more and I don't want you to miss it.

Followers **LET JESUS SERVE THEM**

Some people think it had to be humiliating for the disciples, letting Jesus wash their feet. If pride filled their heart, then yeah, it was pretty bad for them. If it clicked, they realized the amazing privilege of allowing the master to teach them firsthand how to serve others!

In [John 13:6](#) Peter asked Jesus, are you going to wash my feet? If I were there, I'd say *really Peter... you that dumb?* Jesus is washing everyone else's feet, but no, he's going to skip you dude. What's really happening is Peter's head was standing in the way of his heart.

He's really saying, "No way you're washing my feet!"

Then Jesus says in v7:

"You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

The undertone here is Jesus telling him, Peter, you just don't understand. Peter, you don't understand me serving you. Peter, you won't understand my arrest. Peter, you won't understand the cross. Peter, you won't understand why I won't fight back. Peter, you won't understand the tomb. But someday you will!

Faith is trusting Jesus even when you don't understand, because someday you will! Jesus says, follow me!

Followers **LEARN BEFORE THEY LEAD**

Peter eventually did great things serving Jesus. He led the awakening at Pentecost where thousands were saved. He helped to build the early church. But before Peter would preach at Pentecost, he had to watch Jesus wash feet.

Before John became a leader in the early church, he had to watch Jesus wash feet. Before these disciples would carry the Gospel around the world, they had to learn to grab a towel and put it to use. That's discipleship. But watching Jesus isn't enough...

Followers **DO WHAT JESUS DOES**

John 13:13-17 (NLT)

¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Notice the word Jesus used in v15...

I have given you an example to **FOLLOW!**

That's the process: **WATCH → LEARN → DO**

That's the journey!

And it's not really about feet. It's about life. Lifestyle!

Jesus is saying, look for opportunities to serve, don't wait to be asked. Step up and do it not for what you get out of it, but because it's the right thing to do. Do it because it's what Jesus would do!

If something needs doing – grab the towel!

If somebody needs encouragement – grab the towel!

If somebody needs help – grab the towel!

If somebody is hurting – grab the towel!

If somebody needs forgiveness – grab the towel!

If there's a job others think are beneath them – grab the towel!

Because that's what Jesus did!

If this is new for you, it's okay, few of us really grab the towel like we should. It just means we have a lot of work to do.

Stay close to Jesus.

Read his words.

Watch his life.

Learn his heart.

Follow his example.

You don't have to look hard and you see Jesus doing things you haven't done, or maybe wouldn't do.

When you see Jesus forgiving, learn to forgive.

When Jesus loves difficult people, learn to love difficult people.

When Jesus prays, learn to pray.

When Jesus shows compassion, learn to show compassion.

When Jesus serves, learn to serve.

We watch, we see, we observe.

It's how we learn.

Then we do it!

That's discipleship.

If it were easy, everybody would do it. But they don't.

Most of us don't. But we should! Even if it's hard!

Because it's what Jesus would do.

Just listen to him as he says... follow me! Then do it!

This week, look for opportunities to grab a towel!

Then don't just grab it, use it! Be more like Jesus!