

## Why Service? #1: Loving Jesus by Acts of Service

Goal: To serve one another not out of a place of obligation, but out of a place of gratefulness for the ways our Lord has served us.

Opening questions (Choose one):

- ❖ Has a loved one ever made significant sacrifices to help you when you were in need?
- ❖ Remember a time another person made you feel loved or appreciated. What did they do?
- ❖ Share about a close friend, somebody you love. How do like to show them you care?

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### Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

<sup>36</sup> When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. <sup>38</sup> As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

<sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

<sup>41</sup> "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

<sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

<sup>44</sup> Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

<sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

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[Re-read Luke 7:44-47]

1. What does the woman do?
2. The washing of another's feet is not common in Western culture in the modern day. What stands out to you about this gesture?
  - a. Do the things you've noted help shed any light on her actions' potential cultural significance or meaning?
3. What emotions or motivations does Jesus attribute the woman's actions to?

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Pray:

[Re-read Luke 7:42-43 individually]

Take some time to silently confess to the Lord. What debts come to mind when reading this passage?

### Activity:

Jesus says the same words to us believers today as He did to the woman in vs.48. Take some time to look at one another now and say:

*"You are forgiven."*

1. If you are comfortable, share: How does it feel hearing this said to you?
  - a. Is the feeling Good? Bad? Complicated?
  - b. Why?
2. How do you wish to respond to Jesus?

### Pray:

Take time to thank Jesus for debts He has forgiven you for.

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### **John 13:1-17 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup>It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

<sup>2</sup>The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

<sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

<sup>8</sup>"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

<sup>9</sup>"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.

<sup>12</sup>When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup>"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

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1. What does Jesus do?
2. Does anything stand out to you about Jesus's actions or the way Peter reacted to them?
  - a. Do the things you've noted help shed any new light on the potential social significance or meaning?
3. What emotion/motivation does Jesus attribute His actions to?
4. How does Jesus ask His disciples to respond?
  - a. What does it mean when Jesus says the disciples "should wash one another's feet"?
    - i. Is it symbolic? If so, of what?
    - ii. By "one another" who do you think He is referring to?

### Application:

1. By washing the feet of another, Jesus and the woman both chose to show their love in a very humbling manner. When was the last time you acted similarly?
  - a. If you can't recall a time you've done this, share a time you witnessed somebody else serving humbly.
  - b. If still, no examples come to mind, ask yourself why this is. What value do those around you place on humility, service, and sacrifice?
2. What are some ways you can love and serve as Jesus and the woman did?

## Why Service? #2: A way to honor the image of God in others

Goal: To see humans as being made in God's image and begin to respect and serve them in ways that honor that image.

### Opening Question:

- ❖ Think about what it's like to have a personal encounter with God. How do you imagine you'd respond? How would you feel, speak and act?
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### **Genesis 1:27 (NIV)**

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

1. Discuss the phrase "image of God". What ideas or images come to mind when you hear this phrase? Where did those images come from?
2. Take some time to look at Genesis 1:27 and its surrounding context. Does the story offer any clues with which to better understand the phrase "image of God"?
3. How does this idea change the way you view:
  - a. Yourself
  - b. God
  - c. Other People
4. Does the above view change the way you feel called to act towards others? How so?

### Prayer activity:

Take some time to thank God for the human beings in your life, made in His image.

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### **Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)**

<sup>31</sup> "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

<sup>37</sup> "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

<sup>40</sup> "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

<sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

<sup>44</sup> "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

<sup>45</sup> "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

<sup>46</sup> "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

1. Using the text, list some examples that Jesus gives of "the least of these".

2. What does Jesus' response to both the "goats" and "sheep" say about God's heart for the "least of these"?
  3. Who in your modern context is the "hungry", "thirsty", or "stranger"? Who might you encounter today who is sick, in need, or imprisoned?
  4. Do you interact much with the above groups of people? In what ways?
  5. This passage tells us that the service we do for others is what we do for him. How could this change our perspective on service?  
[Take 5 minutes to meditate or journal on this question, then share as a group]
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#### Optional Prayer Activity:

Pray aloud through the following Psalm, but when you come to words like "*I, me, and my*" try to replace them with the words "*him/her, he/she, they/them*". As you do this try to picture the "least of these" discussed in the verse above.

#### **Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV)**

<sup>13</sup>For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

<sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

## Why Service? #3: Not a Stranger, but a Neighbor

Goal: To see the people around us as our neighbors and not strangers, as a reason to serve and care about them.

Opening questions (Choose one):

- ❖ Have you ever been helped by a stranger? What about somebody you didn't get along with?
  - ❖ What is your worst travel experience?
  - ❖ What was the most positive interaction you had with a neighbor?
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### Luke 10: 25-37(NIV)

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

1. What details stand out to you from this story? Why?
  2. Jesus told this story as a response to the question "Who is my neighbor?". Does the story answer that question? How?
  3. Based on what you read, who would you consider YOUR neighbor?
  4. Imagine yourself in the place of the Samaritan.
    - a. What does it cost him to care for this man?
    - b. Does the passage say anything that speaks to the Samaritan's motivation?
    - c. What would it take to motivate you to act as he did? Why?
  5. How do you think the expert in the law may have felt? What about those witnessing the conversation firsthand?
  6. What would it mean for you to "Go and do likewise."
    - a. What challenges might you come across when seeking to live like that?
    - b. Why is it still important to do so, despite the challenges?
    - c. How could you support one another and keep one another accountable in this?
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## Micah 6:8(NIV)

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

1. In Luke 10:37 the expert in the law describes the Samaritan as “The one who had mercy on him.”. In the verse above, Micah claims that to “love mercy” is something that God requires of his people.
  - a. What does mercy mean to you?
  - b. How were the actions of the Good Samaritan an example of mercy?
  - c. How could the world look like if all Christ's followers were marked by this kind of mercy?

### Optional Prayer activities:

1. Take 10 minutes to journal and ask the Lord for specific ways you can grow in kindness to your neighbors or ways you can demonstrate mercy to others. Have one of the facilitators bring people back and briefly pray to close.
2. Say together the following prayer of confession, from the Book of Common Prayer:

“Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen”