January 25/26, 2025

Community // Modeled After the Master

Re-Think Stewardship Series

John 13:1-17, 34-35

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Re-think…thinking about the way you think. That phrase is a very literal translation of the Greek word *metanoia*, which most often in our Bibles, is translated *repent*…repent! It's important for us to understand that repentance and our thinking are intimately linked. Often, repentance begins with having a new thought, thinking a new thought. What happens, so often, is we are going through life thinking, most likely, like the world, and then God's thoughts come in. It's a new thought, and we align our life; we change our way of life; we repent, and align with what God has said and the truth that He has made clear…thinking about our thinking.

So, for a number of weeks, we've been doing that. We've been looking at different topics that are important in the Christian life: talking about our time, and then for two weeks we talked about stewardship, about finances. We wanted to do this one last weekend here before we start our winter series next week. We thought it'd be important to talk together about the idea of community. I think we can agree that community is something that is universally desired. Everyone wants to have community, to experience community, but I think we can also agree that the actual experience of it is incredibly rare. So many people long for it, and yet so many people live in isolation. They live alone, and often that is because a community requires something of us, requires that we give something of ourselves. As Christians, we can agree that we are called to community, and Christian community is absolutely unique in the world. There's no other community like it, because it is the only community in the world that is centered, focused on one person, on Jesus Christ, our Lord, our teacher, our model. So it raises a question. If Jesus had absolute say, if He could come to us this morning and say, "Here is what I want this community that has My name to look like, what shape would that community take?" What would a community modeled after the Master, modeled after Jesus, look like?

That's what we want to consider together this morning. So open your Bibles to John, Chapter 13. This is a point in John where there is a transition. It takes place in the Upper Room, and so this chapter and the chapters that follow are often called the Upper Room Discourse. Jesus is on the eve of His death, on the eve of the crucifixion. And in these chapters, He is sharing intimate fellowship with His disciples, teaching them all, loving them, explaining to them what is about to happen, and teaching them through His words and through His deeds, how they should operate together. So let's begin in verse 1:

> **Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.** (*NASB, Matt. 25:1)

So here at the outset, in this one short verse, we learn a number of things that are important. The first that we need to take note of is the timing of this scene that we're about to read. This took

place, John says, right **before the Feast of the Passover.** The Passover feast, of course, was the most celebrated, the largest, the most important feast in the Jewish religious calendar. It was the feast that commemorated, that remembered, that acknowledged that God had taken Israel out of slavery, out of Egypt, and taken them into the Promised Land, had delivered them and had made them a people. Jesus, in timing all of what's about to occur—this idea, this timing—was not lost on Him. In fact, I believe that He and the Father timed this all just right. All of this is a foreshadowing. The Passover is a foreshadowing of what Jesus is about to do. And the fact that He's about to go to the cross, about to die, about to shed His blood, in the same way that God saved Israel out of Egypt by having them put the blood of a lamb over their door so that His Spirit would pass over the households that had that blood. In the same way, God was about to do something extraordinary through Jesus. He was about to save people from sin…deliver them from sin. The timing was no accident. The entire timing of this Passover feast, what is about to occur in Jesus' life, is always right there in the background.

Second, John told us what Jesus knew. He knew of course, because of the timing, He knew that His hour had come and that He was about to depart and go to be with the Father. In other words, Jesus knew that His days upon the earth—His ministry in the flesh—was coming to an end, and that He was about to die. This is the eve of His death. Just consider that for a moment: to know that tomorrow is the day that I die! Tonight is the night that I'm arrested! That knowledge, for so many, would wreck them. It would upend them, fill them with anxiety, with worry. That's not at all what we see from Jesus. As Jesus walks through this moment, He's equipped with a knowledge. John told us that He knew the end of His life would mean that He would return to the Father…He'd return to the Father. Therefore, He stood in absolute assurance He had a glorious future. And so because of that, He walked through this moment, this moment full of drama, with strength, with courage, and with one other quality that will be fully on display.

John tells us He walks through it with **love**. It says that as He was about to die, He came together with those disciples—those He had chosen, those He had called, those He had loved thus far in His life with them—and John says **He loved them to the end**. Jesus' love was on display. What quality of love, what abundance of love must be present in Jesus that in this moment—so full of tension, anticipating His very death, and it was an agonizing death—what poured forth from Him was love. He loved His disciples.

To love means to seek the good of those that we love, to bless them. Jesus had done that throughout His entire experience with His disciples. And John tells us that Jesus **loved them to the end**. In other words, that as He would walk through these moments, up until His final breath, He would love them to the max, love them to the extreme. There would be no tapering off of His love for them. And so as this scene continues, we are going to see what love on display was going to look like with these disciples, what form it would take. So, knowing that He was going to return to the Father, He **loved them to the end.** And this is what it looked like. Verse 2:

> **During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son of* Simon, to betray Him, *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded**

Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. (Vs. 2-5)

So His love here was on display for them. How? By washing their feet. Just imagine this scene with me, even as I'm describing it. Try to picture it in your mind. He gathered together with them in the Upper Room, probably a rented room where they would have set and prepared everything for this Passover meal, which every Jewish family would be partaking in around this time. It would be a long rectangular table with maybe couches around it. And often the way they would enjoy this meal is they would put their shoulders up by the table, and then their feet would come back from the table. So there they gathered in this Upper Room. And it was customary in the Middle East, at this time, to have foot washing be something that would occur in an environment like this. The Middle East, of course, is a dry and dusty world, and so when a host would have a dinner party—something like a Passover meal—it would be refreshing. But it would also be an incredible act of honor and hospitality to the dinner guests to have their feet washed. But no self-respecting host would ever do the washing themselves. Foot washing was a menial task. It was an undesirable task, an unattractive task, and so it was often reserved for the lowest in that society; for servants, for slaves, for people that weren't deserving of respect…certainly not for someone like Jesus. Jesus was the kind of person that deserved to have His feet washed, not to wash someone else's feet. So foot washing was common, but it was always done by someone whose honor in society, whose position in society, was equal to the lowly task that it was. It was the lowly, the undeserving, that washed feet.

So here they sat, ready for a meal, knowing the foot washing had to occur. They, I imagine, just kind of wondered who was going to do it, like they were playing a game of "Not it. I'm not doing it." I have no doubt the disciples probably gladly would have washed Jesus' feet alone. That would have been an honorable thing to do to their Teacher, but to wash one another's feet? Well, that's humiliating. They've been jockeying for position with Jesus all throughout the past few days. "Who's going to be at Your right hand?" They're not about to lower themselves and do something like that. So they sat there waiting.

It's also important to remember who is there. You know, there's 13 people in the room: 11 disciples and Jesus and the one—Judas—the one who would betray Him. The disciples didn't know that at that moment, but Jesus knew it. Imagine sharing table fellowship with the one who would turn Him over. And in that moment, He did something completely unthinkable to them. John tells us that *He got up from supper. He laid aside His garments, and He washed their feet.* Everyone was waiting. Who would do the lowly task? Jesus did it! This scene is so familiar to us, but it's a challenge, I think, for us to understand just how radical it was, just how unbelievable it was to these disciples. Jesus took off His outer garment, that maybe was a robe that signified he was a teacher, certainly just His respectable clothing. And then He put on the clothing of a slave, of a servant—a tunic or a loin cloth—something a little embarrassing, to be quite honest.

As I was preparing, I thought about the moment that maybe some of you have experienced. Have you ever gone to a pool here in town and you've run into someone that goes to church with you or that you work with? Have you ever been through that moment where you're both standing there in your swimming suits and you're kind of embarrassed. It's an embarrassing moment. You kind of want to say, "Hey, can we go put something proper on before we continue this conversation?"

Jesus humbled Himself. His disciples thought this was humiliating. Humiliation is when our pride is attacked, and we feel humiliated. Jesus wasn't humiliated. Jesus embraced humility. Humility understands that they are sufficient in God, and they live in full dependence upon God. John tells us that Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, that He had come from God and He was going back to God, then got up from supper. In other words, Jesus, fully aware, absolutely grounded and confident in the knowledge that He was the beloved of God…the beloved of God, chosen by Him, sent by Him, and about to return to Him, was absolutely free to do something that everyone in the room thought was humiliating. He was free because He knew who He was, free to serve in a way that the whole world would say that a teacher should never do that, but Jesus is free to embrace humble, loving service. The question is, "How would His disciples respond to this audacious act?" We don't get to know how all of them responded, but we do, of course, get to know how Peter responded, because Peter always just comes right out with it, doesn't he? Verse 6:

> **So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."** (Vs. 6-8)

Peter's tone here is exasperation. He can't believe what he's seeing. His first question seems innocent, but not innocent enough. He says, "**Do You wash my feet**?" But that second statement of his reveals just how scandalous it seemed to him. He said, "**You'll never wash my feet.**" See, Peter was fully aware of what was taking place, and on the human level, according to the world's value system, what was happening was unthinkable. Just a few chapters earlier, we're told that Peter declared, he confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. In Peter's mind, this was someone deserving of a king's throne, a king's robes, not the tunic, not the loin cloth of a servant, of a slave. In his mind he thought, "Never, never will my Lord do this." But Jesus made it clear that Peter was only seeing what was happening on the surface. There was something much deeper going on.

We already mentioned how the crucifixion, this ultimate act of service, is always in the background of what is taking place here, and what Peter couldn't know. But Jesus knew, and we know, because we know how the story ends, in that Jesus, in just a few hours, was going to take the ultimate act of humility. He was going to serve in a way that absolutely was unthinkable. He wasn't only going to put on the loin cloth of a servant, but He was going to step onto a cross as a criminal, and suffer because of love, because of service. He was going to embrace humility because that is what the Father had sent Him to do. And He's saying to Peter, "You don't know what's going on here, but you have to accept this humble act of service. If you can't handle the fact that I'm pulling out a wash basin and water, how are you going to handle the cross and the nails? Peter, you have to allow me to serve you…you have to allow me to serve you!" Oh, I don't even think it's possible for Peter and the disciples to have fully understood all that Jesus is saying. But I do know this with Peter. What's always on display with Peter is that he wants more of Jesus. So what we see in verse 9 expresses just that:

> **Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."**

In other words, if having you wash me gives me a part of you, let the water flow. Give me a bath. Pull out the fire hose. Hose me down. I want more of you. It's a beautiful, eager heart of Peter. So Jesus responds in verse 10:

> **Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."** (Vs. 10-11)

Always the teacher. Always loving, always gentle in His teaching with His disciples, Jesus helps Peter understand that he's clean. They were clean. The eleven were clean by virtue of their faith in Jesus. They had given their life to Him. They had received His word. We're talking about their salvation here. They were saved. They were His…but not all of them. There was one whom He knew was betraying Him. Actually, the ball was already rolling in the betrayal. Not all of them were clean, but the eleven, they were clean by virtue of their association with Jesus, their faith in Him, their receiving of His word. He assured them of that, but they still had to accept this humble act of service. So, having performed this ceremony, this incredibly tangible, real life, living, breathing parable of loving service to them, Jesus continued to love them by teaching them what it meant and what it would mean for them moving forward. Verse 12:

> **So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?"** (Vs. 12)

Answer. No! They don't get it. They don't get it. So he continued:

> **You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** (Vs. 13-15)

He says, "**You call me Teacher and Lord**." These are titles of great respect. Jesus was much more than a teacher, but He certainly was a teacher, and He was the greatest teacher that had ever lived. The crowds listened to His teaching, and they were astounded at His authority. He taught as one having authority. He just laid the bare truth, revealed life and truth, and people knew it when they heard Him. They'd never heard teaching like that. Jesus is much more than a teacher. He's our Savior, but we can't forget He is the great Teacher. He's the One that teaches us how to walk in fullness of life. It says, "**You call me Teacher**." It's a term of respect, and **you call me Lord**. **Lord**, essentially means *master*, the one in charge, and a teacher and a lord. Well, that person shouldn't be washing feet. But Jesus was using this as an incredible, unforgettable teaching moment. He was letting His disciples know what He was calling His community, what He was calling His disciples to. He was displaying to them, "This is the character that I am calling you to. This is what I want to empower you to become, to love and to serve like this. And this is what I want to have be the mark of my very community, that you love and that you serve one another in the same way that I have served you. Never thinking that there's some task that's too low for you, but standing assured in My love for you and the Father's love for you and free to serve without reservation." In the ancient world, disciples were people who were always with a teacher, learning to be like that teacher. And here Jesus is making it clear that what I have just done, that now is what you do as my disciples. He reiterates just that point in verse 16:

> **Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.** (Vs. 16-17)

For three years, Jesus' disciples had been with Him, learning from Him, learning to be like Him. He would send them out on mission, as apprentices of His. They'd come back and they'd learn more. They'd say, "Well, Jesus, how do I/we minister?" They've been in a classroom—an intense classroom—but here at this moment, class was not finished. Jesus made it very clear to them, this act of humility, this humble service and love, was something to be embraced by them. If He, their teacher, their master, embraced this life of service, they too, His pupils…His students…were to relate to their Teacher in the same way that a slave is related to his master. They're called to the same thing. That's what comes with being a disciple. This was a call to sacrificial service, but it was a call to sacrificial service that came with a promise as well.

In the ancient world, no one looked at humility and thought it was a virtue really worthy of pursuit. You hired slaves to do the menial things. But Jesus was telling them something altogether different, demonstrating something altogether different, and then He included a promise with it. While in the world's eyes, you might think it's drudgery or just the worst thing in the world to sacrifice and to serve in this way, but if you do these things, you will be blessed. Blessed means happy. You'll be experiencing life. You'll be experiencing life as it was intended to be experienced. It's not necessarily that it's an equation, like if you do this, then you'll feel blessed. But if you have fellowship with Him, you're living the blessed life with Him, and you're free then to take up the kind of life that He lived, because He by His Spirit, is empowering you to live in the very fullness that He has, and to take part in His very blessedness.

The Christian community is called to be a community of loving service to one another, because Christian community takes its cues from Jesus. John told us in verse one that **He loved His disciples to the end**, and as this Upper Room Discourse would continue, Jesus would continue to describe love and what love looks like and how that is what His disciples are called to. He loved them to the end, and then He called them to live lives of love as well. Just a few short verses later, in verse 34 of chapter 13, he says this:

> **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."** (Vs. 34-35)

As followers of Jesus, as His students, listening to the Teacher and learning from Him, it's important that we understand we as a people, as a community, we are not *encouraged* to love. It's not a suggestion to love; it's a command to love. Just like the Master loves us, we are called to love one another. But that is a commandment that comes also with a promise. First of all, it's a promise that it would be a blessed experience. Second of all, he gives us a promise here, that as we do that…all men…all people in the world around us…will know that we belong to Him. They'll look at this community and they'll say, "They look like Jesus. They must belong to Him." If Jesus had full reign in a community—if He had full reign in this community—what shape would it take? Well, the answer is very clear. It would be a community marked by loving, sacrificial, humble,

God-confident service to one another, loving each other to the end in the same way that Jesus loved His disciples to the end, and continues to love us to the max.

There's no other place; there's no other community where this is even possible. Love like this is only possible in Christian community, because it's only possible when God gives His love and empowers a community to love like God loves. It can't happen anywhere else, but it's very important that we understand that just because it cannot happen anywhere else—it can only happen in Christian community—it doesn't make it automatic. It requires that we take up the call, that we embrace the command, the call to be like our Leader, to take active steps to serve one another, to love one another, to wash one another's feet. So the question, of course, getting quite practical, is, "What does that look like here in 2025 in Lincoln, Nebraska?"

Some churches and some traditions have taken this scene and taken this command to love one another and said, "This is a call to emulate this ceremony." They said, "Oh, you know what we're going to do. We're going to do foot-washing ceremonies." Maybe you've been a part of a foot-washing ceremony. I've been a part of a few myself. One is particularly memorable. When I was at Wheaton, working in leadership there, we would take student leaders up to the North Woods of Wisconsin, to a camp. We'd walk with them for a week and train them, and it'd be a great time of community building and getting to know one another and doing some training. But you know how it goes at camp. You're up in the middle of nowhere, so you decide, "I'm not showering this week." You know, you got to embrace it. And this particular week I also decided, "You know what? These wool socks are fairly resilient. I'm not going to change my socks all week." So I wore the same pair of wool socks every day, and my feet stunk. Okay, not a problem; you're at camp… until on the last day of camp, the leader says at the chapel service, "You know, we want to close our time together by having a foot-washing ceremony." I was mortified. I was mortified because I knew what lurked underneath those socks. And so we started the ceremony. And I thought, "I'm going to be very strategic. I'm going to tell the guy that I lead, Daniel, "You know, Daniel, why don't I wash your feet?" And then I directed, Daniel. I was like, "Why don't you wash John's feet? "And then I kind of stepped out of the way, thinking maybe I can get out of this. And Daniel washed someone's feet. And everyone kind of did it. And I thought "I've made it!" And then Daniel came over to me and said, "Ryan, has anyone washed your feet?" And I said, "No." He said, "Can I wash your feet?" And I thought to myself, "You do not know what you're asking, but of course," and Daniel washed my feet. I don't know if it was meaningful for him, but it was miserable for me. It was mortifying!

Those kinds of ceremonies are fine. They are great reenactments to help us understand what took place and just what a humble thing Jesus did. But please understand Jesus was not initiating a new rite, a new ceremony for the church here. This isn't like baptism or the Lord's Supper that we're commanded to continue to practice together. Jesus was doing something utterly practical, something that needed to be done, and something that everyone in the room, in their pride said, "I will not do that." Jesus was doing something that had to be done. It was an act of service, a practical act of service for us to observe today. Therefore, for us today, the application is, "How do we serve one another quite practically?" And the answer is, "Even this morning, it's happening." As we gather, it takes something like 400 different people volunteering in different parts of the church in order to gather together: people sitting at kids' tables, people ushering, people greeting, people making coffee, getting here early to do that. All of it is an act of service, an act of love.

I love, as I walk around the children's area—the kids' area—where I see different people sitting at kids' tables serving. I see a doctor, and I see a lawyer, and I see a homemaker, and I see a high school student, all of them serving, loving those kids and essentially saying, "This is not below me. This is an amazing act of love." Sometimes our acts of service can be quite menial. Sometimes they're a little more public and you see them. But anything that we embrace as an act of love, motivated by our Savior, can be a way for us to build this community up in love. Whether it be by greeting or changing a diaper, or any other task, it can be an act of service, an act of love, modeled after our Savior.

One of the great challenges that I think we all have to acknowledge is in a church of this size, it's quite easy to "feel" together, but not really experience deep, intimate community with one another. I heard someone say once that, "The church in North America is an exercise in carefully orchestrated distance. We come together, but we don't ever get too close." We need to be aware of that challenge, that pitfall of just modern society. We live in an isolating world. It's one of the reasons that we so often are just persistent about encouraging people to be a part of Life Groups. Life groups are a place where you get together with a smaller group of people. You get to know them. You know their fears and their joys and their sorrows, and you're able to enter in and serve and love them in very practical, tangible ways. You've got a kid going through a tough time. You pray for him, encourage him, maybe make him a meal, offer a word of counsel and support and encouragement. These little acts of service and love to one another, are motivated by the model of our Savior, empowered by Him. It doesn't have to be in a Life Group, though. It can be at a kid's table, can be over in the youth complex, can be making coffee, can just be in groups of friends that you already have—small little communities—that maybe just over time, have started to become a little stale, and you wonder, "Are we really loving each other like this?" And so you take up the call to love and to serve just like the Master. We're called as a community to serve one another, to take proactive steps. It can't be done for us. We have to take up that call ourselves, that encouragement to respond to Jesus.

I was talking with a gentleman once, and he said he loves coming here to church, because he comes and he leaves and no one ever asks anything of him. He just can kind of come and observe and then go home, and he's like, "You guys do that great!" He was just being honest. That was his first step. And you know what? That is the way you enter into a new community. That's, of course, the way it begins. But I was able, in that moment, to just encourage him and say, "You know what? That's not what we long for. What we long for, for you eventually, when you're comfortable, is to take this step to know other people that you might enter into a life-giving community, and take up the challenge to love others in the same way that Jesus loves you. It's what we have always aimed to be as a church, a community of sacrificial service and love, because that is who our Savior is.

Jesus looked at His disciples. He said, "**If I then your Lord and Teacher, washed your feet. You also ought to wash one another's feet, for I gave you an example that you should do as I did to you."**

Let that be true of us.

Our Father, we turn to You with gratitude, gratitude that in Your wisdom and Your sovereignty, in Your providence, in Your love, You sent Your Son into the world to live among us, to live and then to die for us, to serve us in humility, to love us by doing that which we could never do for ourselves. We accept that humbly, gratefully. We thank You that now You call us to be a new type of people, people empowered by Your very Spirit to live differently than the world around us. And so we do pray that You will help us with that. Lord, I am mindful of the fact that at the end of this discourse, You prayed, and what You prayed to the Father is so beautiful. You prayed even for us, and You prayed that we would be one, just as You and the Father are One. And so we echo that prayer, that You would make us one by the power of Your Spirit, that we would live unified, that we might enter into the blessedness of loving service, and that the world may know that we belong to You. We pray these things in Your name, Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE
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WINTER 2025 // WEEK 3

Life Group Questions

ReThink: Community, January 25/26, 2025

Community Modeled After the Master // John 13:1-17, 34-35

Introduction

This week Pastor Ryan took us to yet another passage to ReThink Community. In our individualistic American society, it can be a challenge to really live in community where we are with and for and serving one another. In our passage this week, Jesus provides us with a great example of what this looks like and encouragement and challenge to move in this direction.

We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you will cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

1) What do you enjoy most about the winter months?

2) What was a time in your life where you felt seen and known?

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
    b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
    c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

1) **What challenged or encouraged you from the message this weekend?**

2) **In John 13:1-5, what are we told that Jesus knows? (verse 3)**

   How does knowing what Jesus knows, change the way we see and understand what he is about to do for the disciples?

   What is the significance of Jesus taking off his outer garments?

3) **What does this passage reveal to you about God/Jesus?** (Hint: Compare Jesus actions in this passage to Philippians 2:5-8.)

   How is what you learned about God in this passage reflected (or not reflected) in how you think about and interact with God? (Consider specifically the love Jesus shows in this passage, including Judas.)

4) **Why does Jesus wash His disciple's feet?** (see John 13:1 & 12-17)

In John 13:14-15, Jesus says, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you a example that you also should do as I did to you." **What does obedience to Jesus' words look like today? How can you wash the feet of those around you?**

5) **Considering what has happened in this passage, what is the significance of Jesus words in John 13:34-35?**

How does this passage change the way you think about interacting with one another in the community of your Life Group? (Consider looking at Acts 4:32-37 as an example.)

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: Read Acts 4:32-37. Ponder how Jesus words and actions in John 13 were lived out by the early church. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about how you can live out Jesus words of "washing one another's feet" of those in your Life Group.

Prayer Focus: Several times this week take time to prayerfully read through Philippians 2:5-8. Allow it to guide your prayer for the day. Consider returning to it several times throughout the day as a reminder of the posture Jesus invites us to have towards others.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?