

Strength for the Journey

“The New Community People”

John 13:34-35



“The New Community People”

- Lesson 1
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Group Study Introduction

Use the following questions and exercises as your group time allows. Feel free to skip one or more questions in each section as necessary. If you have less than thirty minutes for group discussion, we recommend skipping the “Getting Started” section. Be sure to save time for prayer at the end of your meeting, using the “Strength through Prayer” section.

Getting Started:

Joe Stowell shares about a woman who fell sound asleep in church.

- Have you ever fallen asleep in church? What’s the funniest story you can remember of someone falling asleep?
- Have you ever known anyone, like this woman perhaps, who was under so much stress that he or she seemed to cope by sleeping?

Strength through Scripture:

Open your Bibles to John 13 and have a volunteer read verses 34–35 out loud.

1. Joe begins this segment by pointing out a couple of obstacles to our being people who love others. Can you relate to the barrier that some of us think the people around us don’t deserve our love because what they really need is to shape up?
2. How tempted are you by the second barrier: to think that life would be a cakewalk if it weren’t for people?
3. How do you feel about Joe’s statement that even though you might say you come to church for Jesus or for the Word of God, not for the people, you are there for them?

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“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

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Notes:

4. In light of the fact that it was the responsibility of the lowest servants to wash feet, and that the disciples had just been arguing about who was going to be greatest in the kingdom, how would you have felt if you were one of the disciples and Jesus started washing your feet? Do you know someone who needs his or her feet washed by you—figuratively, that is.

5. Have one member of your group read Philippians 2:5–8 out loud. Joe states that Jesus’ words in John 13:34 that we must love “as I have loved you” require a depth of humility where we see ourselves as a servant to other people—regardless. Is anything holding you back from being committed to that perspective and that kind of love?

Digging Deeper:

If your group has enough time (i.e., you’ve listened to the audio on your own), answer one or more of these optional questions.

1. What does Joe mean by saying that with contrasting characters like Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector, the group of disciples were “a train wreck waiting to happen”?

2. What does Joe mean by saying that if it wasn’t for their love for one another, the disciples would have split up the moment Jesus left—and we wouldn’t be redeemed?

3. Joe shared that he could not think of a parallel in our American culture that would compare with the depth of servanthood and humility that Jesus demonstrated in the act of washing His disciples’ feet. What is the closest you can come to thinking of such a parallel or illustration?

Strength through Sharing:

1. Do you agree with Joe’s statement that, although all of us have many needs, we walk into church in our own little zone, and then zone out of church?

2. Decide as a group whether you will do the exercise in the “Call to Action” below now or during the week on your own.



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Notes:

Strength through Prayer:

Spend a few moments as a group in silent, personal prayer. Thank God that we have a mentor—Christ—to show us how to love others and to help us to do so. And commit yourself to follow His lead.

You may want to begin your prayer with these words:

“Thank You, God, for sending us Your Son, who loved His disciples until the end—all the way to the cross. I want to be like You, Jesus. I will follow You, humbly getting on my knees and serving other people by washing their feet. Give me Your mind and Your attitude toward others. Show me how I can serve someone who is difficult to love.”

When you are finished with this time for silent, personal prayer, you may want to move into a time of group prayer, praying for one another.

Closing Call to Action:

Pick somebody out—not the easy person, not the lovable person. You might not want to start with the hardest person in your world, but pick someone who may not be easy to love. Then go to Philippians 2 and say, “Can I absorb the mind of Christ into my life in order to think what Jesus thinks about this person?”

Then begin to be a servant to that person by isolating at least one way you can serve them with an act of love. How would you figuratively wash their feet? If you pray about that, God will reveal a way you can actually love them, begin a healing process, and bring them into the community of the love of Jesus where they can feel safe and ministered to.

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.