



JUNIOR HIGH GROUP STUDY

SHARING YOUR FAITH & SERVING OTHERS

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General Editor



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How to Use the Uncommon Junior High Group Studies

Each *Uncommon* junior high group study contains 12 sessions, which are divided into 2 stand-alone units of 6 sessions each. You may choose to teach all 12 sessions consecutively, or to use just one unit, or to present each session separately. You know your group, so do what works best for you and your students.

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) for each session's student handouts are available online at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/. The handouts include the "Reflect" section of each study, formatted for easy printing, in addition to any student worksheets for the session. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each individual session begins with a brief overview of the "big idea" of the lesson, the aims of the session, the primary Bible verse and additional verses that tie in to the topic being discussed. Each of the 12 sessions is geared to be 45 to 90 minutes in length and is comprised of two options that you can choose from, based on the type of group that you have. Option 1 tends to be a more active learning experience, while Option 2 tends to be a more discussion-oriented exercise.

The sections in each session are as follows:

Starter

Young people will stay in your youth group longer if they feel comfortable and make friends. This first section helps students get to know each other better and focus on the theme of the lesson in a fun and engaging way.

Message

The Message section enables students to look up to God by relating the words of Scripture to the session topic.

Dig

Unfortunately, many young people are biblically illiterate. In this section, students look inward and discover how God's Word connects with their own world.

Apply

Young people need the opportunity to think through the issues at hand. The apply section leads students out into their world with specific challenges to apply at school, at home and with their friends.

Reflect

This concluding section of the study allows students to reflect on the material presented in the session. You can print these pages from the PDF found at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_sharing_your_faith.zip and give them to your students as a handout for them to work on throughout the week.

Want More Options?

An additional option for each section, along with accompanying worksheets, is available in PDF format at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_sharing_your_faith.zip.

UNIT I

Sharing Your Faith

It seemed like an ordinary youth group event. About 15 teens in Burleson, Texas, came together one weekend in April 1990 for a discipleship retreat. Then, on Saturday night, something special happened. It was no longer an ordinary youth group event. That night, the students' hearts were broken for their friends who didn't know Christ. Compelled to pray, but not knowing exactly what to do, they went to their school flagpoles and prayed for their friends, schools and leaders.

Word got out to other churches in the area about what had happened, and soon similar prayer meetings at churches and schools began to spread throughout Texas. When youth workers met to discuss what was happening, they decided to invite students to pray simultaneously at flagpoles at 7:00 A.M. on a Wednesday morning toward the start of the school year. They would call that prayer time "See You at the Pole."

The following September, more than 45,000 students met at school flagpoles in four different states to pray before the start of school. By September of the next year, *one million students* gathered at school flagpoles all over the country. Since that time, See You at the Pole has grown to God-sized proportions. It is currently estimated that more than three million students in the United States and in 20 countries worldwide join together on a Wednesday morning in September to pray for their campuses, friends and teachers. Despite setbacks (in 2006, school officials at South Floyd High School in Kentucky, tried to deny students permission to hold the prayer time), the movement has continued.¹

If you've been in youth ministry more than three months, you've probably heard of See You at the Pole. But I doubt if you're familiar with its history and the way God did something extraordinary during what seemed like just an ordinary meeting of about 15 kids for a retreat. That is why if you're serious about seeing junior-highers take the Great Commission seriously, this book is for you. Each lesson is geared so your students understand (1) *why* it's important to be a committed disciple of Christ, and (2) *how* we can live that out in our daily lives.

As you and your students work your way through these lessons, keep in mind a few simple truths that will help the Great Commission become more than just a "Good Suggestion" for your students.

Have Big Expectations for Your Junior High Students

Please do not work with junior-highers if you view them as pre-humans who need to be babysat until they have matured and can make “real decisions.” Junior-highers are having an impact all over the world. From missions trips to India and Kenya to Bible studies on their campuses to simply being nicer and more respectful to their parents, junior-highers are living out what it means to be changed by Christ to change the world. You never know what could happen at an “ordinary” junior high youth group meeting. Could your group be part of a new movement that God longs to bring to students? If so, could your own doubt and lack of faith hinder God’s work in your ministry? (Ouch! That hurts.)

Give Students Practical Application

We have dedicated approximately 25 percent of each lesson to helping students figure out how Scripture intersects with their lives, but I’ve been in junior high ministry long enough to know what often happens when you actually try to teach the lesson. You’re running out of time, you’ve got parents standing in the hallway ready to pick up their students, and you’ve got an adult class breathing down your neck to come and use your meeting room. So what gets cut? The ending. And what happens at the ending? Students have a chance to respond by putting feet to what they’ve been learning about. So try to pace these lessons so that doesn’t happen to you. Make sure you give at least eight minutes to the fourth and final step of each lesson. If you don’t, most junior-highers will lack the abstract thinking abilities to transfer the biblical truth to their time at school and home. So you need to spend time doing it with them.

Make Sure You Are Connected to God

See You at the Pole did not begin in Texas, and it didn’t begin in the hearts of people. It began in the heart of God. God used the sensitivity and obedience of a small group of teenagers to ignite what became the biggest international movement of prayer among young people in history. What does God have for you and your students? Only He knows, but He is pretty good at letting us in on it if we spend some time listening to Him.

Kara Powell

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SESSION I

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

THE BIG IDEA

Being a disciple of Christ means loving others (even when we don't feel like it!).

SESSION AIMS

In this session, you will guide students to (1) learn that a disciple of Christ is someone who follows Him; (2) feel motivated to follow Christ's example of costly love; and (3) choose one way they could love someone who is difficult to love this week.

THE BIGGEST VERSES

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

OTHER IMPORTANT VERSES

Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:38-48; 28:18-20; Luke 10:10-11,25-37

Note: Additional options and worksheets in 8 1/2" x 11" format for this session are available for download at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_sharing_your_faith.zip.

STARTER

Option 1: What I Appreciate About You. You will need tape, pens or pencils and copies of “What I Appreciate About You” (found on the next page).

Greet students and give each person a pencil and a copy of the “What I Appreciate About You” handout. Ask each student to pass around the tape and have a friend tape the flyer to his or her back. Give the students about four minutes to walk around the room and write one thing they appreciate about various students on the sheets that are taped to their backs. You might want to give some examples, such as “you are nice to me at school,” “you are a good soccer player,” “you like to laugh” or “you’re a snappy dresser.” You should also make sure that you have plenty of adults circulating who can add comments for students who aren’t as well known and aren’t getting as many comments on their backs.

When the group has finished, have the students remove the flyers from their backs without looking at them and pass them to you. Next, explain that you are going to read aloud some of the things that they wrote about each other. As you do, they are to guess to whom the description belongs. Note to the group that it is okay if they call out more than one person for the same description. Begin reading descriptions randomly, allowing them time to guess after each one (and editing out any less-than-kind comments). When the group guesses the right student, affirm that student for the qualities that you appreciate about him or her as well.

About midway through reading the handouts, read the following list of qualities: “You make me feel better about myself,” “You are easy to talk to,” “You take time for me” and “I know You care about me.” See if the group can guess who this person is. After several guesses, students may begin to suspect that this person is not in the group (although He is, but in a different way). Share that, yes, this person is Jesus.

Finish reading the rest of the students’ responses, and then ask how the qualities they listed about each other compare to the ones you read about Jesus. Ask them what they would call someone who is trying to follow Christ’s example. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do they think they do at following His example? What makes it hard for them to follow Christ’s model? How do they feel when they do?

Conclude by explaining that the group is starting a new series today about the Great Commission. In this series, they will learn about what it means to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.¹ As they will see, following His example isn’t always easy, but it sure is worth it.

Option 2: Follow the Directions. For this option, you will need a table, a blindfold, the makings for a cold-cut sandwich (a loaf of bread, a package of turkey, some cheese, lettuce, mayonnaise, mustard and tomato) and a few plastic knives. Place all of these items in a grocery bag.

Ahead of time, tell an adult volunteer that you want him or her to follow the student volunteer's instructions exactly. For example, if the volunteer tells the adult leader to take the bread and put it on the table, the adult should *not* unwrap the bread (since the student didn't say to do so), but should put the whole loaf, plastic-wrap and all, on the table. If the student says to cut the tomato, the adult should just cut it in half, since the student wasn't any more specific than that.

Greet students and tell them you have some fun stuff planned for them today. Ask for both an adult and a student volunteer, making sure you choose the adult you've talked with ahead of time. Explain that most people have made a sandwich before. However, today the students are going to do it with a twist. The student who is chosen will wear a blindfold and give instructions to the adult about how to make a sandwich. The adult will only do what the student says—no more and no less (how's that for power?). Make sure you list off, or actually show, the student the items that are available for the sandwich.

What you'll end up with is not really a sandwich, but more of a hodgepodge of food items spread around the front part of your room. That's just fine. In fact, that's not only part of the fun but also the point of the exercise. Take off the student's blindfold and show that person the "sandwich" that he or she has created. Ask the student how it made him or her feel to give instructions. What was hard about it, even though he or she had made tons of sandwiches before? What would that student do differently if he or she could do it over again?

Explain to the students that what they just saw was a true test of obedience and following instructions, even if the instructions didn't seem quite right. Ask the students whom they are supposed to obey. (*Parents, teachers, government, police.*) Then ask what happens if they don't obey. (*The answer depends . . . they may get grounded, arrested, flunked or fined.*) Next, ask them what someone is called when he or she tries to obey God. The answer can be a bunch of things, but try to help students get to the point of using the word "disciple."

Explain that a disciple is someone who follows and obeys Jesus. Ask how following Jesus is different than following the student who was giving the instructions to the leader on making a sandwich. The answer, of course, is that Jesus knows what He is doing, He can see everything, and He never makes a mistake or wishes He had a chance to do something differently.

Explain that today the group is starting a new series about the Great Commission. In the next several weeks, they are going to learn what it means to be disciples of Jesus Christ. As they will see today, following Jesus' example isn't always easy, but it sure is worth it.

MESSAGE

Option 1: How Much Does It Cost? For this option, you will need your Bible, several items to auction off that progressively become more expensive and valuable (e.g., a candy bar, a six pack of Coke, a container of ice cream), and some type of play money (money from the game Monopoly would work well, or you can make up your own using green paper).

Take the play money and divide it in half, making sure that you have the same denominations in each half (that is, both halves have 10 \$1 bills, 5 \$5 bills, and so forth). Divide your students into two teams and distribute the play money to each team. The teams, in turn, should randomly give each person his or her own bill. Of course, this means that some students will have \$1 while others will have \$5, \$10, \$20 or even \$50. That's fine. In fact, it's part of what makes this game interesting. Make sure you have enough money left over to give change if students don't bid their entire bill.

If you want, you can call your two teams creative names, like the Pesos and the Rubles. Explain that each person can spend his or her money individually, or that person can pool resources with one or more people from that team. You, the leader, will be the auctioneer and auction off a series of items, always beginning with \$1 as the opening bid. If the student has \$5, for example, that person doesn't have to bid the whole \$5; he or she can just bid \$2, \$3 or \$4. Whoever makes the highest bid has to give that much money to the auctioneer, and then he or she gets to keep the item.

When the auction is finished, ask the students how they knew what to bid. What kind of things kept them from bidding everything they had? If they could do it again and do something differently, what would it be? Explain to the students that life is a bit like this game. Things that are valuable are all around them. They have to decide whether it's worth it to give their all for those things or maybe just a part of what they have.

Share with the students that about 2,000 years ago, someone decided to give His all. Jesus decided that no matter what it cost Him, He would give up His life in order to have a relationship with us. He didn't hold anything back. He gave up His position in heaven (at least temporarily), He went through times of

hunger and fasting, He suffered rejection from others, and He died a painful death on the cross. Ask the group why He would do that. Students will probably give different answers for this question, but steer them to the amazing love that motivated Jesus to live and die that way for them.

Remind the group members that if we're going to be His disciples, we need to be willing to also do some pretty costly things. Read John 13:34-35, and explain that even though Jesus says in this passage that He is giving us a new command, it's actually pretty similar to one found in Leviticus 19:18. The command is to love one another. And how are we to love one another? The same way He loved us, which means being willing to do some pretty costly things to show other people that we care.

Ask the students what will happen if we love one another the way Jesus loves us. (*People will see evidence of our relationship with Him.*) Conclude by sharing that Jesus gave up more than just some fake money: He gave His life for each one of us, the ultimate act of love. Now He invites us to do the same for other people—He invites us to do some pretty radical but costly things to show our love to others.

To drive the point home, have those students who won something in the auction give away what they won to another student or group of students. (Obviously, if you plan on doing this, ask them not to eat their items when they win them—giving away an empty candy bar wrapper isn't that big of a sacrifice!)

Option 2: Love Is Action. For this option, you will need your Bible, some type of navy jacket that looks like it's part of a business suit, a toy car and a megaphone (you can make one out of paper if you don't have one handy). Also, you'll need a handful of mushy-gushy love cards (like Hallmark cards).

Introduce this talk by asking for a volunteer to come forward. Explain that he or she is the President of the United States. Ask the volunteer how it feels to be President. What do other people think of him or her? What kinds of things would the volunteer do with the power that he or she has?

Transition to the two main points of the talk by explaining that today the group is going to check out someone even more powerful than the President who did something really surprising. He gave up His power, all in the name of love, and now He invites each of us to follow His example by showing true love to others. By His words and His actions, He shows us two important qualities about love.

First, *love will cost us something*. Return to your volunteer President. Hand the volunteer the toy car and state that this symbolizes a presidential motorcade

that will take the person wherever he or she wants to go. Have the volunteer put on the jacket as a sign of how important he or she is. Also give the person the megaphone as a symbol of how powerful his or her words are and how they shape not only what happens in this country but also in the whole world.

Now ask the person to imagine that Congress comes to him or her with an idea. Congress says that in order for the President to really lead people, he or she will need to mingle with regular citizens and in many ways hide the fact that he or she is President. The President will still have power, but people won't respect the person's office because they won't actually know he or she is the President. The President will seem more like a regular person. At this point, take back the car, the jacket and the megaphone to symbolize that the President's life has changed.

Explain to students that if the President were to do this, it would really cost him something. No longer could he get whatever he wanted whenever he wanted it. He would live in a normal house instead of the White House. Although others would be able to tell something was different about him, they wouldn't always be sure what it was. This is similar to what happened to Jesus. He willingly left heaven to come to earth and live a much harder life than He had been living in heaven with God. He still had power to heal and always did the right thing, but others weren't sure who He was and persecuted Him, even to the point of death.

Read John 13:34-35, and then ask the students what they think motivated Jesus to do this for us. (*His love.*) Now, Jesus invites us to show the same kind of love to other people. It might cost us time, money or even popularity, but if we really want to say that we're followers of Christ, we need to follow His example and be willing to give up all aspects of our lives to love others.

A second quality about love is that *it speaks for itself*. Read some of the mushy love cards aloud, making sure you really ham up the gushy parts. Then ask the students to imagine that someone has said that he or she loves them and has bought them a card like the one that you are holding. But then for the next month, that person mostly ignores them. When that person does pay attention to them, he or she usually just criticizes them and mocks them. Ask students if they think that that person really loves them. Well, maybe, but maybe not.

Share with the students that true love speaks for itself. In John 13:35, Jesus said that if we follow His example and are consistently loving toward each other, other people will see that and know that we not only love each other but that we love Christ as well. True love speaks for itself.

DIG

Option 1: Odd One Out. For this option, you will need just this here book. Explain to the group that you have a couple of different stories that you are going to read. You want the girls to respond to the first one and the guys to respond to the second one. Here is story #1 for the girls:

It seems as if everyone is going to Latoya's slumber party. You can't believe how many people are invited. It's all the girls are talking about. You go up to Kim and ask, "What are you wearing to Latoya's party on Friday night?" Kim looks at you sheepishly and mumbles, "Actually, I wasn't invited." You don't know what to do or say to Kim. You also know that she is hearing all about the party from other people.

Ask the girls how they think Kim might have felt. What would be some other options of things they could have said or done so as not to hurt Kim? (Some of the answers might be that they could talk to Latoya and see if she would invite Kim, or they could ask their friends not to talk about the party in front of Kim.) Continue the discussion by introducing this scenario:

Let's say you talk to Latoya at lunch, and she says, "I didn't invite Kim because I don't like her. She always looks at me weird." As Latoya turns around and walks off, you notice Kim at a nearby table. You're sure Kim heard what Latoya said.

Ask the girls what would be the loving thing to do at that moment. What would it cost them, especially if Latoya hears about what they're doing? Ask them if they think it is possible to be in the middle of two friends who are in a fight and still love both of them. If not, why not? If so, what kinds of things do they need to do to love both? Now read story #2 for the guys:

You think Tyler is a good guy, but you seem to be the only one. He really annoys everyone else in your class. He always raises his hand to answer the questions your teacher asks, and he always volunteers to help out with anything the teacher needs. To make matters worse, he just got a new retainer that makes him lisp. The other kids make fun of him behind his back, and sometimes even right in front of him.

Ask the guys what they should do when the other kids make fun of Tyler. What would keep them from doing that? What might motivate them to do it?

If other kids are making fun of Tyler right in front of them and they are standing nearby, what should they do? What might it cost them to do that? Why should they still do it anyway?

Now ask both the guys and the girls how it would change the way they would act if these situations happened at church. In other words, does loving others look different when they are with a group of Christians than with non-Christians? Why or why not?

Option 2: Do I Have to Love? For this option, you will need nothing but this book. Ask the students the following questions:

- How are we supposed to love everyone when we can't be there all the time for everyone? *(We need to ask Jesus to give us His eyes to see people the way He does, and then we simply need to ask God to show us what to do. While it is true that there are unlimited needs in the world, the good news is that God is unlimited. To express His love, God uses different people in different ways. Sometimes we love with a small word or gesture; sometimes it's by giving our resources; sometimes it's by praying for a person. The more we develop our relationship with God, the more we will know the best way to show our love to others.)*
- What if someone is mean to us? Do we still have to love them? *(Yes. In Matthew 5:44, Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Jesus modeled for us how to love our enemies. He never defended Himself, only God, and He told us to forgive others and to pray. Of course, if someone is abusing us, this doesn't mean that we should allow that situation to continue. In Luke 10:10-11, Jesus said that if someone does not receive us, we should wipe the dust off our feet. In other words, God does not want us to expend energy on people who are totally unwilling to receive what we have to give. We are still to act lovingly toward them, but we don't have to hang around them all the time.)*
- If God loves the whole world, then why can't He just help that person Himself? *(The short answer is that God wants us to be in relationship with Him and with other people, and He chooses to use us to love one another. As an added bonus, when we love others, we can't help but be changed. If God did all the work, we'd miss out on ways He wants to mold us and teach us.)*

APPLY

Option 1: Human Waterfall. For this option, you need a hose plugged into a water source, two big bowls, and a cooperative volunteer willing to get wet. (*Note:* You may have to do this outside or, if you want to do it inside, substitute another big bowl of water for the hose. Either way, you will need to have a tarp.)

Show the hose and bowls to the group. Explain that the hose represents God and the bowl that you are holding represents each of them. Have your volunteer sit on the ground, and then ask the person to hold the second bowl on his or her head, just under your first bowl. Turn the hose on and have it fill the first bowl in your hand (and eventually the second bowl on the volunteer's head). Call the students' attention to what happens when the first bowl fills up: it automatically spills into the next bowl. This is also how love works. As we receive God's love, it will automatically overflow onto other people. Of course, before we can share God's love, we first need to be connected to Him. We can't just muster up this love on our own—at least not for long. We have to have a relationship with God and let Him be our ultimate source of love.

Some of the students may not have a relationship with God yet, so share with them what this means. We need to admit that we are incomplete without God and that we have sinned and missed out on God's plan for our life. We need to acknowledge that God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross and to be resurrected. We need to commit our lives to Him, which means asking Him to be our Savior and Lord. When we do, we won't be living for ourselves anymore. Now we will live for Him—which is a much better life!

Some of the students will already have a relationship with God, so explain that the key for them is to let God fill them with His love so they can show it to others. Have them think of one specific person to whom they can show love this week. This person should be someone who is maybe a bit hard to love—maybe that person annoys them or no one else seems to like him or her. It could be a newer kid at school, a little brother who wants to follow them everywhere they go, or even someone at church who seems to need a friend.



Youth Leader Tip

Whenever you invite students to become Christians, ask them to see you afterward. Make sure you have a Bible to give them and get their contact information so you can follow up with them during the week.

Give the group members some time to pray on their own, or have them repeat a prayer after you in which they invite Jesus to take over their lives and commit to loving someone difficult this week. When you are finished, explain that if they've just asked Jesus to take over their life for the first time, you definitely want to meet with them. Tell the rest of the group that you will see them next week.

Option 2: Are You a Snapshot of Jesus? For this option, you will need your Bible, some paper, pens or pencils, a whiteboard and dry-erase pens.

Reread John 13:34-35. Ask the students to pay attention to Jesus' last few sentences and then summarize the verse in their own words. Ask them to consider if they really believe that others will see Jesus by the way they love each other. What about if a guest showed up to the group? Would that person see a difference between this youth group and the average soccer team or Boy Scout troop? Or would that person see people gossiping, forming cliques and doing all sorts of other things? If so, that person would get a poor snapshot of who Jesus is.

Distribute paper and pencils and read the following three questions one at a time, giving students enough time to answer them thoughtfully and thoroughly. Instruct them not to put their names on their papers.

1. What do we do in this group that shows love to each other?
2. What kinds of things do we do that hurt each other?
3. What is one thing you could do to help this place to be a more loving place?

When they are done, collect the papers and read the answers to each question in order. Write the responses on the whiteboard, and when you are finished, have an honest discussion about what's on the board. Invite students to reflect further on any concerns or frustrations they have with the climate in the group (without sharing names or specific details) as well as ways they've seen the group love each other.

Close by inviting students to come forward and write their initials next to one of the answers for question #3 on the whiteboard that they think they could do for the next month. Ask a few members to pray that when guests join the group, those individuals will be able to tell not only that the students love each other but also that they love Jesus.

REFLECT

The following short devotions are for the students to reflect on and answer during the week. You can make a copy of these pages and distribute to your class or download and print from www.gospellight.com/uncommon/jh_sharing_your_faith.zip.

1—DENIED

Get out your Bible and turn to Mark 8:34-35. After you read these verses, try to guess which statement below is true.

Jesus says that if we want to follow Him, we must . . .

- Deny our sins and wear a cross around our neck.
- Deny our true identity and wear a WWJD bracelet.
- Deny ourselves, take up our cross and try to lead a good life.
- Deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ.

Jesus makes it clear that if we are His followers, we must deny ourselves. This means that we need to put away our own ways or ideas in order to be more like Him. We may have to put away old habits, desires or material goods. What are three things that you need to deny today in order to follow Christ?

Now ask God to help you get rid of these things and grow closer to Him!

2—DANGEROUS ROAD

Read about the world's worst funeral in John 11:38-43.

It is 1954, and you are an African-American man living in the South. At this time, racism is accepted as the norm. As you walk down the street, you see a Caucasian girl lying on the sidewalk who has been injured. You want to go into a nearby store to get help, but it has a sign that says "whites only." You could be killed for stepping foot into any place that has this sign, and if you even touched the girl, you could put your family in danger. But the little girl is badly hurt, and you cannot just leave her there alone.

When Jesus travelled to Judea, where Lazarus's family lived, to raise His friend from the dead, He knew that His life was in danger. There were Jews in Judea who did not like Him. But He went anyway. He was not afraid of what others might do to Him. He would not allow others to interrupt what He came to earth to do. Jesus loved Lazarus, so He was willing to pay the price for bringing him back to life.

Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you might be made fun of for doing something you felt God telling you to do? If so, what happened?

Who is someone whom you could minister to regardless of the cost?

What ministry could you get involved in, even if it cost you something?

Ask God today to give you strength as you do His will and seek to follow Jesus' example of loving and serving others.

3—CRUSTY TOES

For those with crust between their toes, here is some encouragement in John 13:2-5. Read these verses, and then answer the questions below.

What did Jesus wash?

- His car
- His disciples' heads
- His own feet
- His disciples' feet

In Jesus' time, washing people's feet was considered to be a lowly act that only servants did. People wore sandals most of the time, so their feet were usually

pretty dirty. Jesus humbled Himself by doing this for His disciples, and in John 13:15 He says that we are to follow His example.

What are some ways that you could put others above yourself and be a true servant to them?

What can you do today that would make you an even better follower of Christ's example in those areas?

4—LOVE THE ENEMY?

Want to know what to do to your enemies? Read Matthew 5:43-44.

It is election time at school, and everyone is so pumped to see who the new eighth-grade class president will be. You, of course, are excited because you are running in this election and have been praying about it for months. Now it is finally here.

There is only one person running against you, and her name is Jennifer. Jennifer seems like a good candidate, and everyone thinks she has a good chance of winning. However, the votes are now in, and you have won the race. Jennifer is upset about this, so she starts to spread rumors that you somehow cheated to win. So there is a re-election, and this time she wins.

Does God actually expect us to love people who do cruel things like Jennifer? Absolutely YES. Jesus makes it very clear that if we only love those who love us back, we are no different from the world. We must make an effort to love even those who are the most difficult to love.

Can you think of someone that you know who has hurt or mistreated you or is just difficult to love? Ask God to help you love that person today. Start by praying for that person right now.

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