

## session 12 study guide

# being a servant leader

### starter

FEET GAMES: Allow 10 to 15 minutes to play one of the following games that focus on feet.

1. Shoe relay race: Have all the students take off their shoes and pile them up in the center of the room. Mix up the shoes, and then form relay teams of four people to a team. Let the students choose who they want to have on their teams. The object of the game is, as in a relay race, for the students to find their shoes, put them on and run back to the next person. The first team to have everyone back across the line with his or her shoes on is the winner.
2. Foot wrestling: Divide students into pairs. Have the pairs sit together without their shoes or socks on—foot to foot—and lock toes. When the signal is given, students will try to “pin” the other person’s foot, just as in arm wrestling.
3. Foot drawing: Divide students into groups of four. Have each team draw a picture using only their feet. Give fun prizes for the most creative drawing, the worst drawing and the most unique drawing.
4. Foot autographs: Divide students into groups of four. Give the students a felt-tip marker (the kind that washes off!) and have them take two minutes to see how many signatures they can get on their feet.

Chances are that some students will not want to participate in the above games because they will be uncomfortable with taking off their shoes or touching another person’s feet. That’s

okay; just let them observe. When the game is over, discuss why feet are not often at the top of the list of places that people like to touch or be touched.

### message

In Jesus' day, people either wore sandals or went barefoot. Roads weren't paved, and most people walked when they needed to get somewhere. Running water was almost unheard of (unless you were rich), so people's feet got dirty. Washing people's feet was typically a job reserved for a lowly slave or servant to do for a guest or family member who had just arrived. Yet in one particularly memorable story, Jesus used this simple act of humble service to teach an important lesson to His disciples about servant leadership. We find the account in John 13:3-17:

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 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.*

*He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

*Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

*"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."*

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

*"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"*

*Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.*

*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. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."*

1. Notice in this passage that Peter calls Jesus "Lord." Who do you think should have had the job of washing the disciples' feet?

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2. What was Peter's reaction to Jesus washing his feet?

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3. What explanation did Jesus give for why He did this?

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4. What earthly and heavenly authority did Jesus have?

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5. “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God” (John 13:3). How does Jesus’ washing His disciples’ feet show servant leadership?

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6. What will be the result for those who follow Jesus’ example (see verse 17)?

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7. In John 5:19, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” What does Jesus’ example of washing His disciples’ feet tell us about how God expresses His character?

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8. What does Jesus tell the disciples they should do in response to His service to them?

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**dig**

Being a follower of Christ means to do as Jesus did—use our service to lead others to Christ. Second Peter 3:18 says, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!” Grace, simply defined, is undeserved favor.

1. How would you define the grace and knowledge of Jesus?

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2. How are the grace and knowledge of Jesus key to serving others in a way that shows Jesus to them?

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3. What does it mean to give glory to Jesus through service to others?

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4. Based on Jesus' example, how would you define a servant leader?

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## apply

Servant leadership can be demonstrated in many ways and also under many different circumstances, as the following illustration demonstrates:

There was a soldier who was wounded in battle. A padre crept over and did what he could for him. He stayed with him when the remainder of the troops retreated. In the heat of the day he gave him water from his own water bottle, while he himself remained parched with thirst.

In the night, when the chill frost came down, he covered the wounded man with his own coat, and finally wrapped him up in even more of his own clothes to save him from the cold. In the end, the wounded man looked up at the padre. Then said the wounded man, "If Christianity makes a man do for another man what you have done for me, tell me about it, because I want it."

Christianity in action moved him to envy a faith which could produce a life like that.<sup>1</sup>

1. How was the "padre" (another name for a priest or pastor) a servant?

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2. What does the wounded soldier's response tell you about the padre's role as a leader?

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3. Why do the words “servant” and “leader” often seem like they shouldn’t go together?

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4. What similarities do you see between this story and the parable that Jesus told in Luke 10:30-36 of the Good Samaritan?

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5. What are some ways we can humble ourselves and serve others in order to make an eternal difference in their lives?

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6. What are some other illustrations of how Jesus was a servant leader? How can you follow Jesus' example in these ways today?

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At this point, you might want to conduct a brief foot-washing ceremony. If you choose to do this with your group, bring out buckets of soapy water and ask each member to wash another's feet (don't worry about it not being a solemn ceremony). Allow time for the students to discuss their feelings about having their feet washed.

### **reflect**

Albert Schweitzer was a man who knew a lot about serving. In 1913, at the age of 38, he travelled to what is today the nation of Gabon, Africa, to establish a missions hospital. During his first nine months there, he and his wife examined about 2,000 patients, some of whom travelled many days and hundreds of miles to see him. Commenting on why he chose to do this, Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know—the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

1. What are your impressions of service based on this quote?

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2. How do Schweitzer's words reflect the statement of Jesus in John 13:12-17?

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3. Roy Lessin, co-founder of Dayspring Cards, had this to say about servant leadership: "A godly leader finds strength by realizing his weakness, finds authority by being under authority, finds direction by laying down his own plans, finds vision by seeing the needs of others, finds credibility by being an example, finds loyalty by expressing compassion, finds honor by being faithful, finds greatness by being a servant." What does this tell you about true leadership?

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4. Which of the leadership traits that Lessin mentions (strength, authority, direction, vision, credibility, loyalty, honor, greatness) do you consider to be your greatest strength? Which do you need to improve on?

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5. How does the idea of being a leader who draws others to Christ through your acts of service make you feel? Excited? Intimidated? Afraid? Why?

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6. What will you do to strengthen your servant-leadership qualities?

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### meditation



Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

COLOSSIANS 3:12