



MAXIE DUNNAM

With Jesus in the Upper Room

A WORKBOOK ON
HIS FINAL LESSONS
FOR TODAY'S
DISCIPLES

With Jesus in
the Upper Room

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MAXIE DUNNAM

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CONTENTS

Introduction ix

Week One: Having Loved His Own, He Loved Them to the End

Day One: The Holy of Holies of the New Testament 3
Day Two: The Passover, “A Piece of Cloth” 5
Day Three: The New Passover 8
Day Four: Contract and Covenant 11
Day Five: I Have Given You an Example 14
Day Six: Power That Stoops to Serve 18
Day Seven: The Nature of Humility 20
Group Meeting for Week One 24

Week Two: A Foot-Washing Style of Life

Day One: More Than an Example 29
Day Two: A Parable in Action 32
Day Three: Self-Affirmation and Self-Depreciation 35
Day Four: The Church as Servant 38
Day Five: Is It I? 41

Day Six: Will You Lay Down Your Life for Me?	45
Day Seven: Style and Power	48
Group Meeting for Week Two	51

Week Three: Promises, Promises

Day One: What's New about a "New Commandment"?	57
Day Two: A Place, Now and Then.	60
Day Three: In My Father's House . . . Heaven	64
Day Four: The Promise of Presence	68
Day Five: The Way, the Truth, the Life.	72
Day Six: The Glorious Partnership	75
Day Seven: The Gift of the Helper	78
Group Meeting for Week Three.	81

Week Four: Christ's Chosen People

Day One: Greater Things Than I Have Done	87
Day Two: Whatever You Ask in My Name	91
Day Three: Peace.	94
Day Four: Being Reminded	98
Day Five: Jesus' Dual Invitation	102
Day Six: Chosen for Privilege	105
Day Seven: Chosen for Partnership	108
Group Meeting for Week Four	112

Week Five: Joy in Relationship with Christ

Day One: In Christ	117
Day Two: The Fullness of God's Presence	120
Day Three: Apart from Me.	123
Day Four: Joy in Obedience	126
Day Five: Chosen for Friendship	129
Day Six: In but Not of the World	133
Day Seven: The Ultimate Test of Discipleship	136
Group Meeting for Week Five	139

Week Six: God's Continuing Advocacy

Day One: Pentecost	143
Day Two: Persecution? Maybe Not, But	145
Day Three: The Holy Spirit Convicts	149
Day Four: The Holy Spirit Guides	153
Day Five: God Hears	157
Day Six: God Cares	160
Day Seven: We Shall Overcome	165
Group Meeting for Week Six	169

Week Seven: Listening to Jesus Pray

Day One: Prayer Is a Revealing Picture of the Person Praying	173
Day Two: Jesus' Understanding of Himself	176

Day Three: I Have Manifested Your Name	179
Day Four: What Jesus Thinks of Us	183
Day Five: Jesus Prays for the Church.	187
Day Six: The Sustaining Source.	191
Day Seven: Eternal Life	194
Group Meeting for Week Seven	198
Notes	201

INTRODUCTION

Suppose you had an evening with Jesus—an entire evening—would you listen to Him? Jesus knows that this is the last intimate time He is going to spend with you. He knows He’s going to die. What does He need to say? What lessons He has taught you does He need to underscore? How does He need to relate? What actions does He need to take to make clear who He is and what He has tried to communicate?

You don’t know what Jesus knows—that He is going to die—but if you did, would you listen?

Chapters 13–17 of John’s Gospel is the story of a time like this . . . Jesus’ last hours with His closest friends. Passover, the celebration of God’s deliverance of His people out of Egyptian captivity, was coming. Jesus knew He had little time before His death, and He wanted to celebrate this monumental event of Passover with those who had become His most faithful followers.

They borrowed an upper room in which to share this evening and a Passover meal. Jesus knew this would be the last supper and the last extended time He would have with them. The disciples didn’t know the heaviness of the occasion. From the beginning they were confused, and as the evening went on, they became more perplexed. But before it was over, the deep significance of it all began to settle in their minds and hearts.

John’s record of this evening (chapters 13–17) has been called “Jesus’ Final Discourse.” Some biblical scholars refer to it as “Jesus’ Last Will and Testament to His Church.” The most precious legacy of Jesus’ teaching is here, the distillation of His thought and message—what He really wants us to hear.

Knowing all this, will you listen to Him?

As we give attention to this treasure of Jesus' sharing, we have an advantage even over the disciples who were personally present. Christ is risen and we hear His words from the perspective of promises realized. He has not left us "desolate"; He has come to us (John 14:18). We have experienced His presence and power, so we listen with confidence and assurance. In the next seven weeks, we want to spend some time daily listening to Jesus. We are His modern friends, to whom He speaks as lovingly as He did to His friends in the upper room. My hope and prayer is that we will not simply listen; we will hear, believe, and obey.

I reflect and share these last words of Jesus in a workbook style. I have discovered this to be the most effective way of teaching through writing. It is written to be used, individually or with a group, over a seven-week period.

The Plan

This is a seven-week adventure. It is an individual journey, but my hope is that you will share it with fellow pilgrims who will meet together each week throughout the seven weeks of the study. You are asked to give thirty minutes each day to listen to Jesus. For most people, these thirty minutes will be at the beginning of the day. However, if it is not possible for you to give the time at the beginning of the day, do it whenever the time is available, but do it regularly. The purpose of this spiritual journey must not be forgotten: to incorporate these disciplines into your daily life.

The workbook is arranged in seven major divisions, each designed to guide you for one week. These divisions contain seven sections, one for each day of the week. Each day of the week will have two major aspects: reading the Scripture with commentary, and reflecting and recording.

Reading the Scripture and Commentary

In each day's section you will read Scripture and commentary. Reading Scripture is a basic resource for Christian discipline and living.

Reflecting and Recording

Each day there will be a time for reflecting and recording. This section calls you to record some of your reflections. The degree of meaning you receive from this workbook largely depends on your faithfulness to its practice. You may be unable on a particular day to do precisely what is requested. If so, simply record that fact and make a note of why you couldn't follow through. This may give you insight about yourself and help you to grow, as well.

The emphasis is upon growth, not perfection. Don't feel guilty if you do not follow the pattern of the days exactly. Follow the content and direction seriously but not slavishly. Always remember that this is a personal pilgrimage. What you write in your personal workbook is your private property. You may not wish to share it with anyone. For this reason, no two people should attempt to share the same workbook. The importance of what you write may not mean to someone else what it means to you. Writing, even if it is only brief notes or single-word reminders, helps us clarify our feelings and thinking.

The significance of the reflecting and recording will grow as you move along. Even beyond the seven-week period, you will find meaning in looking back to what you wrote on a particular day in response to a particular situation.

Sharing with Others

You can use this workbook as a private venture without participating in a group. Its meaning will be enhanced, however, if you share the adventure with eight to twelve others. In this way, the priesthood of all believers (see 1 Peter 2:5) will come alive, and you will profit from the growing insights of others, and they will profit from yours. A guide for group sharing is included in the text at the end of each week.

If this is a group venture, all persons should begin their personal involvement with the workbook on the same day, so that when you come together to share as a group all will have been dealing with the same material and will be at the same place in the text. It will be helpful if you have an initial group meeting to get acquainted and to begin the adventure. (Suggested guide to follow.)

Group sessions for this workbook are designed to last ninety minutes (with the exception of this initial meeting). Those sharing in the group should covenant to attend all sessions unless an emergency prevents attendance. Seven weekly sessions will follow this first introductory session.

A group consisting of eight to twelve members is recommended. Larger numbers limit individual involvement. One person can provide the leadership for the entire seven weeks, or leaders can be assigned from week to week. The leader's task: to read directions and determine ahead of time how to handle the session. It may not be possible to use all the suggestions for sharing and praying together. Feel free to select those you think will be most meaningful and those for which you have adequate time. A leader should:

- model a style of openness, honesty, and warmth. A leader should not ask others to share what he or she is not willing to share. Usually the leader should be the first to share, especially as it relates to personal experiences;
- moderate the discussion;
- encourage reluctant members to participate, and try to prevent a few persons from doing all the talking;
- keep the sharing centered in personal experience, rather than academic debate;
- honor the time schedule. If it appears necessary to go longer than ninety minutes, get consensus for continuing another twenty or thirty minutes;
- confirm that meeting time and place are known by all, especially if meetings are held in different homes; and
- make sure necessary materials for meetings are available and that the meeting room is arranged ahead of time. It is desirable that weekly meetings be held in the homes of the participants. (Hosts or hostesses should make sure there are as few interruptions as possible, e.g., children, telephone, pets, etc.). If meetings are held in a church, they should be in an informal setting. Participants are asked to dress casually and to be comfortable and relaxed.

If refreshments are served, they should come after the meeting. In this way, those who wish to stay longer for informal discussion may do so, while those who need to keep to a specific time schedule will be free to leave but will get the full value of the meeting time.

Suggestions for Initial Introductory Meeting

Since the initial meeting is for the purpose of getting acquainted and beginning the shared pilgrimage, here is a way to get started:

- Have each person in the group give his or her full name and the name by which each wishes to be called. Do away with titles. Address all persons by their first name or nickname. Each person should make a list of the names somewhere in his or her workbook. (If name tags are needed, provide them.)
- Let each person in the group share one of the happiest, most exciting, or most meaningful experiences he or she has had during the past three or four weeks. After all participants have shared, lead the group in singing the doxology (“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”) or a familiar chorus of praise.
- After this experience of happy sharing, ask each person who wants to share his or her expectations of the pilgrimage. Why did he or she become a part of it? What does each expect to gain from it? What are their reservations?

The leader should now review the plan for the workbook journey and ask if there are questions about directions and procedures. (This means that the leader should have read the plan prior to the meeting.) If persons have not received copies of the workbook, the books should be made available now. Remember that every person must have his or her own workbook.

Day One in the workbook is the day following this initial meeting, and the next meeting should be held on Day Seven of the first week. If the group must choose another weekly meeting time other than seven days from this initial session, the reading assignment should be brought in harmony with that so that the weekly meetings are always on Day Seven, and Day One is always the day following a weekly meeting.

Nothing binds a group together more than praying for one another.

The leader should encourage each participant to write the names of each person in the group in his or her workbook and commit to praying for them by name daily during this seven weeks.

After checking to see that everyone knows the time and place of the next meeting, the leader may close with a prayer, thanking God for each person in the group, for the opportunity of growth, and for the possibility of growing through listening to Jesus.

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WEEK ONE

**Having Loved His Own, He
Loved Them to the End**

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DAY ONE

The Holy of Holies of the New Testament

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

—JOHN 13:1 RSV

What a picture: “having loved his own . . . , he loved them to the end”! With this shimmering description of Jesus, John begins a section of Scripture that has been designated by some scholars as “the Holy of Holies of the New Testament.” Chapters 13 through 17, in almost blinding luminosity, reveal the heart of God. The cross is Jesus’ most perfect self-revelation in action; these five chapters are His most vivid self-revelation in speech. Gleams of Jesus’ heart are unveiled here unlike any other section of Scripture.

Today we are beginning a seven-week reflection/prayer journey with Jesus. We want to look at Him, really look and see. We want to listen, really listen and hear. We want to walk with Him, walk as a friend who wants to garner from the relationship everything that is promised. We want to respond to Him, really respond in loving and joyful obedience.

So let’s take our first step. Read again verse one, printed above. Sit quietly for a few minutes and let the Word pervade your mind and heart: “having loved his own . . . , he loved them to the end.”

Instead of “to the end” many translators render the verse “unto the uttermost.” New Testament scholar E. V. Rieu renders it: “and now he showed how utterly he loved them.”¹ Two dynamics are suggested by the different translations. “Unto the uttermost” expresses

the depth and degree of Jesus' love; "to the end" suggests the permanence and perpetuity of His love.

Either rendering is staggering to contemplate. We cannot plumb the depth of Christ's love. But also think about this: the dark shadow of the cross, already covering Jesus' life, did not interrupt His love of "his own . . . to the end."

Reflecting and Recording

Spend some time reflecting, and then write a few sentences recording how you feel about Jesus' love for you.

During the Day

At mealtimes, pause a moment to offer a prayer of thanksgiving, and affirm, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

DAY TWO

The Passover, "A Piece of Cloth"

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 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.

—JOHN 13:2–5

L*es Misérables* is an epic novel that was written by Victor Hugo and published in 1862. It has been cast as a film and also as a musical, long-running on Broadway and theatres across the world. In this masterpiece, Victor Hugo presents a powerful picture of the courage and risks involved in love.

Jean Valjean, the hero in the story, was a kind of Christ figure who, "having loved his own . . . , loved them to the end" (John 13:1 RSV). He loved the little girl, Cosette, and when Cosette's mother died, he assumed the task of parenting her.

Cosette grew up and became a beautiful woman. She fell in love with Marius, who was very possessive of Cosette and distrusted Jean Valjean. He banned Valjean from his house. It was a painful rejection, but Valjean, transparent in his love and extravagant in his self-giving, suffered the estrangement nobly.

Marius was involved in the French Revolution. One night he was wounded at the barricades in the pitch of battle. In spite of the fact that Marius had exiled Valjean from his home and Cosette, Valjean struggled his way through the battle lines, risking his own life, to

rescue Marius and to save him for Cosette. He carried Marius on his shoulder through the vast underground sewers of Paris.

The evil Thénardier, a devil figure in the story, was hiding in the sewer. His primary passion was to destroy Valjean. In a struggle with Valjean, Thénardier tore off a piece of Marius's coat. He planned to blackmail Jean Valjean and then send him to the gallows for murdering whom he thought to be the victim on his shoulder.

Jean Valjean, exhausted and near death himself, delivered Marius home, where he recovered and prepared for his wedding to Cosette. In a dramatic scene, Thénardier appeared and confronted Marius with a piece of cloth from the victim's coat, believing that Marius would help him convict the hero. Marius, pale and shaking, went to the closet, picked up his battered and torn coat, matched the piece of cloth with the torn place, and learned for the first time that it had been Valjean who had saved him that night. The man whom he had hated—of whom he had been destructively jealous—had risked his life to save him.

In that moment, Thénardier was unmasked as the scoundrel that he had always been, and Jean Valjean was tearfully reconciled to Marius and restored in love with Cosette.

Can you imagine what that torn piece of cloth meant to Marius? It saved him from estrangement and separation from the man that meant the most to him and to his wife. Can you imagine what that torn piece of coat meant to Jean Valjean? It literally saved his life from return to prison, and even death.

Reflecting and Recording

Our personal memories define who we are. New research and studies have shown that children who have the ability to recall and make sense of memories from daily life can use them to better develop a sense of identity, form relationships, and make sound choices in adolescence and adulthood. Playright James M. Barrie said, "God gave us memory so that we might have roses in December."

The psalmists illustrated the power of memory. They wrote, "tears have been my food" (Ps. 42:3), feeling like "a worm and not a man . . . poured out like water" (Ps. 22:6, 14), "downcast . . . disturbed" (Ps. 43:5); then in the midst of their desolation and moans of despair, they emerged in joyous exaltation. The transition of sadness to joy is captured in

words like this: “These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God”(Ps. 42:4) and, “I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago” (Ps. 77:11).

Memory is powerful. The psalmists also call upon God to remember: “Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love . . . according to your love remember me, for you, LORD, are good” (Ps. 25:6–7).

We are going to use memory as a spiritual discipline in this journey together. Let’s begin by remembering and naming two or three significant events in our lives, with just a brief description to identify the event and/or relationship.

During the Day

Move through the day especially attentive to things you see, read, or hear that remind you of any of these significant events you have named.

DAY THREE

The New Passover

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 RSV

Jesus and His disciples gathered in the upper room around "a piece of cloth" that linked them to the most important fact of their faith. The piece of cloth was the Passover. Every year, faithful Jews relived that awesome event in their history when God delivered them from oppressive slavery in Egypt.

God had seen their unbearable horrors and suffering and sent Moses to deliver them. Pharaoh disregarded God's command to let His people go. Even after numerous warnings, and plague after devastating plague, Pharaoh refused to heed God's command.

God shared His plan of deliverance with Moses and Aaron.

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are

to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

“This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.” (Exod. 12:1–14)

The God who had made covenant with Abraham acted mightily to fulfill that covenant. Jesus and His disciples were celebrating that signal event. Though the disciples didn't know it then, we know now that Jesus was establishing a new covenant, and the next day, He would become the eternal Passover Lamb, sacrificed for our salvation.

In the first days of the church, following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Christians made this “new Passover” a central act of worship. Read again today's passage from 1 Corinthians. Paul was teaching the Corinthians about the Passover, and the new meaning given by Jesus. Earlier, he said to them: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in

the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16–17 RSV).

So when we Christians come to Holy Communion, we have a torn piece of cloth that tells us of the One who loved us enough to die for us. The bread and the wine are torn from the cross, defining what the cross is all about. In fact, the cross itself is a torn piece of cloth as well—torn from the heart of God. We match this torn piece of cloth with the being of God and discover who He is: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 RSV).

What a magnificent description of Jesus: “Having loved his own . . . , he loved them to the end” (John 13:1 RSV). The covenant of God is forever made clear. It is a covenant of love.

Reflecting and Recording

Look back at the events you thought of yesterday in your reflecting and recording time. Do any of them have anything to do with your relationship to Christ? If so, write a few sentences to describe why and how.

During the Day

Find occasions during the day—waiting for an appointment, resting, waiting at a traffic light—to repeat this affirmation: “Having loved his own . . . , he loved them to the end.”

DAY FOUR

Contract and Covenant

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.”

—JEREMIAH 31:31–32 RSV

There are two ways to look at our relationship with God: *contract* and *covenant*.

To see the relationship legalistically, as so many people do, is to think in terms of contract, and to see God as a judge. Though there is law in the Bible, and though God is judge, that’s not the dominant image in the Bible. The dominant image is covenant.

One of the ways the meaning of covenant relationship is brought to life is the picture of God as husband. This was Jeremiah’s image. Read the above passage again.

Sounds like marriage, doesn’t it? And what is a clearer image of covenant than marriage? Marriage is not a contract. When a couple sees it as a contract, the relationship is in trouble. Sure, the state regards marriage as a legal contract, but not the church. The church sees a couple as married not when they *sign* something, but when they *promise* something, when they enter a covenant.

To be sure, the covenant of marriage is fragile, and often broken long before the legal contract of the state is dissolved by divorce. It’s fragile, but far more binding in its essence. “I, John, take you, Mary—for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death separates us.”

Fragile words, but a powerful covenant. No fine print, no signing of agreement, just, “I will love you and be faithful.”

We can break the covenant—indeed, we do, and our relationship with our spouse is threatened. But here is the good news: we can break our covenant with God, but God, this “husband,” will never leave us. “Having loved his own . . . , he loved them to the end” (John 13:1 RSV). Though we separate ourselves from God, reconciliation is always possible. We can always come home.

It’s interesting that one way salvation is pictured in the New Testament is as a home-coming. The parable of the prodigal son is a transparent witness of this. When the wayward boy “came to his senses” (Luke 15:17), he knew he needed to be back home. When he returned, the father received him as though he had never been away. He was given a ring, the signet ring of the family, so no one would ever question whether he was a part of the family or not (see Luke 15:11–32).

Reflecting and Recording

Name a covenant you have made; describe it enough to get it firmly in your mind.

Name and briefly describe a contract in which you are involved.

What keeps you bound to the covenant you have named? What binds you to the contract?

Spend some time reflecting on your relationship with God. Does it look more like a contract or a covenant? Do you have doubts about God keeping His covenant?

During the Day

Make a copy of this portion of a prayer of St. Patrick. Take it with you today, or put it in a place where you will see it frequently during the day. Pray it as often as you can.

I bind unto myself today:

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.

DAY FIVE

I Have Given You an Example

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 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.

—JOHN 13:2–5

Tony Campollo tells about the Baptist church he attends in the city of Philadelphia. They celebrate a student recognition day once a year on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's Day. At one service, after six or seven students had spoken, the pastor stood and said, "Children, you are going to die. You may not think you are going to die, but you are. One of these days, they will take you to the cemetery, drop you in a hole, throw some dirt on your face, and go back to the church and eat potato salad." What an opener for a sermon! Shocking.

Jesus' words must have been as shocking, but His actions were even more shocking. He rose from the table, acting like a servant, girded himself with a towel, took a basin of water, and washed all the disciples' feet.

Don't pass over the introductory word to Jesus' dramatic action: "Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God." Jesus' actions and words came from His knowing who He was.

Friends told me the story of their son who came home from school one day and asked his mother, "Where did I come from?" She was taken aback and said to herself, "Oh, my, here it is!" She and her husband had talked of this day, and sought to prepare themselves for it, so she told him to wait until his father came home and they would discuss it.

Though he knew it would happen sometime, the father was not anxious for the challenge. After dinner, the three of them sat down, and the father and mother hid their nervousness by appearing in control, and with words carefully chosen, explained how human reproduction occurs, and how he was born.

Both parents stammered and perspired a bit, but they made it through, and the father asked, with a kind of sigh, "Now, Tim, does that answer your question?"

Tim, who had listened without a word, responded rather hesitantly, "Yes, and no." "My friend Jimmy said he came from Biloxi, Mississippi."

We can trust the word and action testimony when it comes from someone who knows who he is and where he came from.

The Bible does not tell us when Jesus became aware of who He was, but the message of Scripture is that Jesus was always confident of who He was and why He had come to earth. At the early age of twelve, Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover because His parents supposed that He was in the company of those they were traveling with. After a day's journey, they sought Jesus among their relatives and acquaintances, but couldn't find Him. They returned to Jerusalem.

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:46-49)

From this account we see that, at the age of twelve, Jesus knew His identity: He was at home in His Father's house.

During His public ministry, He was sure of His identity and calling. When the Pharisees questioned His authority, and sought to know why they should accept His witness and teaching, He told them exactly where He came from: “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

Jesus was so confident of His identity that even in the experience of betrayal and facing death, He didn’t deny who He was or His calling. In the garden of Gethsemane, he “knelt down and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done’” (Luke 22:41–42). Jesus knew what He was about to face, and He faced it without wavering.

At His trial, when He refused to respond to the testimony of the Sanhedrin that He had been making claims about being Christ, “[t]he high priest said to him, ‘I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ [Jesus responded,] ‘You have said so’” (Matt. 26:63–64).

He realized that this confession would lead to His eventual death, but He set the record straight. He had no doubts of His identity and calling.

Ponder the way John writes about Him: “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel” (John 13:3–4 RSV).

Jesus knew who He was: He had come from God, and was going to God.

All sorts of people call us to follow their example. A huge part of television advertising is the personal witness sort, urging us to follow particular examples. The advertisers presume a lot. Why should some television personality know what’s the best car for us to drive? Or, why should some bone-crushing athlete have better taste buds and be an authority on either drink or food? Because someone may be stunning and beautiful doesn’t mean they have good judgment about mouthwash or toothpaste.

When people are making their testimony, we need to check it out, especially if they are asking us to follow their example. This testimony of Jesus comes from someone who knows who He is, from where He has come, and we can follow that. We can trust the example He offers.

Reflecting and Recording

Think of a person who has recently shared something with you that got your attention. What did they share? Was it a personal experience? Had they experienced what they talked about? Were they trying to convince you of some conviction of theirs? What about the sharing really got your attention and influenced you to listen?

Locate in your memory a Christian witness (testimony) that impacted your life. Make enough notes about that experience to get it firmly in mind.

Looking back on that experience, what made you think the witness was worth listening to?

During the Day

Seek at least one opportunity today to share your faith with someone. Flavor that witness with “knowing who you are, and from where you have come.”

DAY SIX

Power That Stoops to Serve

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

—LUKE 22:24–27

Luke tells the story of the dispute among the disciples about who was greatest in the context of Jesus' last supper as they celebrated Passover together. Luke, however, does not tell of the foot washing. Yet, he provides a sentence that finds its true meaning in Jesus' act of foot washing: "But I am among you as one who serves" (v. 27).

The foot washing was the signal act in the event. This is clear in the way John, in introducing the story, records Jesus' reason for doing what He did. These reasons are stated in two convictions of Jesus, which have an intimate connection with Jesus' call to a foot-washing style of life.

John 13:1 expresses one of those convictions: "[W]hen Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (RSV). His loving them *to the end*, not just to the end of His life, but loving them "to the uttermost," required that He share as clearly as possible who He was and the life to which He was calling them.

The second conviction that leads to His act of foot washing is stated: “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” (John 13:3–4). Jesus was absolutely conscious of His divine nature, and this led Him to perform this act of a slave. He who was so high stooped so low. Loftiness was joined with lowliness to demonstrate a love that serves.

The humble know who they are. Albert Schweitzer was once working around the hospital in Lambaréné, when a visitor from America saw him pushing a wheelbarrow. He was shocked that this renowned doctor would stoop to such manual labor, so he asked, “How is it, Doctor, that you push a wheelbarrow?” Without stopping, Dr. Schweitzer replied, “With two hands.”

Reflecting and Recording

Recall here some act you performed or some relationship you shared that would come closest to a foot-washing style.

Spend a few minutes reflecting on your daily life. How close does it come to a foot-washing style?

During the Day

Seek a specific opportunity today to stoop and serve.

DAY SEVEN

The Nature of Humility

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, "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." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

—JOHN 13:3–11

There is true humility and there is affected humility. Look at the contrast between Jesus and Peter. When Jesus came to Peter to wash his feet, Peter resisted: "Lord, do not wash my feet" (author's paraphrase). I'm sure there was real sincerity in that. But sincerity and humility are not the same.

Peter was struggling in his relationship with Jesus, struggling with his own life, struggling with what was going on because things were not turning out as he thought they might when he left his fishing boat and followed this itinerant preacher. And he certainly didn't

understand what Jesus was doing. He couldn't understand why Jesus was deliberately taking the position of a servant, so he *acted* humbly and backed away from Jesus because he didn't want his leader washing his feet. It was a kind of affected humility.

But not the humility expressed by Jesus. As I said yesterday, the humble know who they are. Jesus knew who He was; Peter did not yet know who he was.

In our culture, it is easy to have distorted notions about humility. We think of it as a kind of cowering, taking a backseat kind of style. In our most mistaken notions, we stereotype the humble person as being without strength, allowing people to take advantage of them, and staying in the shadow. That's not true humility.

A father made this confession. Every night he would bring work home from the office; lots of work, work he would begin doing right after the evening meal. One night his son asked him why he brought all this work home. He explained, probably too adult-like, that he was a very busy person, his job was demanding, and he just had more work to do than he could get done at the office.

I like what the little boy said. From his world, and the way they did it at school, he asked, "Well, in that case, why don't they put you in a slower group?"

Is anything more needed—to know who we are and, thus, to be genuinely humble? This means knowing our weaknesses, as well as our strengths. Perhaps more than anything else the humble not only know they are vulnerable, they know their Source of power. They live from the inside out, not the outside in. The humble have power, but the power is not so much in them as through them.

I'm not a baseball fan, but I relish sports stories of perspective and power, of humility and greatness. One of my favorite stories speaks to this issue of humility, of living from the inside out, not the outside in.

After the Dodgers won the Pennant in 1988, they gave their star pitcher, Orel Hershiser, a three-year contract for 7.7 million dollars. Though I have real problems with that sort of price tag on sports stars, it does say that Hershiser was a phenomenal player.

In Game Two of that series, Hershiser was pitching. He got two doubles and a single at bat, as many hits and more total bases than he allowed the competing team. He ran the bases like Jackie Robinson, and shut out Oakland 6–0.

Then came the fifth and final game. Folks wondered if Hershiser was going to make it again. He had to talk his manager into letting him stay in when he got into trouble in the eighth inning. He went on to win the series by winning that final game 5–2.

What fans remembered for a long time, though, was watching Hershiser on television on the bench in the top half of an inning, leaning back, mouth wide open, singing to himself that last night. It wasn't until later on that we learned exactly what he was doing. He was singing to himself two songs: The Doxology—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow . . ."—and a contemporary Christian tune by the late Keith Green called "Rushing Wind." A line in that song goes: "Rushing wind, blow through this temple, blowing out the dust within."¹

Hershiser said he wanted to cleanse his mind of all the clutter of the world in that moment, to block out the pressure, and concentrate on the game at hand. This was a convincing picture of living from the inside out, not the outside in.

As with Jesus, so with Hershiser and us, when we know who we are, we know our Source of power.

Reflecting and Recording

Did you follow through with yesterday's suggestion to seek a specific opportunity to stoop and serve? Make some notes, honestly expressing your feelings about that exercise.

What does it mean to live from the inside out, rather than the outside in? Can you think of incidents when you expressed that kind of living?

During the Day

Find an occasion today to talk to someone about what it means to live from the inside out. Maybe tell them the story of Hershiser to get the discussion going.

GROUP MEETING FOR WEEK ONE

• INTRODUCTION •

These group sessions will be meaningful to the degree that they reflect the experience of all participants. The guide is simply an effort to facilitate personal sharing. Therefore, do not be rigid in following these suggestions. Leaders, especially, should seek to be sensitive to what is going on in the lives of the participants and to focus on the group sharing of these experiences.

Ideas are important. We should wrestle with new ideas as well as ideas with which we disagree. It is important, however, that the group meeting not become a debate about ideas. The emphasis should be upon persons, shared experiences, and relationships. Content is important—but how content applies to our individual lives and our relationship to Christ is most important.

As the group comes to the place where all can share honestly and openly, the more meaningful the experience will be. This does not mean sharing only the good or positive; but also the questions, struggles, difficulties, and the negatives.

The process is not easy; it is deceptive to pretend it is. Growth requires effort. Don't be afraid to share your questions, reservations, and dry periods, as well as that in which you find meaning.

• SHARING TOGETHER •

1. Leaders, begin the group with prayer. Then, if necessary, invite each person to introduce him or herself, giving their full name and the name by which they wish to be called.
2. Invite each person to share the most meaningful day with the workbook this week, beginning with the leader.

3. Invite those who are willing to share their most difficult day, and why it was difficult.
4. Invite two or three persons to share the occasion when they accepted the fact that they were truly loved by God.
5. (Leaders, be sensitive to time; remember the meeting is scheduled to last no more than ninety minutes.) Spend five to ten minutes discussing the difference between a relationship being a covenant or a contract.
6. Leaders, be sure to save at least five minutes for closing prayer time. With the time you have left, invite participants to share their memory of a Christian witness (testimony) that impacted their life.

• PRAYING TOGETHER •

Suggestions for this time will be offered each week. The leader should examine these ahead of time—regarding them only as suggestions. What is happening in the meeting—the mood, the needs that are expressed, the timing—should determine the direction of the group’s praying together.

Leaders should introduce the prayer time with something like this:

Corporate prayer is one of the great blessings of Christian community, but that prayer does not always have to be verbal. In this time of prayer we are going to be praying silently. I hope you have written the name of each person in your group somewhere in your workbook. Look at that list now. Let’s spend about three minutes going through our lists. As you see a name, think of what that person has shared in this session, and simply breathe a prayer, “Lord, I offer up [fill in the blank] to You for Your blessing.”

After sufficient time, invite the group to join you in praying together the Lord’s Prayer.