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Do This To Show Someone Their Worth

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As Jesus entered the Upper Room for a final meal with His disciples, He remained silent. No need to speak. His actions would soon say more than words: “You want to see greatness? You want to see power? Look here. I’ve been telling you all along that great men serve. Here's what it looks like."

Great Men Do This

On the last evening of Jesus’ earthly life, at a time when He felt the urgency of the hour, He didn’t review His accomplishments? He didn’t remind His disciples about the people He had healed, fed, taught, forgiven, or raised from the dead. He didn’t talk about walking on water or driving out demons. He didn’t perform one last miracle. Instead, He disrobed, knelt, and performed the work of a lowly servant. He washed the disciples dirty feet.

When Jesus got to Peter, the fisherman said, “No, you shall never wash my feet” (John 13:8).

I don’t blame Peter. Jesus was the Messiah . . . the future king. From Peter’s perspective, kings don't wash the feet of fishermen. They rule kingdoms. They command armies. Peter may have thought Jesus had lost His mind. No leader had ever performed such a task—at least no master -leader. Peter had no way of knowing that over the next few minutes Jesus would redefine leadership, power, and greatness. In creating the role of a servant-leader, Jesus modeled what the apostle Paul would later call, “power made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Whatever Peter thought, his words veiled a stern rebuke—a push-back against Jesus. In response, the Lord pushed back harder. He said, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). In other words, “Let Me wash your feet or show you the door.”

Given that choice, Peter relented—in fact, true to his nature, he swung to the opposite extreme: “Then Lord, . . . not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!” In his initial refusal, Peter had apparently forgotten what happened when James and John asked Jesus if they could sit at His right and left hand during His future glory. The Lord had called the disciples together and told them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45). By washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus had *shown* them what He meant. And then He said, “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” (John 13:15-17).

Instead of Dominating, Jesus Served

Jesus interacted with people from a position of strength and self-control. Yet He refused to exercise that strength by dominating. Instead, He served. In John’s account of the foot-washing he shows us the source of the Lord's strength. “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God.” His humility and sense of worth flowed from His Father, who repeatedly affirmed Him. This freed Jesus to serve others without regard to appearance.

Jesus never sought honor—He extended it. He never sought respect—He extended it.

The disciples, on the other hand, tried in their own strength to win respect by fighting for honor and refusing to serve. They hadn’t learned how to find their identity in God, their heavenly Father. Jesus never vied for a position of honor, because His Father had already given Him honor.

By washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus did more than remove dirt. He lifted them above Himself—even Judas. Did you catch that? Jesus washed the feet of the man who would betray Him. And the feet of the man who would deny Him three times. And the men who would desert Him. He honored them by stooping to serve. And by stooping to serve, He declared their worth.

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