

Drawing Closer to God - Week 2

God has given us his Word and Spirit to teach and encourage us and to reveal himself to us. To draw closer to him, we must know him and to know him more, we must spend time with him. We can do this in many ways privately. We can also draw closer together as his people to be in his presence, hear his words and voice in our hearts and then share and encourage each other. By being intentional in prioritizing spending time listening to God and hearing God through each other, we can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live it out and share with others.

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17 NLT)

¹³ Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.^[a] ² It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas,^[b] son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶ When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will. ⁸ "No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." ⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

¹⁰ Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet,^[c] to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴ And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Divide into groups of 3 (4 at the most)

Sit in silence. With your eyes closed, breathe deeply in and out a few times. Relax your body and your mind and let go of worries, frustrations and to do lists for this time set aside for God and his Word. Note that we are made of spirit, soul, heart, and body. God gave us many senses to experience him and the world he gave us. He can use any and all of them to draw us closer to himself.

Today we have the opportunity to enter the Upper Room with Jesus and his disciples the evening before he was arrested. I will read the scripture to you. Let yourself use your imagination to engage personally with it. You may use this paper to jot things down for yourself during the reading, but you don't need to because afterwards you will have time to make notes before you share with your group.

Each of us will be able to experience this scripture individually as we visualize being present with Jesus and the disciples. Release your logical framework and embrace your creativity as you allow yourself to enter into the Bible story as it unfolds. **Close your eyes.** Let God guide your mind, heart and imagination to see, hear, feel, taste, touch and experience being present with Jesus and disciples. **Imagine you are there in this moment.**

Let yourself picture them and the room and yourself in it. Notice who or what is near you, facial expressions, who you are drawn to or who repels you. Notice sounds, smells, physical sensations, tones of voice, emotions of other people as well as your own. Become a part of everything you hear and notice as you are there with Jesus and his disciples in the room set aside to celebrate the Passover meal. **Open your heart as I read...**

After the reading, we will sit in silence for a few minutes. Then make some notes of what you experienced so you can share with your group.

Here are some questions to ask yourself. Choose a few to share:

As you share in your groups, remember to focus on understanding and encouraging the person sharing, noticing how you see God moving in them and blessing them.

Who or what were you in the story? Where were you and who was with you? What did you see? What other senses did you use? What did you feel? What sensations? What emotions?

What did you notice about the room? About Jesus? About the Disciples? About yourself?

Describe how you felt about being there. What questions or issues did this bring up in you? How did this experience affect your understanding of Jesus, his actions and this event?

Was this easy? Difficult? How did you feel God's presence? How did this experience affect your relationship with God? Other comments?

Take with you the assurance that God is always with you and calls you to have an intimate relationship with him using all the faculties he created in you. The Holy Spirit will continue to draw you closer as you release yourself to him in everything you are and do.