

Briefing Doc: John 13:1-17 & 1 Peter 4:10-11

For the message, "Let Us Serve One Another" given by Pastor John Ferguson
at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on April 6, 2025

*This is a fun AI generated briefing document (edited) to help you process
and reflect upon what we learned in our study together of this passage*

Main Theme: This study centers on the crucial theme of servanthood as a defining characteristic of a gospel-impacted community, drawing primarily from the account of Jesus washing his disciples' feet in John 13 and connecting it to other New Testament passages. The overarching message is a call to intentionally embrace a posture of service towards one another, reflecting the humility and love demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

Key Ideas and Facts:

1. The Context: The Last Supper and a Dispute Over Greatness:

- The sermon begins by establishing the context of John 13 – the Last Supper, just before the Passover feast and Jesus' impending departure, emphasizing a critical detail from Luke's Gospel: a dispute arose among the disciples about which of them was the greatest.
- Jesus directly addresses this prideful argument by contrasting worldly notions of greatness with his own example: "Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is greater, the one who reclines at a table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table, but I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22).

2. Jesus' Act of Foot Washing as a Radical Example of Servanthood:

- The central event is Jesus rising from supper, taking off his outer garments, and washing his disciples' feet. The sermon emphasizes the unexpected and scandalous nature of this act: "Nothing braced them for what happened next... I wonder if embarrassment fell upon them at that moment realizing how stupid they had been to be arguing about who's the greatest. I mean, the greatest is in the room with them and is now washing their feet."
- The speaker highlights the cultural significance: foot washing was a basic act of hospitality usually performed by the lowest servant, and disciples were not permitted to wash their master's feet. Jesus, their Lord and Teacher, taking on this role was unprecedented.

3. Jesus' Teaching on True Greatness:

- The sermon references Jesus' direct teaching on greatness from Mark 10:43-45: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you 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 a ransom for many."
- Jesus explicitly instructs his disciples to follow his example: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do just as I have done to you" (John 13).
- The sermon summarizes this by stating, "Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords became the Servant of the servants. We've got to hold these together." The disciples expected a conquering king but struggled to grasp the concept of a serving Messiah.

4. Practical Application: Loving, Serving, and Slaying Pride:

- Let us remember how Jesus loved them and us "to the very end," culminating in his sacrificial death on the cross, which was a far greater act of service than washing feet.
- Let us ruthlessly slay pride in our lives. Mahaney: "The real issue here is not if pride exists in your heart. It's where pride exists and how pride is being expressed in your life." The disciples' argument about greatness despite Jesus' teachings is used as an example of unseen pride.
- John Stott's quote is also included: "At every stage of our Christian development and in every sphere of our Christian discipleship pride is the greatest enemy. And humility is our greatest friend."
- Let us intentionally take the place of a servant with one another. The sermon encourages practical actions like asking "How can I help?" in various relationships (marriage, roommates, work). It highlights Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 4:10-11: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace... Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies." The speaker notes that this strength often comes in the act of serving.

5. The Blessing of Servanthood and Becoming More Like Jesus:

- Jesus states, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (Sermon, quoting John 13). The blessing is not just in understanding but in the active practice of servanthood.
- The sermon concludes by suggesting that a community where serving one another brings joy, mirroring Jesus' own disposition, is a powerful indicator of becoming more like Christ. The anecdote of the 13-year-old girl finding the food pantry her "favorite place in the world" illustrates this point.
- The ultimate goal is to have the mindset of Jesus: "I am among you as one who serves." (Sermon, quoting Luke 22).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, both the sermon and the accompanying slides present a compelling case for servanthood as the essence of Christian community, grounded in the profound example of Jesus Christ. They challenge listeners/viewers to move beyond a theoretical understanding to a practical and intentional embrace of serving one another, actively combating pride and reflecting the love and humility of their Lord.

Bonus Thought: If God wants to make me more like Jesus, can he do that without making me into a servant?