

DAY 10

Serve Like Jesus: Humility

So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

John 13:4–5

Leadership Affirmation

I humble myself before those I lead, even as Jesus humbled himself before those who looked to him for guidance.

Great leaders are humble. Jesus, the Son of God, took on the role of a servant by washing His disciples' feet, a task typically performed by the lowest servant. Jesus's action of washing the disciples' feet was outlandish.

Peter, to his credit, recognizes the outlandish action and initially wants no part of it. In the Jewish mind, this was a job so low that only the lowest *Gentile* slave should do it, with some insisting that no *Jewish* slave should be required to do this job.^{ix} If peers didn't wash one another's feet, certainly the Rabbi of a band of peripatetic disciples had no business with a towel and a basin of water.

We publicly acknowledge that Christian leadership isn't about position and power and control and personal prestige. But we still long to be the hero to those we serve.^x How easily we default to *acting* humble without necessarily *being* humble. We seem to have a carryover notion that being humble is a sign of weakness, that it is a wearying burden. Gene Wilkes addressed this in *Jesus on Leadership*. He heard a pastor say, "If we exalt ourselves, we will be humbled. If we humble ourselves, we will be exhausted."^{xi}

Humility doesn't mean being a doormat or having a low view of yourself. Rather, it is acknowledging that apart from the Spirit of God empowering us, we really can do nothing that has lasting value. God doesn't see us as lowly and pitiful. He sees us as needy and dependent and highly treasured. We are so treasured by God that He gave His only Son to redeem us. The humble leader accepts this God-given identity and mission.^{xii}

Our identity is in Jesus. And when we identify with him, we receive His word: *Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him* (John 13:16).

Prayer for Protection

Dear Lord, deliver me from thinking of myself more highly than I ought to think.