



The Last Shall be First

A Challenge for Christian Lawyers

A Bible Study by Yvonne Viakemulder

a publication of the Christian Legal Society

The Last Shall Be First

A CHALLENGE
FOR CHRISTIAN
LAWYERS

A BIBLE STUDY
by
Yvonne Vinkemulder

Christian Legal Society gratefully acknowledges the generous gift we received from the CLS Puerto Rico Chapter under the leadership of Hector M Hernandez-Nazario of Hernandez-Nazario & DeMier-LeBlanc which has made the republication of this Bible study possible



Christian Legal Society

©1997 Christian Legal Society

Introduction

Take time to get acquainted with each other

As a bridge to the study, you might think of a time when, as a guest or visitor, you felt warmly welcomed. What did your host or hostess do to welcome you?

John 13:11-18

John 13:34-35

Now that I,
your Lord and
Teacher, have
washed your feet,
you also should
wash one
another's feet.

JOHN 13:14

Study 1

THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS MASTER

STUDY

1. In the Palestinian culture, the gracious host would provide water for guests to wash their feet. If there were servants, a servant would wash and dry the guests' feet. Imagine how this would feel to you after a long walk on dusty roads.
2. Read John 13:1-18. The site is a room borrowed for the evening (c f Mark 14:12-16). Briefly describe the action.

3. If you had been one of the Twelve, what thoughts might have gone through your head as Jesus came to you?

4. What did Jesus know (vv 1-3, 10-11, 18)? What effect might this have had on His non-discriminatory actions?

5. In what ways does your self-attitude affect your actions toward others? How does assurance of your relationship with God free you?

6. What is the point of Jesus' action (vv 12-16)? Recall that the Twelve had seen Jesus serve others for three years. Why do you think He now uses a dramatic and personal act to make His point?

7. Our culture doesn't require that we wash guests' feet. If Jesus were among us today, what might He do to make His point?

8. Think of the various relationships you're familiar with. Identify some thoughts or feelings those who serve might have. (You might consider, for example, host/guest, family or peers, lawyer/client, master/servant, employer/employee.) Look at John 13:34-35. According to Jesus, what should be the mark of our serving others? What will result?

9. Think of the person(s) closest to you. What do you expect from your relationship? In what ways might you take the place of a servant? What effect might this have on those believers who look up to you as their example and teacher? On non-believers?

10. How can we serve you now by praying for you?

GROUP PRAYER

Take time to pray for each other in response to the last question

YOUR CHALLENGE

Go... and serve!

Study 2

Isaiah 52:13 to
Isaiah 53:12

But He was
pierced for our
transgressions, he
was crushed for
our iniquities;
ISAIAH 53:5a

PORTRAIT OF A SERVANT

Think of some portraits you've seen. Who do people paint portraits of? What do portraits tell you about the person?

A servant is an unlikely candidate for a portrait. In the first study, we glanced quickly at Jesus, the servant-model. Now we want to gaze intently at the Servant's portrait, clearly identified in the New Testament as Jesus.

STUDY

1. What image pops into your mind when you think of a servant?
2. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Describe this servant — his appearance, development, actions, etc. In what ways does he fit your image of a servant? How does he differ?

3. How do others react? What reason do you find for their reaction (c.f. especially 52:1-6)?
4. Compare the verb phrases that describe the servant in 53:4-6 and 10-12, noticing similarities and repetition. What appears to be the servant's primary role?
5. How does or should a lawyer bear burdens and carry loads that rightfully belong to others?
6. How does the servant respond when mistreated and denied justice? Think of a time when you've been mistreated or denied rights or justice; compare and contrast this with the servant's response.
7. Account for the ultimate reason(s) for the servant's pain and anguish (vv. 6, 10). What does he anticipate?
8. How does assurance of God's will and hope for the future give you perspective as you endure hard times and trials?
9. The New Testament clearly identifies the servant as Jesus. In John 13:16 in the first lesson, Jesus said, "The servant is not greater than his master." Connecting these two passages, how is Jesus' servanthood and ultimate sacrifice an example to us?

PRAYER

St. Francis of Assisi captured the essence of Isaiah 53 in a prayer; let this guide our prayers for ourselves and each other during this study:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your Peace —
Where there is hatred, let me sow Love;
Where there is injury, Pardon;
Where there is doubt, Faith;
Where there is despair, Hope;
Where there is darkness, Light;
Where there is sadness, Joy

O Divine Master, grant that I not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to
Eternal Life

Study 3

ISAIAH 58

to loose the
chains of injustice
and untie the
cords of the yoke,
to set the
oppressed free
and break
every yoke.
ISAIAH 58:6b

THE SERVANT'S VOCATION

Is your life compartmentalized or integrated? Do you have separate boxes for worship and prayer, compassion and justice, work and/or study, family and friends, recreation and chores, etc? A time and place for each?

Isaiah conveyed the Lord's words to people who tried to keep Him in a religious box-and then were surprised that He didn't respond.

STUDY

1. Recall a time when you weren't listening to God, when your spiritual "hearing aid" turned off. How did God get your attention?

2. Read Isaiah 58. To whom is God speaking? About what? Why do you think the Lord trumpets their sin (v. 1)?
3. Notice How God's people compartmentalize life. What did they focus on? How do you think they perceive themselves (vv 2-3)?
4. Why did the Lord seemingly ignore them (vv. 3b-4)?
5. Contrast the religious practices of these people with the practices the Lord has chosen. In what ways are His practices like a fast?
6. Examine vv. 6-7 more closely. What kinds of needs are identified? Think of people within your sphere (e.g. clients, students, acquaintances, family): do any have similar physical, emotional or spiritual needs? What might you do to free, feed, shelter, protect, or care for them? Might God be asking you to move out of your comfort zone and expand your circle?
7. What promise(s) does God make to those who choose His kind of fast? Contrast these promises with His peoples' present experience (vv 2-4), then contrast them with your own experience.
8. Compare v. 3 with v. 13. What seems to be the crux of the Lord's complaint against His people? How does this contrast with the portrait of a servant showcased in Isaiah 53?
9. Think about the place your religious practices have in your activities. To what extent do you compartmentalize your life to suit your needs and schedule? What changes might you make to create a seamless web, integrating your faith in Christ into all of life? How do you think this will affect others?

PRAYER

In Romans 12:1 the apostle Paul urges us to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." Focus your prayer time on asking

God's forgiveness for compartmentalizing and for seeking your own goals rather than His. Ask for His help in offering yourself as a living sacrifice.

FOR FUTURE REFLECTION

How do you respond when the Lord speaks? Isaiah's response is recorded in Chapter 59: (1) he looks at his world (vv. 1-8); (2) he acknowledges how great are the needs (vv. 9-11); he confesses the sin of his society (vv. 12-15a); he anticipates the Lord's intervention (vv. 15b-19). If possible, find time today to look at Isaiah's response, and contemplate your own response.

Study 4

PHILIPPIANS 2

Do nothing out of
selfish ambition
or vain conceit,
but in humility
consider others
better than
yourselves.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3

THE MIND OF A SERVANT

INTRODUCTION

Being a servant like the Master is not a change of clothes, a series of events or independent actions. It's a way of life.

STUDY

1. Think of a person who has been a servant to you. What qualities stand out?
2. Read Philippians 2:1-13, paying particular attention to repeated and/or similar words and ideas. What is the substance of the writer's appeal (vv. 1-5)?

3. What motives should be the underpinnings of our actions toward others? What do we need to repudiate?

4. What is the mind of Christ like (vv 5-9)? How did He flesh out or model the attitude and mind-set we are to have?

5. Compare the concepts of humility and exaltation in vv 8 - 11. How would you define humility? Why is humility an essential characteristic of a servant?

6. Talking about the mind of Christ in our study is easy; it's much harder to act as He did. What is your responsibility? What is God's? How does it help you to know the whole load isn't on you?

7. Read Philippians 2:14-30. In what ways are the children of God to be different from other people?

8. What's the difference between grumbling and complaining? What causes us to grumble and complain? (See vv 3-4.)

9. Look quickly at the persons described in vv. 17-30. What qualities of servanthood stand out in each of these men? How might their example strengthen your resolve to serve your family, clients and colleagues, others?

10. Think again of the person you identified as a servant to you. What qualities of a servant described in Philippians 2 have you seen in that person? What quality or qualities of a servant would you like us to pray will become part of the fabric of your life?

PRAYER

In your prayer time, you might pray for the person on your right, asking God to help to develop the quality or qualities he/she identified. Then resolve to serve each other by staying in touch through the study time and afterward

YOUR CHALLENGE

Go in peace! It is God who is at work in you both to want to do — and to DO — what pleases Him!



Study Notes

Study Notes

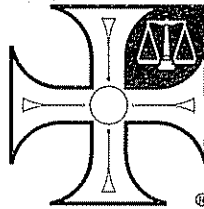
*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition
or vain conceit,
but in humility
consider others better than yourselves."*

— **Phillipians 2:3**

There is no better example for a Christian lawyer to follow in the practice of law than Jesus Christ, who even now is our "Advocate" who ever lives "to make intercession" for us with the Father in heaven. (Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1.) In this Bible study, we are challenged to compare and contrast our ideas about service to clients, our fellow workers, our families and even our enemies with the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ. This study will help the lawyer or law student understand the servant's calling we have as followers of Christ.

Yvonne Vinkemulder served for many years as the General Counsel for Intervarsity Christian Fellowship in Madison, Wisconsin. She is a graduate of the University of Miami School of Law, and has been a member of the Christian Legal Society since 1980.

For more information about CLS membership and its publications and services, please contact us below.



Christian Legal Society

<http://www.clsnet.com>