

Gospel of John #20
Let Go, Say No, Grow
John 13

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When I was single, I had an ingrown toenail and the college pastor knew I had this issue. When he brought water to wash feet one night at our college group, I escaped to the bathroom because I didn't want to be exposed.

"Image is everything!" -Andre Agassi

You might disagree with this but I think it might be true. And because image is everything:

- we struggle to **let go** (of control)
- we struggle to **say no** (to our addictions)
- we struggle to **grow** (in Christ)

Self image plays a huge role in shaping the options you perceive as available to you. For example, we live in a world full of labels. Maybe you have felt you are shy and introverted all your life and that you need down time to recover from people. When you walk in the door here at the Village, you believe you have limited options because you "are introverted." On the flip side, you might believe you are a people-person with the limited options of being funny and extroverted; the option of sitting in the corner and not talking isn't an option.

You might find yourself caught up in controlling your image and environment to make you feel OK. But Jesus is about **image deconstruction**: losing the labels and narratives you have. He wants to broaden your choices.

What part of your self-image (belief statements you have developed from yourself and others) is Jesus inviting you to deconstruct? Which ones make it very difficult to let go of control and demands. What story do you tell yourself?

At this point in **John 13**, Jesus has 24 hours left and he talks a lot; between Chapters 13 and 19, John records a lot of these final teachings.

John 13

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.

This was part of the Passover meal Jesus was having with his disciples: take a moment to feel these disputes which brought relational disappointments and tension:

Luke 22:24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.

Note to parents: Jesus was perfect and during the last 24 hours of his life, those who spent three years with him were fighting about who was greatest and one of them wanted to stab him in the back. Have grace on yourself, parents!

Watch Jesus deconstruct their self images:

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **4** so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. **5** After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." **11** For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. **13** "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. **14** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. **16** Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. **17** Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Help me out here! What do you observe about the disciples' self images? Call it out:

- They seem clueless
- They believe they are entitled
- They have to prove themselves
- They are the cutting edge of the revolution
- Lazarus was just raised and they think they were in the in-crowd

Servants were the ones who normally cleaned people's feet. The disciples, however, didn't have servants and hence were responsible for cleaning each other's feet. ***But they don't see a need.***

There is a contrast between the disciples who wanted to be greatest and Jesus who IS the greatest. With this in mind, Jesus begins washing feet until he gets to Peter. If Peter wants to be around Jesus, he has to let him serve him, a very vulnerable and exposing position. He agrees, though, and Jesus starts talking again: serve one another and be blessed. This actually addresses the honor that they were fighting for in **Luke 22:24**. If they do as he did, they will be known and called.

I often get requests for books to read. Why? Because we want instructions about how to do things. But the answer I want to give is The Bible. This will help us to be a better parent, spouse, neighbor, etc. We think we need more than this but really, the Bible is the best and today's chapter is about this.

If you want to understand who you are, wash someone else's feet. Care for others and serve them. When things aren't working at home in your relationships, ask what it would look like to wash your spouses feet, to let go of your control and expectations and in humility and wash your children's feet, your spouse's feet. **This will transform your marriage and friendships!** The way you interact changes: you are no longer trying to control things to meet your needs.

Judas's moments with Jesus are among the most painful because Jesus loved Judas to the end. He tells him to do what he has to do and then continues talking.

18 “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned^[a] against me.’^[b]”

19 “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. **20** Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.”

21 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

22 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. **23** One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. **24** Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

25 Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

26 Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. **27** As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” **28** But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. **29** Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. **30** As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

We pick up the narrative after Judas:

31 When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. **32** If God is glorified in him,^[a] God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

33 “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

36 Simon Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?”

Jesus replied, “Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”

37 Peter asked, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.”

38 Then Jesus answered, “Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!

23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

It’s interesting that John 13 starts with Passover, the exit out of Egypt before God gives them the Law. Now they get a new commandment: this is the way the world will know who we are as followers of Jesus.

Jesus came: he chose, provided for, and taught the disciples; he was human, gentle, intimate and didn’t condemn yet he demonstrated the core of this in his service to them. He gets down on his hands and knee and serves, not fighting for position. This is a nice big picture but, in reality, we are always fighting for position to know we are Ok. To be really blessed, Jesus says we have to lift others up and serve them. This creates an environment of love where we can fight addictions. This is how we become leaders of love.

Last week, I ended with the idea of not letting others define our identity. In the in-grown toenail example, I wanted to be the one who defined myself. However, I cannot entrust others telling me who I am: this is the job of Jesus alone. Jesus came to save so he didn’t base this on how others saw him.

What part of me is the thing that I cannot let go and say no?

I want to have a conversation about this now: I want to allow time now to talk about what kind of self-images we have constructed.

