



Session 6: (Extra) Ordinary life

How do we begin to appreciate ordinary stuff – in a world where a simple coffee comes in 20 varieties and TV has to offer hundreds of channels plus HD and 3D?

How do we learn to appreciate the ordinary, mundane and everyday stuff of life? Jesus often referred to ordinary things in life – sparrows, the lilies in the field, housework and vineyards; he often turned the ordinary into extra-ordinary (water into wine!). It's so easy to lose our sense of wonder and not notice God in everyday life.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

John 13.1–20

It was before Passover, and Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and to return to the Father. He had always loved his followers in this world, and he loved them to the very end.

Even before the evening meal started, the devil had made Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, decide to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that he had come from God and would go back to God. He also knew that the Father had given him complete power. So during the meal Jesus got up, removed his outer garment, and wrapped a towel around his waist. He put some water into a large bowl. Then he began washing his disciples' feet and drying them with the towel he was wearing. But when he came to Simon Peter, that disciple asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered, "You don't really know what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"You will never wash my feet!" Peter replied.

"If I don't wash you," Jesus told him, "you don't really belong to me." Peter said, "Lord, don't wash just my feet. Wash my hands and my head." Jesus answered, "People who have bathed and are clean all over need to wash just their feet. And you, my disciples, are clean, except for one of you." Jesus knew who would betray him. That is why he said, "except for one of you."

After Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and had put his outer garment back on, he sat down again. Then he said: Do you understand what I have done? You call me your teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am.

Setting the scene:

- This is the start of Jesus' 'Farewell Discourse' (John 13–17). He knows that his death is imminent and that he will soon return to the Father.
- John indicates that this meal took place before the Passover Feast, which becomes known as 'The Last Supper'.
- We must assume that there was no-one present to do the foot-washing – a necessary and routine requirement for dusty (smelly?) feet as it was usually done upon arrival and carried out by a non-Jewish slave.
- We can also assume that there was an embarrassed silence (as Jesus took the towel and water) as none of the disciples wanted to volunteer. This was an act of extreme devotion and love for his community of disciples.
- Jesus takes the ordinary elements of a Passover meal, a towel, water and a bowl and turns an ordinary event into something extraordinary.
- He prepares this new community by cleansing them (symbolically and literally) through the simple task of foot-washing and in doing so he sets an example of humility and service.

And if your Lord and teacher has washed your feet, you should do the same for each other. I have set the example, and you should do for each other exactly what I have done for you. I tell you for certain that servants are not greater than their master, and messengers are not greater than the one who sent them. You know these things, and God will bless you, if you do them.

I am not talking about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. But what the Scriptures say must come true. And they say, "The man who ate with me has turned against me!" I am telling you this before it all happens. Then when it does happen, you will believe who I am. I tell you for certain that anyone who welcomes my messengers also welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. What 'ordinary stuff' reminds you of God each day?

Q2. Are you tempted to only look for signs of God in the spectacular or miraculous?

“Is God not to be seen in Vincent Van Gogh's Sunflowers? Is God not to be seen in the crashing of the sea? Is God not to be seen in the innocence of a new-born baby's eyes? Or in a rosebud or a character in a film or a book, in a song or in the change of seasons? Can't we hear God in the expressions of love of our friends? Or taste God in good food and conversation?”

Michael Frost,
Seeing God in the Ordinary

Respond

(Extra) Ordinary Life challenge: Create a challenge this week to help you to notice God's presence in the ordinariness of life or choose from one of the following.

Challenge ideas:

1. Observation

Become a God-observer this week. Often we 'limit' God to only showing up in the spectacular and miraculous. Look out for signs of God in the ordinary and everyday stuff of life – see if you can see God in the TV you watch, the music you listen to, the conversations and situations you face in life this week. Regain your capacity for wonder and awe as you see the 'little signs of God' become new again.

2. Spirituality of the Ordinary

Make a conscious effort to involve and interact with God in the mediocre and mundane stuff of life this week. Whatever you are doing – washing up, housework, exercising, dropping off the children at school – ask God to be present with you. Intentionally welcome God into every activity before it begins. Follow the advice of Paul: 'So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10.31 ESV).

3. Service

It was in self-sacrifice, love and great humility that Jesus took on the mundane job of a slave and turned it into something extraordinary. Humility and gratitude help us to recover a great sense of appreciation and capacity for wonder. This week, aim to serve someone every day. Find an opportunity to make a drink, offer a lift, run an errand, help with a task – whatever it may be and do it with love and humility. Whilst you are giving, also make it possible to receive from others – as Peter received the service of Jesus, it was then that he received from God. Allow yourself to receive the love of God through other people this week.

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you connect with God in the ordinary and mundane events of your life this week.