

**Question:** Who in your local community needs **your** radical loving action?

### **CONCLUSION**

Great God, in Christ you call our name,  
and then receive us as your own,  
not through some merit, right or claim,  
but by your gracious love alone;  
we strain to glimpse your mercy-seat  
and find you kneeling at our feet.

Then take the towel, and break the bread,  
and humble us, and call us friends;  
suffer and serve 'til all are fed,  
and show how grandly love intends  
to work 'til all creation sings,  
to fill all worlds, to crown all things

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We pray together

Heavenly Father, your word has challenged us:  
challenged us to revolutionise our thinking,  
our serving and our loving.  
Strengthen us with your Holy Spirit  
that we may be inspired  
to find new ways of caring for others  
within our families,  
within our churches,  
within our communities  
and within our world.  
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray  
Amen

(A Prayer Resource can be found in the Together in Prayer magazine available from the WWDP office)

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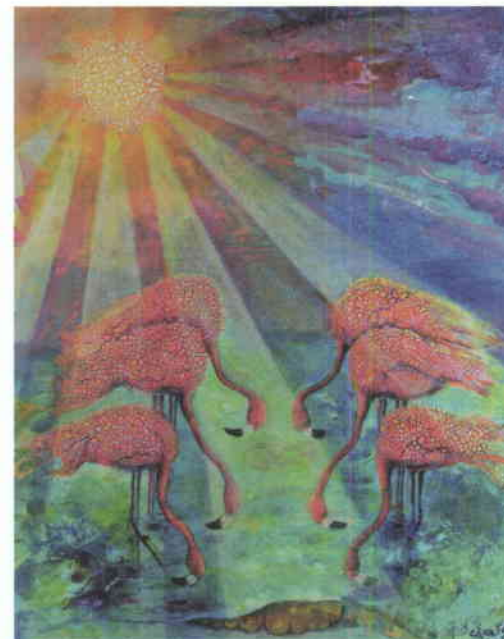
# **WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

## **(INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL)**



**6<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

## **BIBLE STUDY**



**Jesus said to them:  
Do you know what I have done to you?**

**THE BAHAMAS**

## Introduction

What a strange title! What does it mean? It sets us thinking right from the start.

We pray together

**Dear Lord and Father:**

**as we are gathered in your presence to consider your word, guide our thoughts and minds. We thank you for our Christian sisters in The Bahamas who have provided the outline for this study about radical love. May we have open minds as we reflect on the words and ideas, so enabling us to find new and deeper meaning in your teaching and example.**

**Hear our prayer and those prayers of all who, at different times and places, will use this Bible study.**

**In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord and your Son. Amen.**

## READ JOHN 13:1–17

It is the night before his crucifixion. Jesus has finished his public preaching and now he is alone with his disciples. John chapters 13–17 consist of the final instructions and explanations Jesus gives to prepare them for his death and resurrection, words that would change their lives forever.

The entire Gospel of John focuses on radical love. God's love is not static or self-centred; it reaches out and draws others in. It is God who sets the pattern of true love; and the basis for all loving relationships – and Jesus is God (see John 13:3 & Phil. 2:5-11).

Jesus showed radical love throughout his ministry, continuing right up to the end. And in the crucifixion we will see the ultimate revelation of that love to its full extent.

In John 13, Jesus is focused on what is going to happen next. There is one particular message that he needs to get across – something that his disciples haven't yet grasped: he wants them to know that he loves them all equally (even Judas Iscariot) and that none of them is better or more important than the others. He might have been thinking: 'It's not about them: it's about the message. They've got to understand that they are servants - messengers - but it doesn't seem to have entered their heads. I need to get this across to them but I'm running out of time. I can't pussyfoot around any more.'

So he gives them a dramatic demonstration: actions often speak louder than words.

*'Jesus got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist.'* (John 13:4).

In Jesus' time, people didn't sit at table to eat. They reclined – so people's feet were on the same level as most of the rest of their bodies. Foot washing was an important part of personal hygiene as well as a sign of welcoming hospitality. Washing guests' feet was a job for a household servant to carry out when guests arrived; or it was something wives did for their husbands, children did for their parents, and disciples did for their teachers. None of these disciples appeared to be willing to undertake this task.

By taking on the role of the servant Jesus was showing radical love in a radical way as an example of radical service. Jesus who came from God and was to return to God, Jesus who had power over all (John 13:3): there he was taking off his robe, pouring out water and stooping down to kneel at the feet of his followers and to wash their feet.

John's gospel is full of symbolism. Could there be some symbolism here? Jesus, as he takes off his robe, strips himself of his lordly position and becomes the lowliest of servants; as he pours out the water, he is pouring himself out for others even to dying a cruel death; as he puts his robe back on, he indicates his return to glory through resurrection.

**Question:** What do you think?

Imagine Peter watching Jesus wash the others' feet, all the while moving closer to him. Seeing his master acting like a servant must have confused Peter. He still did not understand Jesus' teaching, that to be a leader a person must also be a servant. To Peter, it would have been more appropriate for one of the disciples to have washed Jesus' feet.

Peter responded: *"Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

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

Peter said, *"No, You will never wash my feet."*

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

*"Then, Lord,"* Simon Peter replied, *"Not just my feet, but my hands and my head."* (John 13:6–9, Life Application Bible)

If Peter is to become part of the body of Christ, he must be washed by Jesus. The foot-washing of the disciples was the action that brought them into the body of Christ and his mission. We all must be washed by Jesus if we want to live and serve with love.

**Question:** What does this mean for us today?

After Jesus had finished washing their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table, asking, ***"Do you know what I have done to you?"*** (John 13:12).

Jesus does **not** say 'Do you know what I have done **for** you?' but 'Do you know what I have done **to** you?' By washing his disciples' feet, Jesus wasn't simply doing his disciples a kindness, nor did he just want to get them to be nice to each other. He was saying, 'By doing this to you, I've changed you; you have all become part of me. You are one in me; there is no hierarchy. I have set the pattern for you to follow in the future.' This is what **radical love** means.

**Question** What are the issues that divide your local Christian community: language, worship styles, politics .....? And how might you personally begin to reconcile these divisions?

Some Christian denominations hold foot-washing ceremonies. When Jesus did it, it was not part of a ceremony: it was what the lowliest slave did every day as part of his job. Jesus did not say that we were to do 'what' he did but 'as' he did. He calls us, members of his body, to go out and demonstrate the **radical love** of God to the world. This could involve the most menial of tasks, like washing up or cleaning toilets!

God calls us, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to be Christ-like, to put others on our own agenda, to look for a need and to take the initiative in acts of love. The service written by the Christian women from The Bahamas gives examples of where Christian love can be shown: to young single parents, to cancer sufferers, to victims of HIV/AIDs, to refugees.....