



On your marks

Activities to explore this Holy Week story with children or in an all-age service.

Get set

Make a tape recording of 'Footwashing' from [The Gospels Unplugged](#) (page 125), ideally with a young boy's voice. Collect any of the following: lamb, bread, wine, a glass, Seder plate (your local school may have one you can borrow), a towel, a large jug of water, a bowl, a really smelly sock, cut-outs of footprints, enough for everyone to have one - or one big one to share

Go!

1 Hold up a sock and ask for volunteers to come and have a sniff. Say that today you're thinking about a very dirty smelly time in Jesus' life, even if socks hadn't been invented.

2 Play 'Cross the circle if...'

Stand in a circle and call out the following. If the statement applies to you, you cross the circle and find a new place to stand. An oddly fascinating game with no losers.

(If this is part of an all-age service and movement is difficult, you could ask people to stand up if... or sit down if... or wave your arm if...)

Cross the circle if...

- you've had a bath or shower this week
- you've ever had a pedicure (explain what this is)
- you've ever painted your toenails a funny colour
- you've ever met anyone with really stinky feet
- you feel a bit funny about other people's feet
- you would hate to show anyone your feet right now
- you've ever done a job that you feel was beneath you
- you've been surprised by someone who's done something you thought they were too important to do
- you've been embarrassed (explain this if necessary) by someone doing something that you think they're too important to do.

3 Sit down and tell the person sitting next to you about any one of those situations. Hear one or two out loud if there's time.

4 Tell a short story. Try to tell it by heart rather than read out. Here's the gist: The school toilets were disgusting. (Invent some sordid details. If toilets are inappropriate, how about the school swimming pool?) The county kept refusing to come and wash and paint them. So the Head (a very



smartly dressed person with expensive suit, gold watch, crisp shirt etc.) asked the parents and children to come and help do the job one Saturday. The Saturday came and ... the Head was the only one who turned up. Everyone else thought they would come along later when the worst bits were over. What did she/he do? Took off the lovely jacket, rolled up the crisp shirt sleeves and got to work on the horrible toilets all by him/herself. I wonder how everyone else felt when they turned up and saw the Head doing that? Tell the person next to you how you think they felt.

5 Explain that in Jesus' time, people's feet got very grubby and before a meal, someone had to wash all the guests' feet because they all lay down to eat. Imagine eating a meal with someone's smelly dusty feet in your face! It was such a grubby job that no one wanted to do it, so they always got a slave to do their dirty work, as a slave has to do what he's told. But imagine what might happen if the slave forgot...

6 Play the recording of the footwashing and set out your props as they are mentioned in the story. Let people listen to the sound of water being poured into the bowl.

7 Read John 13:1-15 in the quiet, with the props still visible.

8 In pairs, tell each other how you think the disciples might have felt when Jesus washed their feet.

9 Jesus is the most important person ever to walk on this planet, and he was the one who chose to do the dirtiest possible job. This sets us free to look after each other without worrying that we're too important or clever or rich to do whatever is in our power.

You might like to mention some local examples of 'grubby' jobs that need doing for the good of others. Challenge everyone to do one thing for other people this week.

10 Play some quiet music and give people space to listen to what God is suggesting they might do to help other people.

11 Let everyone write down what they would like to do on a footprint, either privately or communally and finish with a prayer, asking everyone to look at someone else's feet as you pray:

Dear Lord of heaven and earth; you made the world and everything in it, but you were humble enough to kneel down and wash your friends' feet. Please help us all - however old or young we are - to do all we can for each other and for the needy people in *our town/street/school*, because we know when we help other people, we are helping you. Amen.