

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 4

### CONVERSATION STARTER

---

What is a really special place for you, and why is it significant?

### WHAT IS THE TEMPLE?

---

For people in Jesus' day, no building carried quite as much significance as the Temple in Jerusalem. It's as if we were to combine the White House, the Capitol Building, the National Cathedral, and the National Monument into one place. The Temple was the center of religious and political life, as well as a source of national pride. More importantly, it was the place people could go to be *with* God. It was the place where God's space (heaven) and human space (earth) symbolically overlapped. Inside the Temple were all kinds of images and symbols that recalled the Garden of Eden, when God dwelled with His people. It was a reminder that one day, God was going to restore humanity to the Garden, fix everything that had gone wrong with the world, and once again fully dwell with His people. When Jesus comes onto the scene, he begins speaking of the Temple in a new way. In John 2:18-22, he claims that *his body* is the Temple, the place where God's space and human space collide, and it will be *through him* that God restores all people.

### WE ARE MINI-TEMPLES

*1 Corinthians 6:19*

---

Jesus isn't the only one who is said to be like a new kind of Temple. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul says the same is true for us. Like Jesus, we are called to be places where heaven and earth overlap. We are partners with God, revealing God's nature and character to the world, just like Jesus did for his followers. And as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, we are people who—through the decisions we make, the way we order our lives, what we value, and how we love—bring more and more of heaven to earth. In this way, we act as little monuments to the truth that hope is on the horizon because God is not done yet.

What would change about the way you spend your time and energy if you thought of yourself as a mini-temple, a representative of God on earth? Spend a few moments discussing as a group.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

1. What places have you been where you felt uniquely connected to God?
2. In this week's passage, Jesus gets angry when he sees what's become of his Father's house. Usually, what makes us angry shows us what we really love. What are the things that make you mad, and what does that reveal about what you value and love most?
3. Jesus' demonstration in the Temple was meant to call out the spiritual and political abuse that was happening there. What systems or structures do you feel need to be called out today for their potential abuses of power? In other words, what tables would you flip given the chance?
4. The Temple stood as a promise that God would one day make all things new. What are we called to do in the meantime? What does it look like for us to be little bits of heaven in a world that sometimes feels full of darkness?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

---

In this week's reading, Jesus calls out the darkness that had become part of the religious system in Jerusalem. At the same time, Jesus often calls out the darkness that lived *within* his followers as well. He calls us to an inward reflection on the state of our own hearts, on what is influencing our desires, decisions, and the way we interact with those around us. A helpful way to go about this is through a tool used by millions around the world: St. Ignatius's Prayer of Examen. For hundreds of years, this way of praying has been used to invite God into the midst of our mundane. We invite you to find a quiet, peaceful place wherever you are and follow the steps of the Prayer of Examen below.

1. Invite God to be with you where you are: Pray, *"God, would you meet me in this place. Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_."* List at least five things. Be specific and detailed in the things you are thankful for.
2. Ask, *"God, how are you moving in my life?"*
3. Think through your day. If it is morning, think about the previous day. Ask, *"God, what two or three moments do you want me to remember from the day?"* Ask God to help you identify what you were feeling in those moments.
4. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those moments. Ask, *"God, help me to see whether I was drawing closer to you or further away at these times."*
5. As you look toward tomorrow or the day ahead, pray, *"God, show me the specific ways I can partner with you and your plan for my life in this day. Help me to be aware of the opportunities I have to bless others and recognize you at work, even in the midst of the mundane."*