

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 22

CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite holiday to celebrate, and why do you enjoy it? Do you have any unique or special traditions for that holiday?

THE FEAST OF DEDICATION

The reading this week takes place during the Feast of Dedication, also known as Hanukkah. Hanukkah is an eight-day celebration that takes place in November and December that has been celebrated for thousands of years in Judaism. The name 'Hanukkah' means renewal or consecration. The holiday commemorates the rededication of the Temple after it was desecrated by a Syrian king, Antiochus Ehipanes, around 175-164 BCE.

Hanukkah remembers the heroic acts of the revolutionaries who retook the Temple Mount and restored Godly worship in the Temple itself. It also looked forward to the day when God would once again deliver His people through a new renewal movement.

And then comes Jesus, who claims to be a new kind of Temple (John 2:19). And he is the 'consecrated' or Holy one of God, just as the Temple is Holy, or set apart for a special purpose. Essentially, Jesus claims to be the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Dedication, because he is bringing a new renewal movement that will bring about the people's deliverance and restore true worship to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Jesus points to his works as the evidence that supports his authority and identity in the world. What works can we see in the world today that point to the truth of Jesus?
3. In what ways are we charged with carrying forward the works of Jesus on earth?
4. Jesus faced increasing hostility for his claims about his identity. Is there still hostility toward some of Jesus' claims about who he is today? Why or why not?
5. What keeps the religious leaders from being able to recognize Jesus' true identity despite the testimony of his works?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Jesus left the distractions and the hostility of the city and crossed back over the Jordan at the end of this week's reading. And it's there, in the wilderness, that those who found Jesus were able to encounter him and recognize him. This speaks to our need as human beings to regularly leave behind the hurried pace and distractions of the world in order to spend time with God in silence and solitude. To help this week, try this exercise adapted from John Mark Comer's "[How to Unhurry](#)" guide.

Get to a quiet place where you can spend a few moments alone. Put away your phone and any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable. Start by focusing on your breathing to calm your mind. Take slow deep breaths with your eyes closed. Take note of any sensations in your body—stress, heart rate, tightness, calmness, pain, lightness, etc.

Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to-do's, and distractions. That's okay. It's used to constant chatter, not stillness. Don't judge yourself, feel like a failure, or give up. Just let each thought go as quickly as it comes. When you notice your mind start to wander, just re-center with a quick prayer, like "Father" or "Jesus" or "Peace" or the ancient, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner," and come back to your breathing.

Spend some time in prayer. Once you settle into a rhythm, begin to turn each breath into a prayer. One breath at a time, imagine yourself breathing out: anger, sadness, anxiety, despair, fear, the need to control, and discontentment. And then imagine yourself breathing in its opposite: love, joy, peace, hope, trust, humility, and contentment.

Finally, before you leave, simply sit in loving attention with God. It is through resting under God's loving attention toward us by the Spirit, that we are transformed. In the beginning, just 2-3 minutes of this is a win, and 10 minutes is a home run. Like many practices, at first, you may well feel awkward or even anxious, but give it time. It will likely come to feel deeply enjoyable in time.