

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 2:12-25 | A WELCOME DISRUPTION

KEY TERMS

Capernaum: A village on the north side of the Sea of Galilee approximately 150 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus uses Capernaum as a “home base” during his ministry.

Money changers: OT law required a temple tax for all adult males coming to Jerusalem for Passover (see Ex 30:13-16). Money changers were needed either 1) because the religious leaders did not want to accept Roman coins with the image of emperors or 2) because the tax was required in a coinage not widely available.

Passover: Passover was an annual festival celebrating the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt and was the high point of Jewish worship (see Ex 12). All adult Jews who were able would make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival.

DID YOU KNOW?

John is the most meticulous of the four gospel writers in recording when a Jewish festival (such as Passover) is taking place. It’s because of John’s Gospel that we date Jesus’ ministry to three years because John mentions Jesus celebrating three Passovers.

SYNOPSIS

After the wedding in Cana, Jesus traveled east with his mother, brothers, and disciples to Capernaum, and then—after a short stay—took a 125 mile journey south to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (vv. 12-13). Upon arriving at the temple, Jesus encountered merchants selling sacrificial animals and exchanging coins (v. 14). This was a common practice during Jewish festivals because people would travel to Jerusalem from all over and it would be difficult to bring the animals and coinage needed for worship. Jesus, however, does not approve of what is taking place and John says, *And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables* (v. 15). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus doing this at the end of his ministry—just days before his death—while John records it at the beginning. Many scholars believe John has moved the story intentionally and Jesus actually did this at the end of his ministry, while others believe Jesus did this twice. There may be several reasons Jesus does this, but the most common view is that all of the commerce had turned the temple into a noisy marketplace instead of a reverent place for worship. In response to his actions, the Jewish leaders ask for a sign, which is like asking Jesus for his credentials. Jesus replied, *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up* (v. 19)—speaking metaphorically about his body. This story, which fits with the wedding at Cana is further symbolism that Jesus is bringing something new where worship is no longer focused on the temple and sacrifices, but on Jesus himself. Following this scene, John says that *many believed* (or “trusted”) *in his name*, but *Jesus did not entrust himself to them* (v. 23-24). The point seems to be that many were enamored with Jesus’ actions, but Jesus saw that their faith was not genuine.

GOING DEEPER

Read Isaiah 56:6-7 and Jeremiah 7:9-11. What is God's vision for the temple? What does this say about the kind of worship and devotion God desires from his people? Now read John 17:20-26 and 1 Corinthians 6:9. What does it mean that our bodies are temples? How should this impact our worship?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 2:12-25. What jumps out to you from this story? What questions do you have?
2. Verse 17 references Psalm 69:9, which says, "Zeal for your house will consume me." In what ways can Jesus' actions be considered zealous? What is Jesus zealous for?
3. After cleansing the temple, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." What is the significance of Jesus' statement?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. What does it mean that "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit"? How should this truth affect our lives?

LIVING THE WORD

5. This story shows us that Jesus is the center of worship. What are some ways we can have the appearance of worship but miss Jesus?
6. Tim Keller says, "If your god never disagrees with you, you might just be worshiping an idealized version of yourself." Why should we expect God's vision for our lives to disagree with our own?
7. Do you have a hard time believing God's law—given to us in his Word—is meant for our good? Why do you think that is and is there a specific area of life where this is especially hard?
8. Why is it good news that Jesus wants to disrupt our lives? What areas of your life might Jesus want to disrupt for your good?

Practice to consider: As you spend time praying and engaging with Scripture this week, ask God to show you areas of your life that are inconsistent with Jesus' vision for life and ask for the Spirit's power to help you align your life with God's Word.