

LIFEGROUP STUDY
WITH: Walking Portals
2021-11-28

LEADER NOTES

OVERVIEW

Welcome back to our LifeGroup study – WITH. Throughout this series we've talked about how a temple is the place where Heaven and Earth are united. In the beginning this place was the Garden of Eden. After the fall it was the Tabernacle followed by the Temple in Jerusalem. Then it was Jesus who came and declared that he was the new temple of God on earth. Today we'll be looking at the next part of the story where God's people, the church, become his temple.

ICEBREAKER

- What is the best experience you've ever had as part of the church?
- If you haven't been a part of the church very long, what is your favorite family memory?
- What made these experiences or moments so special?

STUDY

1. On Sunday Pete talked about how the church is now the temple of God. We are like walking portals that are places where heaven and earth have been united. **What was a highlight or key insight for you from Pete's sermon?**
2. Read **1 Corinthians 3:16-17**

What are the basic points Paul is making in these two verses?

God is protective of his church/temple in this passage. Why do you think Paul uses such strong language to describe God's passion for his temple?

Leader Note:

Notice that God dwells in the midst of his people. Most of the time in Paul's letters when we read "you" it is supposed to be plural. It would be more helpful for us to read "y'all". Note the repetition of the word temple 4 times. Here the temple of God is not referring to one individual, but the collective body of Christ. It is a recognition of the important position every believer has as a part of God's temple. It is a motivation to live worthily of such a position. And it is a warning not to do anything that would hurt it or we will face the consequences and separation from God. Examples of this include false teaching, gossip – anything that creates disunity within the collective body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 10:11-13, we are reminded of what happened in Israel's history, that these things were recorded as examples and warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come, through Christ Jesus and that although as individuals, we are faced with temptation, God is faithful and has given us a way out of that temptation, in so that we, as the collective body of Christ, are able to fulfill our ultimate mission as the church.

3. Read **Ephesians 2:11-21**

Talk with your group about what stands out to you from this passage. How would you summarize what this passage is saying?

Leader Note: In verses 11-13 Paul is speaking to the Gentiles here to remind them that before Jesus came they were on the outside of the family of God. But now, because of the blood of Jesus they have been brought near. In verses 14-21 he then goes on to talk about how God is making one new humanity, one new family, one new temple.

When you think of the church, do you think of us as a temple (meaning a body where God dwells)? What does it mean or look like for us to be a temple? (hint, think about community, presence, teamwork and mobility)

Leader Note:

Community: There is an inbuilt communal aspect to being a part of God's family. Paul uses the metaphor of the "body of Christ" to describe the Christian community and how all of the diverse members need each other. There is an inherent assumption of teamwork, cooperation, and unity as the people of God function as the temple today.

Presence: The temple is where God dwells with his people throughout the biblical story. So, if the people of God are the temple, that means it is through these people that God reaches the world.

Mobility: People travelled from far and wide to encounter God at the temple in Jerusalem. Now, the people of God are the temple and take God's presence to the world! If the people are the Temple, then they must make his glory known to all nations from now until Jesus comes back.

4. Sometimes we overemphasize the personal aspect of salvation and lose the corporate reality that we are being saved into a community, a family, a temple for God to live in. How would your life be different if you embraced the corporate aspect of your salvation?

Leader Note: Possible answers would include things like a greater desire for unity in the church, more forgiveness and grace for fellow believers, less pride and individualism. It would lead to a desire to be part of something bigger than oneself and to play one's role within the larger body of the church.

5. Throughout the series we've been emphasizing that the story of the Bible is the story about the God who longs to dwell WITH human beings. How has this series helped you to see that this is a major theme in the Christian story? How has this series helped you make changes in how you think about Christianity? What are some ways you would share it with someone else?

EXPERIENCING GOD:

Read **Revelation 21:1-5** together.

Notice that in this passage John describes the extraordinary new City of God. In this new city there is no temple because Jesus will be right there with us, his people. In this passage we have a strong declaration that God will dwell with us once again just like he did in the Garden of Eden. "He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (v.5)

Reflecting back to week one of this series, observe the foreshadow that takes place from our reading in Genesis 2:10, "A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters." Pete reminded us that "four" in the bible is the symbol of the four corners of the earth. We find a bookend to the temple theme from Genesis to Revelation, in Revelation 22:17, "The spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

After reading and talking about these verses spend some time expressing your hope for the day when this will be a reality.

PRAYER

This week, let's focus our prayer on our Celebrate Recovery ministry. Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered 12 Step Program designed to help us overcome any hurt, hang-up & habit. Celebration Place is a group for children ages 6-12yrs, that runs alongside Celebrate Recovery, where children can also learn how to heal from their own hurts, hang-ups and habits.

Celebration Place:

Additional volunteers, specifically so that we can open CP nursery.

That God's message will be imprinted on the hearts and minds of the kids we work with, and used to transform their lives as learn to follow Jesus.

Celebrate Recovery: for the Newcomers and those that are feeling the prompting to come join us on Friday nights but haven't made it through the door yet. That God would give them the courage to keep coming back or to come for the first time.

Prayer for more volunteers and leaders to join us so we can launch cafe and provide more transportation options in the new year.