



October 15-16, 2022

Ice Breaker Questions

- What is the busiest place you've ever been; what did you see there?

Understand Their Story

In John 2:12-25, Jesus goes up to the Jewish capital, bustling with people coming from all over the Roman empire to celebrate the primary Jewish holiday. Read the passage and answer the questions below.

1. It sounds like the temple was a busy place when Jesus was there.
 - a. List all the people and animals that were driven out. (v.14)
 - Merchants who were selling the animals
 - Money-changers
 - Oxen
 - Sheep
 - Pigeons
 - b. Can you picture this scene? Can you hear it? What would it have been like?

There would have been the bellowing of cattle, bleating of sheep, cooing of pigeons, probably the haggling of the merchants and the money-changers with the people visiting the temple. **It would have been busy and loud, if not even chaotic.**
 - c. Why were these services, the money-changing and selling of animals, offered?

As a service and convenience for the worshippers. The merchants provided animals for the sacrificial worship, especially as a convenience for those travelling from afar (see Deuteronomy 14:22-2). Commentators on the text explain that the money-changers would have been there to exchange the foreign currencies of Jews coming from far away for a standardized currency with which to pay the temple tax. Some people in your group may focus on the possibility that these people were corrupt businessmen. That's entirely possible! In John's Gospel, however, Jesus's rebuke and focus is on the basis of location.
2. Historians tell us that in times before Jesus, the money-changers and merchants would set up in the Kidron valley, *outside* the temple, but in Jesus' time, they set up in a part of the temple called the Court of the Gentiles, the outermost part of the temple.
 - a. What was the purpose of the Court of the Gentiles?

It was the furthest in that non-Jews could come into the temple. It was their place for worship. And non-Jews did come. Across the empire there was a class of people called "God-fearers" who participated in some Jewish rites but did not fully convert to Judaism. These were often some of the first converts to Christianity.

- b. What effect would the bringing of all those people and animals into the Court of the Gentiles have had on that space?
They would have made it very difficult to worship and pray, particularly for the visiting Gentiles.
 - c. Who had the power to stop the Court of the Gentiles from being used this way but allowed it?
The priests and other religious leaders.
3. In verse 18, John refers to the religious leaders in the story as the Jews.
- a. Where else in John's Gospel have we already seen these people show up?
In the story of John the Baptist, 1:19-28.
 - b. When the religious leaders ask Jesus their questions, what is their attitude like? What is their primary concern?
Similar to their interrogation of John the Baptist, **their attitude is skeptical and critical**. Their primary concern is **whether Jesus had authority to do what he did, not whether his rebuke had any merit**. There is no indication they have reflected on their actions in allowing the temple to be used that way.
 - c. Based on their initial question to Jesus, do they think Jesus is a lunatic, a mere troublemaker, or a possibly important figure? If an important figure, what kind?
By asking for a miraculous proof of his authority they are asking if he is a prophet, someone with divine authority.
 - d. If Jesus is that kind of important figure, what happens to the religious leaders if they ignore him?
God will judge them. God warns that he himself will judge those who ignore his words that he puts in the mouth of his prophets (Deut. 18:18-22).

Connect to His Story

4. The temple was an important place for the people of God. What did it signify?
- a. Read Exodus 29:43-46, and John 1:14-18 What was God doing by giving the Israelites the temple — and its predecessor, the tabernacle — and how is Jesus better?
God was making his dwelling with the people; God was making himself close to his people. In Jesus, God did the same but as a person to make himself more fully known. God met humanity as a human. In Jesus's words to the religious leaders he claims himself to be the new temple and John set us up to
 - b. Read Revelation 21:1-4 and 21:22. What sort of communion or connection will we enjoy with God in the world to come?
Perfectly, joyfully, and without any barriers. It is a fuller enjoyment of his presence than ever before.
 - c. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, and 2 Corinthians 6:16. Where does God dwell now?
In his people. It should hopefully be clear to everyone in the group that "dwelling" language is a thread in God's story. God dwells with his people in greater and greater ways. In the temple and tabernacle, God dwelt with his people. In Jesus, God dwelt and walked with us. In the new creation, we will enjoy his presence perfectly. Now and until then, God dwells in us by the Holy Spirit.

Apply to Our Story

God's house is a place to meet with "God, our saviour, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:3,4).

5. How do we let duties and responsibilities get in the way of our communing with God?
6. What would it look like to be people who, with hospitality, welcome and invite those who don't know God?
 - a. Are there specific things we can do now to become that sort of people?

Prayer

(these have been borrowed from this week's daily devotional)

- *Pray in Adoration for the way Jesus came as the new temple of the Living God, dying and rising again in victory over sin.*
 - *Pray in Confession for the ways that our worship of God has gone from holy adoration and persistent prayer to noisy, busy, and focused on the wrong pursuit; full of bustle, but devoid of life.*
 - *Pray in Supplication for those who have yet to trust in this Savior.*
 - *Pray in Thanksgiving that God has chosen to dwell, by His Spirit, in each of His children, and we now have immediate and unveiled access to the Father. What a gift!*
-

God's work and our Work

How All of Life Connects to the Gospel - in John 2:12-25

The history of the protestant church has revealed at times a tension between what some would call the secular and the sacred. At first glance, this passage may lend itself towards supporting an idea that the marketplace and its activities are inherently sinful and the temple (or the church) is a sacred place in stark contrast to the world. Yet throughout scripture we see many passages that reveal to us that work itself is a form of worship and our workplaces can (and should in some ways at least) also be sacred places.

So, what can this passage inform us about how we view or engage in our work and our workplaces? The selling of livestock and the service of currency exchange are activities that are necessary in our daily lives and are not wrongful activities, yet Jesus was clearly upset about what was happening in the temple. Whenever we extort the needs of others (and there are numerous scriptural warnings specifically about using people's need for God as a means to excessive financial gain) we turn the God-honouring purposes of work into a selfish and sinful distortion of God's design for human flourishing.

- Discuss the ways that you may have incorrectly prioritized the sacred over the secular.
- Discuss the ways that your work/workplaces exploit the needs of others for sinful ends.
- Pray that God would be at work in you and at work in your work to properly meet the needs of others and thereby give glory to God.