

# LifeGroup Note - Leader's Guide

## John 2:13-25

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In John 2:1-12 we were introduced to Jesus' first miracle, turning water into wine. John doesn't use the word *miracle* in his writings, rather he refers to them as *signs* (cf 2:23). Miracles are spectacular and out of the ordinary or natural occurrences. But signs are a message in and of themselves. Signs point to something beyond the spectacular occurrence. For example, the sign of water being changed to wine pointed to the fact that Creator God was on the scene and a new work of redemption was underway. It's no coincidence that the next story in the Gospel of John is Jesus cleansing the temple courts. **Sometimes the only way for a new work of God to take root in our lives is for the old and broken ways to be kicked to the curb.** Do not be fooled: John 2:13-25 is not just about something irrelevant that happened way back then to "those people," it is as vital and practical in our secular context today as it was in their religious context then.

### Warming Up

1. Choose one or two of the following.
  - a. What is one of your "pet peeves" (a relatively small thing that causes too much frustration)?
  - b. Do you think of anger as a positive or negative emotion?
  - c. On a scale of "hoarders" (way too much clutter) to Marie Kondo (domestic perfection) how would you rank your cleanliness? (Do not throw your spouse or roomie under the bus!)
  - d. What is your cleaning regime? Just a spring clean, or does the whole household have a list of weekly cleaning chores?

### Prayer

Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your study and conversation. Ask the Spirit to prepare your hearts to be challenged and equipped for kicking "old and broken ways" to the curb.

### Context

Read John 2:13-19.

*But how could it be that the temple had degenerated into a marketplace? Annas, the deposed High Priest, had established a franchise system for the right to sell sacrificial animals in the temple courtyard. All animals had to be without blemish (Lev 1:3), so sacrifices brought to the temple had to pass an inspection, and, as you would anticipate, few passed the test so as to promote sales of the available temple sacrifices which, of course, were certified perfect. But that was only the beginning of a poor pilgrim's problems; he next found that the only acceptable money to pay for a temple sacrifice was temple currency. Naturally, there were money changers to convert 'secular' money into 'temple' money, and this was done at an exchange premium of 12%. All this made for lucrative business with a dedicated and captive clientele, and Annas charged exorbitant premiums for these franchise rights. This was one of the most despised practices in the life of that first century nation; this is what Jesus reacted against, and you can be sure the ordinary people adopted Him as their champion. We can therefore expect that initially, at any rate, He had a ready hearing with them. The market possibly started as a convenience to pilgrims, but Jesus' attitude towards the whole circumstance makes it plain that the primary purpose of God's house is to be a place of worship. The convenience of the worshiper is at best inconsequential, if not irrelevant.*

*Jesus simply cleared the floor on this first occasion; that was warning enough for the traders. The next time He cleansed the temple His anger was directed against the traders and not simply against their trade. Is it not marvelous how He, even in His indignation, first warned before punishing? Note, too, the consideration He displayed even in these circumstances, for He did not release the doves, which would have caused their owners loss, but ordered them to remove these sacrifices (presumably, the sellers of livestock could retrieve their merchandise outside the temple precincts).<sup>1</sup>*

2. Does Jesus' reaction shock you or comfort you? Why or why not? Share if you have a different kind of reaction to the story than shock or comfort.
3. Why did Jesus not try to reason and look for diplomatic compromise?
  - a. **Leader's Note:** Jesus is compassionate with those who humbly seek and welcome him but he is also full of courage and indignation toward the evils that consume and destroy us.
  - b. Sometimes the only way to deal with sin, evil, is not negotiating but termination. If mice or rats decided to winter in your house because it's warm and there's food, what do you do? Do you let them chew on your wires? Make holes in your insulation? Leave poop and pee on your counters? No, you call an exterminator!
  - c. God is zealous for you and hates what sin does us. Judgment would have been Jesus leaving the corruption place and letting people suffer the consequences of sin. It was mercy and love that God not only confronts sin but cleanses us from it. That's comforting.
4. The religious leaders (Pharisees and Scribes) would have seen the temple as "their temple" but Jesus declared the temple as "my Father's house."

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<sup>1</sup> Mills, M. S. (1999). [The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record](#) (Jn 2:13–22). Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries.

- a. How does this apply to matters of church (think not just about the building but about the people) and faith today for us?
  - i. **Note:** We often view faith/church as a matter of our preferences and choices as opposed to our belonging and surrender to God. This change in perspective can impact the way we go about engaging with God and one another.
- b. Reread John 2:19. After kicking the money changers and merchants to the curb Jesus explained that his body (the temple) will be resurrected. Read John 4:21-24.
  - i. How has worship (not just music!) changed since Jesus' resurrection?
  - ii. In what ways might our worship risk becoming corrupted like the temple? (Again, think beyond music!)

Read John 2:20-25, Malachi 3:1-3, and Psalm 96:6.

Religious leaders would have known of the prophecies of the Messiah coming into *his* temple. So when Jesus came into the temple the religious leaders did what is quite natural. They requested a sign! Jesus, however, does not perform signs based on their demands. The sign was Jesus fulfilling the prophecy that already existed. *Jesus wants us to believe based on the evidence we already have about who he is and not because of spectacular miracles that he can perform.* In the sermon Paul said, *"They loved the signs more than Saviour & Lord performed them. They liked having needs met, not their lives transformed. Keep multiplying loaves of bread and fish, keep blessing finances, health & fertility kids and we'll keep praying before bed & coming church. However, Jesus is not our pet!"*

5. In what ways might we be tempted to treat God like a pet or a genie?
6. What is the evidence we already have about who Jesus is that should push us to belief?
  - a. **Leader's Note:** Jesus wants our faith to be informed and evidence-based (i.e.: fulfillment of Scripture) and not sensational based (i.e.: do another trick for me). This seems to be what guided Jesus when deciding whether or not to do a miracle. If sensation was being sought Jesus refused a sign/miracle. However, if faith was already present Jesus often performed a sign.

## Application

**Leader's Note:** For the next section consider splitting people up into groups. This could get quite personal and people might be more likely to share when it is same sex groups of about 3-4.

Reread John 2:13-17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

7. Think personally (to yourself) and reflect on the following questions, you could take some notes. It's ok if your group sits in silence for a bit!

- a. What area of my life (thought, attitude, activity, relationship) grieves God most? (Think from bedroom to office, from church to hobbies, from relationships to secrets.)
- b. What am I holding onto or where am I afraid of losing control? Be specific! (I.e.: image, money, security.)
- c. What would I gain if I trusted the Holy Spirit to remove my strongholds (i.e.: image, self hatred, drugs, fears, addictions, etc)?

**Leader's Note:** This next section is hard! The goal here is not comfort. If people are unsure why this is important you could share James 5:19 or Psalm 32:5. Make sure everyone has some time to read through the questions themselves and silently reflect before sharing with their groups.

8. **Next Level:** Share some of your notes and learning. If you do this you're practicing biblical confession! Encourage each other to rely on God's strength for this process.

## Prayer

Pray specifically for each of the people that share.

This is a time to encourage each other with the beauty of forgiveness as you rely on God's strength in this hard process of dealing with sin.

Read Psalm 103:11-12.