

Small Group Guide: "Flipping the Script - Cleansing the Temple"

Scripture Focus: Mark 11:15-19

Sermon Theme: Jesus' zeal for true worship and the need for believers to examine what drives our worship and what we may be worshiping instead of God.

Opening Prayer

Begin by thanking God for the freedoms we enjoy and asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any "abominations" in our hearts that distract us from pure worship.

Icebreaker Question

What's one thing in your home that you've had so long you don't really "see" it anymore? How might fresh eyes view it differently?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Recognition of Abomination** - Jesus saw religious activity that exploited people rather than drawing them to God
 2. **Response to Abomination** - Jesus took bold, decisive action to restore proper worship
 3. **Restoration of Purposed Worship** - God desires a house of prayer for all nations, not a marketplace
 4. **Retaliation by the Religious** - Standing up for righteousness will bring opposition
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Discussion Questions

Part 1: Recognizing What We Worship (15-20 minutes)

1. The pastor stated, "If you really want to know what your people worship, start moving things." What does this statement mean to you? What might it reveal about our priorities?
2. Read Mark 11:15-17. What specifically angered Jesus about what was happening in the temple? How were people being exploited in the name of religion?

3. The sermon mentioned that good intentions (helping travelers buy unblemished animals) led to exploitation. Can you think of modern examples where "good intentions" in church or Christian culture have become problematic?

4. What are some "abominations" we might have in our hearts or churches today that we've become blind to? (Consider: busyness, comfort, programs over people, buildings over ministry, etc.)

Part 2: The Condition of Our Hearts (15-20 minutes)

5. The pastor noted people during worship who aren't singing, are distracted, or focused on other things. Why do you think we struggle to maintain focus during corporate worship? What distracts you personally?

6. Read 1 Peter 3:15. The sermon emphasized that the true sanctuary is our hearts, not a building. How does this change your perspective on worship? What does it mean that your heart is God's sanctuary?

7. The story of King Josiah (2 Kings 22-23) showed that Israel had buried God's Word behind their treasure. What "treasures" in our lives might be burying our access to God's Word and presence?

Part 3: Standing for Righteousness (15-20 minutes)

8. The sermon mentioned that standing up for Jesus will cost us something. What are some practical ways Christians face opposition today for their faith? Have you experienced this personally?

9. The pastor challenged us about prioritizing church attendance and activities. How do you balance work, family, and church commitments? What changes might God be calling you to make?

10. Jesus didn't need defending, but we should "always be prepared to give a defense...with gentleness and kindness" (1 Peter 3:15). How can we stand firm for truth while also showing grace and love?

Part 4: Memorial Day and Ultimate Sacrifice (10-15 minutes)

11. How does Memorial Day help us understand Jesus' sacrifice more deeply? What's the difference between those who died for our country and Jesus who died for our souls?

12. The sermon ended with the image of a flag-draped casket and the reminder that Jesus willingly laid down His life. How does this truth impact your daily life and priorities?

Personal Reflection Questions

(Allow 5 minutes of silence for personal reflection)

- What is one "table" God might be calling you to overturn in your life?
- Is there an area where you've become comfortable with something God sees as an abomination?
- What percentage of the "spiritual meals" God provides are you actually consuming? (Sunday morning only? Wednesday nights? Personal devotions?)
- How can you demonstrate zeal for God's house (your heart and His church) this week?

Practical Applications

Choose 1-2 to commit to this week:

Individual Actions:

- Conduct a "spiritual inventory" of your home. What do your possessions and decorations say about what you worship?
- Commit to attending midweek services for the next month to receive more spiritual nourishment
- Set boundaries with your employer about Sunday worship (or Wednesday nights) if you've been compromising
- Remove one distraction during worship services (phone, bulletin reading, people-watching)
- Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any "abominations" in your heart

Group/Family Actions:

- Have a family discussion about priorities and what gets scheduled over church activities
 - Thank a veteran or military family personally this week
 - Pray together for revival in our nation and church
 - Examine your church involvement - are you serving or just attending?
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Closing Exercise

Josiah's Example: Just as Josiah emptied the temple treasury and found God's Word, what is one thing you need to "empty out" that would lead to experiencing God's presence more fully?

Have each person share one commitment they're making this week.

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- For courage to stand for righteousness even when it costs us
 - For renewed zeal for God's house and pure worship
 - For military families and those who have lost loved ones
 - For hearts that are true sanctuaries for God's presence
 - For our nation to return to honoring God
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Memory Verse

Mark 11:17 - "And he was teaching them and saying to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers.'"

For Next Week

Read Mark 11:20-26 and consider: What does faith look like in action? How do we pray with expectation?