

Immersed in God's Word, following Jesus – together

They took note that they had been with Jesus. ~ Acts 4:13

Welcome to a new calendar year. We are developing an Immersion series titled, ***The Foundational Fruit of a life with Jesus***. We will be living in the Word, under the Spirit, and with each other as disciples of Jesus. In doing so, we expect that God will transform us to be like Jesus. That transformation will bring about the foundational fruit of love, joy and peace in our lives collectively and individually.

LOVE
JOY
PEACE

While we expect many devotional moments to be done between you and God alone, the goal of this ***life with Jesus*** emphasis is to live out life ***together***. To drive that home, we include a Micro-Group Moment (MGM) weekly and strongly encourage you to participate in Micro-Group life at least one a week. Stick around and learn what we mean by that as we go. We are introducing Micro-group life in January. For now, let's jump into day one.

Monday, Jan 1 Theme: Jesus gets baptized by John

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:16-17



Pondering Point about Jesus Baptism: Read Matthew 3 (and the other gospels) for context, or verses 13-17 if you are running short on time. Prior to Jesus' baptism, Luke's Gospel recounts three events which happen "post-Christmas:" Jesus' circumcision on the 8th day, when He is named (to *save His people from their sins* – Matthew 1:21); His dedication at the temple after 40 days; His visit to the temple at age 12, when His parents lose

Him for 3 days. For His part, He didn't feel lost, saying, *"Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"*

These events help us highlight temple language. God's temple is present in each situation – but not the way you think. Actually, more than one temple is present twice! In the Bible, temples are places God and people connect. And since Jesus is God-in-the-flesh, He is a temple of course (*tabernacle* according to John 1:14). Jesus refers to Himself as such in John 2:19. Everywhere He goes, people are connecting with God – though, according to John 1:10, not everyone recognizes this. This week we see how God shows up in various temple experiences throughout the Bible. Once Jesus arrives on the scene, *how* the Father seeks worship – in Spirit and in Truth – begins to transition from an "Old Testament (covenant)" style to a "New Testament" one in Jesus – temple and all. More on Jesus full of the Spirit and Truth Wednesday.

Notice in Matthew 3:17 that the Father is pleased with His temple, Jesus, and fills that temple with His presence. That Presence came not in the form of a cloud, like in the Old Testament, but in a dove that alighted on Him. This baptism experience leads into our MGM for the week, but first – a prayer:



Prayer: Father God, how awesome to hear that You were pleased with Jesus – and loved Him. And how awesome to know that, because of Jesus, You are pleased with us and love us as well. Let that love inspire us that we may honor You in our temples each day, loving You with our whole heart and loving our neighbors as ourselves. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Bible Project: Where Heaven and Earth Overlap
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/heaven-and-earth/>



Micro-Group Connections in the Discipleship Lifestyle

*where two or three are gathered
in my name,
there am I.*

~ Jesus, Matthew 18:20

Micro-Group Moment: Micro-groups are small pockets of people (2-5) with whom we have a connection. These clusters often co-exist within larger pockets of people. There are dozens of such groups active in our lives, maybe hundreds if you expand these connections to occasional contacts. A few examples are couples, families, friends, drinking or fishing buddies, workout partners, neighbors, etc. It can also include one's co-workers or recurring consumer-provider relationships. How can God impact that groups?

Micro-Relationship:

A connection you have with one, two, three, or four other people.

Spiritual Micro-Group:

A connection with one to four others that acknowledges God.

Throughout the year, as an encouragement to pursue a Micro-group lifestyle with Jesus, we will highlight Micro-group moments (MGMs) of Jesus and those who follow Him. An obvious MG in the life of Jesus is the trio of Peter, James and John. He did activities with them that His Small Group (SG) known as the Twelve missed out on. But this MG of Jesus pre-existed that of the disciples. You might even say that this is the Micro-group of all Micro-groups: that of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Micro-Group Moment (MGM): The Baptism of Jesus

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one,
says Deuteronomy 6:4. True enough. And yet, that

one Lord shows Himself to be present at the Baptism of Jesus as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our baptism, commanded by Jesus, is also done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God in three Persons – and He comes to live with and in us.

Tuesday, Jan 2: God's Mission in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all,

who with unveiled faces contemplate (or reflect) the Lord's glory, are **being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory**, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

TRANSFORMATION

TUESDAYS



Pondering Point: I love this verse to kick off *Transformation Tuesdays* for 2024. God's mission is to *transform* us – to *conform us to the likeness of His Son*, Paul says in Romans 8:29. We too are given the Holy Spirit in baptism and have the Word, living and active, working in us individually and collectively.

Today we look at any individual who, in Christ, is a temple of the Lord. Here is Paul describing it for us: *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.* 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Looking ahead, Thursday will bring a chance to reflect on how you honor God with your body personally – and as part of the church body. And while Wednesdays generally introduce statements of identity about who we are in Christ, that idea fits well today so:

In Christ, we are temples of the Holy Spirit, being transformed into Jesus' image with ever-increasing glory to God. Therefore I will honor God with my body.



Prayer: Father God, transform me into the image of Jesus, full of love, joy, and peace. Let me display a life of fruit that shows I am like You, my Father in Heaven. Amen.

TEMPLE
of the 
HOLY SPIRIT
1 Corinthians 6:19

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34-35

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (“tabernacled”) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14



Pondering Point: The tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was commissioned at Mt. Sinai under Moses. It housed the Ark of the Covenant and traveled with the people of God through the desert and into the promised land. The city of Shiloh served as its home until the Ark was lost in a battle against the Philistines (see 1 Samuel 4). The Ark never returned to Shiloh, and we don’t hear about the Tabernacle again except as a warning about what happens when people treat God with contempt (Jeremiah 7:12).

Jesus Himself spent time in the desert and traveled with God’s people, particularly His disciples. He also went through Samaria (John 4), leading to a comment about how and where people will soon worship – *in Spirit and in Truth*. I capitalize both words because Jesus was full of Spirit (Luke 4:1) and Truth (John 1:14, 14:6). This Samaritan woman knew that people were divided over worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem (only) or elsewhere (Mt Gerizim). Jesus’ comment reflects a transition taking place through Him. Physical temples were giving way to bodily temples, not unlike His own. Tomorrow, we learn about the temple made up of God’s people collectively – the body of Christ. This too is a temple of God to be filled with the Holy Spirit and God’s Word.



Prayer: Thank You Heavenly Father, for the temple of Jesus, full of Spirit and Truth. I pray that Your Holy Spirit fills my temple body – and our church body – to produce holiness in action that reflects Your holiness as the Heavenly Father. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

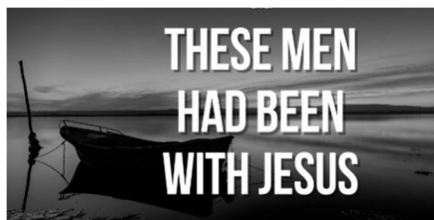
As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house [Temple of the Holy Spirit] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-5



Pondering Point: Peter, filled by the Holy Spirit, wrote the words above. He also spoke the following words. Note that in both instances he references Jesus as the stone rejected by men but chosen by God: *Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:8-12).* That section in Acts 4 concludes with the following, a hallmark for all disciples:

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and **they took note that these men had been with Jesus** (Acts 4:13).*



Since we are His temples, bought at the price of Christ's life, the directive is to honor God with our bodies. How can we do that? Slot a time today (either now or later) to re-consecrate your body to the Lord with thanksgiving. It serves as a great backdrop for our Thursday practice of *review, repent (if necessary) and return (as necessary) to God.*

R

Review: Do you consider your body as your own or God's? Do you see your body as His temple? By which current actions are you honoring God with your body? By which current actions are you dishonoring God with your body?

R

Repent if necessary for any unbiblical and ungodly attitudes about your body (this could relate to mistaken ownership, self-pride, self-loathing, etc.). Repent of ungodly action and lack of action in regards to using Your body for God's glory,* or of neglecting the fellowship (or partnership) with the church;

[*if you are involved in addictively sinful behaviors (abuse of drugs, food, alcohol, pornography, sexual misconduct, fits of anger, etc.) Bring that darkness into the light by confessing your specific sins to a fellow Christian you trust and who will support you in letting God break you free from such besetting sin.]

R

Return as necessary: Consecrate your body back to God (See prayer link to follow for an extended version). Thank God for His forgiveness, His bodily blessings, and His presence within You. Cease ungodly lifestyle choices immediately and ask God to assist you by His strength and Spirit to practice a godly lifestyle.

I have included links to prayers, one on *freedom from habitual sins* and one on *consecration* created by *Wild at Heart*, a great blessing in my spiritual journey with God -- the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

www.wildatheart.org/prayer/prayer-consecration
www.wildatheart.org/prayer/prayer-freedom-habitual-sins

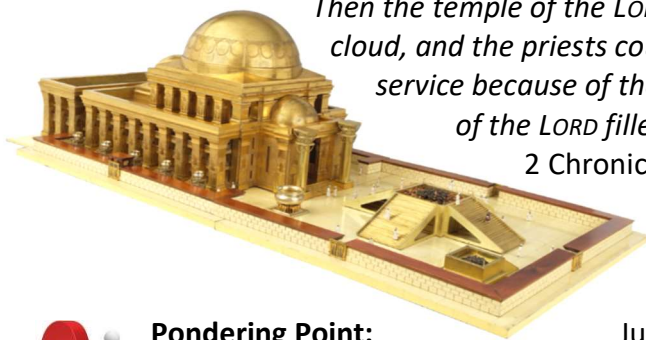


When all the work Solomon had done for the temple of the LORD was finished... The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple... The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place... Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang:

"He is good; his love endures forever."

Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.

2 Chronicles 5:1,7, 11, 13b,14



Pondering Point:

Just as God filled the tabernacle with a cloud upon its completion, He now fills the temple Solomon has built once it is completed – again with a cloud. Both sites became synonymous with meeting God there.

By the way, the Bible envisions a time when God's space and men's space will totally overlap (John 21:3). How cool will that be?! If you have not done so, check out Bible Project's video about temples:

[\(https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/heaven-and-earth/\).](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/heaven-and-earth/)

Until that time comes, we live in perishable, breakdown-able bodies. Paul describes it like this: *we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.* 2 Corinthians 5:1

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Revelation 21:22-23

Discipleship Point:

Come now, let us settle the matter:

*Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.*

The Lord, Isaiah 1:18

As we ponder our bodies being temples of God, take a look at this picture taken in Missouri. The cornerstone reads **Saint Patrick's Church 1952 A.D.** and was likely established with dreams to glorify God among that community.



The lottery advertisement above the marker hints that the owners settled on a much lesser dream for that property.

Maybe that church sold and built elsewhere, but we humans don't get the option of trading our God-given bodies for upgraded versions. The temple you're born with is the one you live with. It's also the one many of us dedicated to God at some point – often with dreams to glorify God through the ensuing years. So here's comes the question: Have you sold out for lesser dreams? Is your once consecrated-to-God temple now dreaming of smaller things.

Today's quote from Isaiah is God asking His people to reconsider how they are living and to return to life in, with, and under Him. Let God's word serve as a call to you to come to Him and deal with your life so that your sin might be eliminated, dissipated, forgiven, erased – whatever image works for you. Who knows? God might just resurrect those long-lost dreams you shelved.



Prayer prompt for the day: Get with God. Confess your sins to God; Confess your faith in God (that Jesus is Lord); Reconsider with God your life and dreams; then return to living fully for God.

Saturday, Jan 6: Scripture's Story for the Week

The Temple and its River of Water

Ezekiel 47:1-12



Pondering Point: This story is a vision that the prophet Ezekiel receives from God. You will read of a temple and running water. To supplement this story, keep in mind John 7:37-39 where He says, *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."* By this he meant the Spirit... Both manifestations of God's presence, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, are related to water. Ponder how this Holy Water is present in your life as you go through this story from the bible. And since we have been introducing *Wild at Heart's* various prayers into our daily devotions, below is one more based on this story. It is called the *River of Life* prayer—adapted for us. Finish your devotional time with it.



Prayer for the day: "Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit" — we love You God! We worship You! We give our hearts and lives to You in every way. You are our Life, Father, and there is no other. Jesus, You came that we might have Life. Romans says we reign in life through Your Life, Lord. And so we present our lives to You in a fresh way, to be filled with Your magnificent Life! We pray that the River of Life, the very Life of God, would flow through our lives in abundance. We pray the River of Life would flow through our homes and families; our work; our kingdoms. We pray that the River of Life would flow through the team and the work of Trinity Family of Faith as a church and preschool in the world. Fill us, fill this mission, with Your inextinguishable Life, God! May Your abundant Life sweep away all death, and destruction, and everything set against us. We call forth Life—more life in us; more life in TFFLC as a ministry; more of the River of Life flowing through our work in the world. In the mighty Name of Life Himself, Jesus Christ, the risen Lord! All praise and glory to Him! Amen.

Sunday, Jan 7: Call to worship God, to gather together

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...

~ **Apostle Paul, Colossians 1:9-11**



Pondering Point: Read Colossians 1:9-14. What would it be

like to be a temple of God filled with a knowledge of His will through all wisdom and understanding of the Spirit? That is what Paul prays about for the Colossians – and what we seek from the churches we worship in. This reading teaches that such a situation produces the fruit of good works, growth in the Lord, and godly power for great endurance and patience. Who doesn't want that?! But it isn't just the church building where people show up. People may show up at your body-temple hoping for a knowledge of God's will and some spiritual wisdom and understanding. Do they experience love, joy, and peace from you? And I like the idea of a temple of God being safe haven: are you a safe haven as a temple of God? Can people come to you and experience mercy rather than judgment? Can one experience God's truth in kindness? May God bless us to be temples that are havens for others seeking God and His mercy, even if they don't know that His mercy is what they are after. Now let's practice praying scripture.



Prayer: Father God, fill us with the knowledge of Your will

through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives so that we may live lives worthy of You and please You in every way. We look forward to bearing fruit in every good work, growing in knowledge of You and being strengthened with all power by Your glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

