



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Through the Bible*

*October 6 - 12*

*Matthew 21:12-17*

## Things to Know

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**Gospel Connections and Conversations**

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder: Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

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## Sermon Recap

- **God rejects corrupted worship** — Jesus overturned the tables because worship had been twisted into greed, distraction, and hypocrisy. God desires holiness, not exploitation.
- **God restores true worship** — Jesus declared His house a place of prayer and healing. True worship is centered on prayer, surrender, and God's restoring work

among His people.

- **God delights in humble worship** — While leaders resisted, children cried “Hosanna!” God loves sincere, childlike praise that glorifies Jesus as King.
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## Discussion Questions

1. **Matthew 21:12–13** – Why did Jesus drive out those buying and selling in the temple, and what does this show us about God’s concern for the purity of worship?
  2. **Matthew 21:13** – Jesus said, “*My house shall be called a house of prayer.*” In what ways can we make sure our lives and our church reflect this calling?
  3. **Matthew 21:14** – How does Jesus healing the blind and lame in the temple reveal what true worship should look like in practice?
  4. **Matthew 21:15–16** – Why do you think the children recognized and praised Jesus while the religious leaders rejected Him? What does this teach us about the kind of heart God desires in worship?
  5. **Matthew 21:16–17** – What does the crowd’s response to Jesus’ presence reveal about the difference between outward religion and genuine praise? How can we guard against empty ritual in our own worship?
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## Read

**Read Matthew 21:12-17 and make observations about the text.**

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
  - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
  - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
  - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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# Scripture

## Matthew 21:12-17

### Jesus Cleanses the Temple

**12** And Jesus entered the temple[a] and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. **13** He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

**14** And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. **15** But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, **16** and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

“‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies  
you have prepared praise’?”

**17** And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

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Matthew 21:12-17

## Living on Mission In Community

When we look at Matthew 21:12–17, we see that worship is not about what we can get out of it, but about giving God the honor He deserves. Jesus made it clear that God rejects worship tainted by selfishness and hypocrisy, but He restores hearts that come to Him in prayer and delights in the humble praise of His people. This means worship is more than singing songs on Sunday; it’s a lifestyle of prayer, purity, and praise that overflows into everyday life. The question we must ask ourselves is this: **Am I offering God the kind of worship He loves, or the kind of worship He would overturn?**

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

# Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
  - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
  - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
  - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

# *Leader Resources - October 6-12*

## **Small Group Curriculum: Matthew 21:12-17**

**Theme:** The Kind of Worship God Loves

### **1. Session Overview**

In this passage, Jesus enters the temple and confronts false worship—driven by greed and self-interest—before restoring it to a place of prayer, healing, and praise. This text reveals that God cares deeply about *how* we worship, and that true worship flows from purity, prayer, healing, and genuine praise.

### **2. Opening**

- **Icebreaker:** Share about a time you felt most connected to God in worship. What made that moment different from others?
- **Prayer:** Begin by asking God to show the group what kind of worship pleases Him.

Encourage groups of 2–3 to share honestly about distractions, idols, or struggles that keep them from truly worshiping God. End by praying for one another’s walk with Christ this week.

### **3. Scripture Reading**

Read Matthew 21:12–17 aloud together.

### **4. Teaching Points**

#### **A. Worship that God Rejects (vv. 12–13)**

- The temple had become a “den of robbers,” filled with self-interest and exploitation.
- Jesus’ cleansing shows that God rejects worship that is corrupted by greed, hypocrisy, or distraction.

#### **B. Worship that God Restores (vv. 13–14)**

- Jesus declares the temple to be a *house of prayer*, then immediately heals the blind and lame.
- True worship is marked by prayer and by God’s restorative power at work among His people.

## C. Worship that God Receives (vv. 15–16)

- While leaders resist Jesus, children cry out, “Hosanna to the Son of David!”
- God delights in humble, pure-hearted praise—even from children—more than in polished, hypocritical rituals.

## D. Worship that Glorifies Jesus (v. 17)

- Jesus departs to Bethany, foreshadowing the rejection He would face leading to the cross.
- True worship always points to Christ as King and Savior.

## 5. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus responded so strongly to the corruption in the temple? What does this reveal about God’s heart for worship?
2. How do we sometimes treat worship as a transaction or performance rather than genuine devotion?
3. Jesus called the temple a “house of prayer.” What would it look like for our lives—and our church—to reflect that?
4. Why do you think the children recognized Jesus when the religious leaders resisted Him? What does this say about the heart posture God desires?
5. In what ways can our worship today include prayer, healing, and authentic praise?

## 6. Application Points

- **Personal:** Examine your heart—are there “tables” of distraction or idols in your life that Jesus might want to overturn?
- **Community:** Seek to make prayer central in your small group and worship gatherings, not just an add-on.
- **Mission:** Recognize that worship doesn’t stay in the temple. Healing, prayer, and praise should overflow into the world.

## 7. Closing Reflection and Prayer

- **Reflect silently:** *What is one thing I need to remove from my life to worship God more purely?*
- **Close in group prayer,** thanking Jesus for being the one who cleanses, restores, and receives our worship.

## 8. Memory Verse

Matthew 21:13 – “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

## 9. Leader's Notes

- Emphasize that Jesus' cleansing was not just anger but holy zeal for God's glory.
- Encourage vulnerability: people may need to confess how they've allowed worship to become routine, distracted, or self-centered.
- Highlight that children's worship reminds us that God desires authenticity and dependence, not polished perfection.

