

---

## “What Does Worship Look Like?”

Sunday School Lesson from John 2:13-22

---



Did Jesus really brandish a whip and overturn tables in church? The story of the temple cleansing can be a fun and fascinating one to share with children. Certainly, it reminds us that Jesus was not merely a meek flannel-graph image, but He was willing to take a stand when necessary to preserve the integrity of His Father’s house. There is more to this story than that, though. In this passage, it’s important to recognize what true worship means, and to see that we are made to worship God with all that we are, body and soul.

**Lesson focus:** This lesson reviews the story of Jesus clearing the money-changers out of the temple, and also predicting His own death and resurrection. There are a few important notes to emphasize for children. It is important to respect the church as God’s house, and recognize what it means to worship and use the church for its purpose. In a similar way, we realize that our own bodies are “temples” made to worship the Lord. This lesson also looks at how Jesus was the “new temple”, and how essential it is to view Him as the thing we should truly worship.

**Passage:** John 2:13-22

**Target Audience:** Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade (adaptable, but some concepts might be best for older students)

**Materials Needed:** Construction paper, scissors, decorations, glue, string, hole punch, paper plates, paper bags, tape, markers, crayons, Bible (optional, depending on crafts and activities of choice).

**More Teaching Ideas:**

- Watch the video of this [children’s sermon](#) or [craft demonstration](#)
- Compare our [Sunday School lesson on John 2:13-22](#)
- Compare an [alternate Bible lesson on Jesus cleaning the temple](#)
- Compare the [John 3:13-22 children’s sermon](#) from rfour.org



---

# Games and Activities

## To Introduce the Lesson

---

**Lesson Opening:** This lesson looks at a story that involves cleaning, the church, money, and worship. There are a few fun games and crafts that can coincide with these themes. As usual, adapt to your group, and feel free to use at any point in your lesson.

Here are some activities to get kids thinking... (select the best ones for your audience and age group):

- Tug of war: there was a struggle going on between Jesus and the people in the temple. Have a (gentle) tug of war battle with students to consider the struggle as well as the ropes used to make Christ's whip.
- Clean up the church! Hopefully your "temple" has not become a "den of thieves", but kids can still have fun actually cleaning the church. If you're able, take cleaning supplies (dust cloths, Lysol, wipes, etc.) and clean up the sanctuary area. This might even be an activity to devote a whole morning to doing, or to make a regular habit.
- Flying animals...Jesus overturned tables and sent the animal cages flying. Use stuffed animals and baskets to have an animal tossing contest. Encourage students to launch the stuffed animals from different sides of the room, attempting to land them in the baskets.
- Coin rubbing: since money and coins were being exchanged in the temple in the story, look at various types of money. Place coins under thin paper and rub over them to make an imprint.
- Clean up relay: separate students into two lines. Place a pile of clutter on one side of the room (trash, toys, etc.). Have students race (one per line at a time) to clear up the clutter and place it in trash bags.

Explain that there are some times we have to clear out a room or space to make sure we can use it for its purpose. If your house has a basement full of junk and you decide to turn it into a bedroom for your grandma to come live with you, first you need to clean up all of the junk! Well, in the story we are exploring today, Jesus had to clean out some clutter. People were using the temple, the church, in the wrong way, and Jesus needed to remind them of what they were doing and what they should be doing.

**Ask:** How can we show respect for the church? Why is it a special place?



---

# Sunday School Lesson:

## What does Worship Look Like?

---

**Bible Lesson:** This passage is a fun one to act out. You might read the story and then tell it again with students taking on various roles; or you could have older kids act it out as a puppet show. You might also simply describe the action and grab the attention of students by acting it out yourself: get some small card tables or chairs to turn over, scatter coins around, toss stuffed animal birds in the air, brandish a string “whip” ...bring the events of this Gospel passage to life and communicate to kids how important what Jesus did was.

*The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.*

*-John 2:13-14*

You may wish to vary the degree of explanation depending on your audience age. What happened in the temple involved the leaders exploiting the people. Those who wanted to worship were required to offer a sacrifice, but not everyone had just the right animal to sacrifice. People sold the “proper” sacrifices, charging high fees in order for visitors to be able to worship. Rather than allowing the temple to be a place of genuine worship, they were taking advantage of an opportunity to turn a profit. For younger students, you might explain it as people turning the church into a shopping center.

**Ask:** What would you think if you tried to come to church, and people had set up a bunch of sales tables in the sanctuary instead of pews or chairs?

Explain that Jesus knew the temple was God’s house. Seeing people use it in the wrong way made Him very angry. Now, it’s important to realize that it’s okay to get angry. Jesus was mad for a good reason. He wanted to get the crowd’s attention and let them know that they were doing the wrong thing. So He took action!

*And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. -John 2:15*

Wow. Jesus was so upset that He drove people out of the temple. He wanted to communicate how important it was to respect the temple as God’s Holy place. These people were not doing that. It would be like using a beautiful fancy cup to mix up mud! Jesus took control, and He shouted at the people...

*<sup>16</sup>And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.” <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” - John 2:16-17*

Jesus was not messing around. Not only did He drive people out and remind them of the true purpose of the temple, but He also quoted a prophecy. Saying “zeal for you house will consume me” actually had to do with something that was in the book of Psalms, written long before Jesus came. Jesus often quoted scripture, and He knew the Bible very well.



**Ask:** What makes you angry? What's the difference between having a tantrum and getting angry for appropriate reasons? (This might be a challenging question for younger groups.)

Of course, the temple leaders were not happy with what Jesus did. He was basically dipping into their money supply! Some of the Jewish people questioned Him (as they often did), trying to ask why He felt He had the power to declare what the temple should be used for. Of course, Jesus was God's son! But He answered in an interesting way...

*So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple,<sup>[c]</sup> and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

**Ask:** What do you think Jesus means? What does the "three days" remind you of?

Explain that Jesus was describing what would happen with His own death and resurrection. He knew that he was going to die, and that after three days God would bring Him back to life. However, the leaders did not understand what He meant. They thought He was talking about the building of the temple. Jesus was telling them that HE was the new temple. Worshipping God with pricey sacrifices and certain temple rules became obsolete after Jesus. He was the final sacrifice. His blood was spilled on the cross and He died for everyone. Jesus wanted people to understand how important it was to respect God's house and use it for its purpose. But He also communicated that ultimately worship was not about a place, but a person. He was the true temple. We remember this, and we also consider that God made us to worship Him. The purpose of our bodies is a bit like a temple. We should think about how we can use our lives to serve God!

**Close** with a prayer thanking God for Jesus, and asking Him to help us in serving Him, loving Him, and using our lives to worship Him in the right ways.

**Crafts:** Consider crafts that coincide with the story details or the themes of worship:

- "Clean-up kit" bag of items used for cleaning
- "Prayer whip" of yarn to recall the story and the importance of worship
- "Worship Methods Reminder" plate decoration
- "Garbage bag distractions" to list things that might detract from worship
- "Keys to worship" ideas for appropriate uses of church



You Have a Purpose...True Worship!

Craft Ideas for the Cleansing of the Temple

Jesus got angry? He knocked over tables? This story can be a surprising one for children to hear, but is a fun one to teach and act out. Of course, the important thing to emphasize is that Jesus had a good reason to get mad. He was not having a selfish temper tantrum, but was defending the integrity of God's house. The lesson that these crafts accompany reminds us that we are made to worship God, and we want to honor Him with our lives and bodies. One of these crafts reminds us of the story with a simple "whip" made of yarn. The other craft encourages students to consider what it means to "clean out" distractions and focus on the best ways to love and serve God.

**Verses or Captions to Consider... (Main Text: John 2:12-22)**

- *And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.*  
-John 2:15
- *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*  
-John 2:19
- *Throw out distractions! Clean up for worship...*
- *Worship in God's temple*
- *A House of Prayer...Respect God's church.*
- *Clean it up! Ways to worship*
- *A life of Worship: our bodies are temples.*



---

# Craft one: “Temple Clearing Whip”

---

## You will need:

- Yarn or string
- Markers
- Fabric (optional)
- Construction paper
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Tape



## Procedure:

1. Choose what kinds and colors of string you prefer for your “whip.”
2. Cut several strings in similar lengths.
3. Tie a knot at the top of the strings, and secure with paper or fabric and tape (packing tape works best).
4. Braid your strings together in a twist or traditional braid as desired.
5. Snip the ends to have a fringe “whip.” Add a caption or verse to your soft lash-giver!



---

# Craft Two: “Worship Methods Reminder”

---

You will need:

- Paper bag
- Paper plate
- Paper (construction)
- Markers or crayons
- Glue and/or tape
- Hole Punch
- Scissors
- Extra decoration



Procedure:

1. Decorate one paper plate with
  2. Add descriptions and Scripture references to each shape.
  3. Cut out the shapes and punch holes in them for the string.
  4. Slide string or ribbon through each shape, taping it to secure.
- Display in a prominent setting to recall the fulfillment of God’s Covenant promises.





This message was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May 2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

- Over 400 Printable [Bible Coloring Pages](#)
- Over 800 [Bible Lessons](#) and Complete [Sunday School Curriculum](#)
- New [Children's Sermons Object Lessons](#) every week
- Our sister website called [Sunday School Works!](#)

If your church buys resources, please consider using [The Sunday School Store](#). Church budgets are tight. That's why our digital curriculum is half the cost of printed material. Even when finances are limited, your teaching can make an eternal difference.

TRUSTED BY THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES

★★★★★ from 269 reviews



**Tina Urso** reviewed "Faith Over Fear" 5 Lesson...

★★★★★

**Faith over Fear**

I love how Bethany devoted so much time and energy into what I believe is the most important subject in our Christian walk... FAITH. Without it our talk is just words. How can we witness if we don't have faith in what we share? As the Word says... "Without faith, it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God. Keep up the good..."

02/11/2021



**Holly Worthington** reviewed The LOVE of God: 4-Week ...

★★★★★

**The L.O.V.E. of God**

we did the 1st lesson Sunday the 7th. The lesson was easy to put together and the kids fully understood it all.

02/08/2021



**Heidi** reviewed The BIBLE Unit 1: Genesis ...

★★★★★

**Life Saver!**

I started a new Wednesday Night children's program for kids ranging from 4-12 years old. The only other people to volunteer to help me were my teens! Faced with the challenge to teach a group ranging from twelve to twenty children each week with very little help. I needed a curriculum that would be easy to...

01/13/2021

