



NEW TESTAMENT 2

Adult Bible Study

Jesus Shows He Is True God

REPRODUCIBLE STUDY PAGES



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Lessons 1, 5, and 7 written by Carl Roth
Lessons 2 and 8–12 written by Gifford Grobien
Lessons 3, 4, 6, and 13 written by Randy Asbury
Edited by Lorraine Groth

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Introduction

God promises to strengthen our life in Christ as we study His Word. This Adult Bible Study series provides resources to help you study God's Word, giving you an opportunity to study some familiar, and possibly not-so-familiar, biblical accounts in depth.

Each of the Bible study books has thirteen sessions that are divided into four easy-to-use sections.

Start—Section 1 of each session points participants to the key point for the session and invites discussion and thinking to draw participants into the study.

Study—Section 2 of each session explores a portion of Scripture through the use of a brief commentary and questions that help the participants study the text.

Share—Section 3 of each session helps the participants apply to their lives both God's Law and Gospel revealed in the scriptural account.

Send—Section 4 of each session provides the participants with practical suggestions for taking the theme of the lesson out of the classroom and into the world.

This study is designed to assist both novice and expert Bible students in their study of Holy Scripture. It offers resources that will enable them to grow in their understanding of God's Word while strengthening their life in Christ.

As an added benefit, the sessions in the Adult Bible Study series follow the Scripture lessons taught in both the Growing in Christ and the Cross Exploration Sunday School series. Parents will enjoy studying in depth the Bible stories their children are studying in Sunday School. This will provide parents and children additional opportunities to

- discuss God's Word together;
- extend lesson applications to everyday situations;
- pray together; and
- engage in family activities that grow out of lesson truths.

How to Use This Bible Study

This leader guide gives you all the material you need to teach the thirteen Bible stories for this quarter. The material is designed to be used in an adult Bible study while children are participating in Sunday School. Shorten or lengthen the suggested section times to fit your time frame.

Each lesson includes a brief Bible commentary with the key point, Law/Gospel statements, discussion questions with leader notes, and a front-and-back Reproducible Study Page at the end of the lesson. Make copies of the Study Page to distribute to class members. This format allows for the frequent fluctuation in class size that is common to adult study groups. It is also more economical to order just one leader guide rather than a leader guide and individual student books.

We also encourage you to order the Bible Posters for this quarter. These large works of art will provide your class with memorable visuals of the texts they are studying. (To order, call 1-800-325-3040; ask for CPH stock number 44-4113.)

World History	Dates	Jesus' Life
Egypt—Greco—Roman Period	332 BC	
Early Imperial China— Western Han Dynasty	206 BC	
Roman Empire	63 BC	
Herod the Great rules Palestine 37–1 BC	37 BC	
Caesar Augustus, Roman Emperor 27 BC–AD 14	27 BC	
	6 or 5 BC	John born Jesus born
Herod Archelaus rules Judea 4 BC–AD 6 Herod Antipas rules Galilee 4 BC–AD 39	4 BC	
	3 BC	Visit of the Wise Men
India—Kushan Empire	AD 1	
Roman Empire begins rule in Palestine	AD 6	
	AD 7/8	Jesus in the temple at age 12
Early Imperial China—Hsing Dynasty	AD 9	
Early Imperial China—Eastern Han Dynasty	AD 25	John the Baptist begins ministry
Pontius Pilate AD 26–36	AD 26	Jesus baptized Jesus tempted in the desert Jesus begins ministry
	AD 29	Jesus transfigured
	AD 30	Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection

Preparing the Lesson

Date: _____

Jesus Changes Water into Wine

John 2:1–11

Key Point

In His first miracle at Cana in Galilee, Jesus showed that He is God. Through God's Word and physical means—water, bread, and wine—God shows us that Jesus is our Savior.

Law/Gospel

Like the disciples, I am unsure of who Jesus is. **Through His Word and Sacraments, Jesus shows He is my Savior and God.**

Context

This event occurs at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry. It shows His glory as God through His first miracle.

Commentary

In ancient Jewish wedding custom, betrothal was the marriage contract and could not be broken except by divorce. After a period of time, the groom and his friends would go to the home of the bride and bring her and her friends to his home. There, they would have a feast, and the couple would begin living together without further ceremony. The feast would often last for days or even a week.

Christ, our Bridegroom, is betrothed to His Bride, the Church. Nothing can break His holy vow to take us as His own. Now we are in the waiting time as the Bridegroom prepares a home for us to live in forever (John 14:1–4).

Meanwhile, we are inviting guests by the work of evangelism. At the Last Day, Jesus will appear with all the company of heaven and take us to Himself, and the wedding feast will commence. We will have table fellowship with our Lord in the everlasting banquet (Revelation 19:6–10).

In this text, we see that Mary was there. She was possibly a friend of the bridal couple, since she seems to have had some involvement in the banquet and so was aware of the problem with the wine running low. Jesus is an invited guest, along with His six disciples. This event takes place early in His ministry—the full complement of the Twelve had not yet been chosen.

The lack of wine was a serious problem and shows a lack of preparation on the part of the steward of the wedding feast or of the groom. It would have caused acute embarrassment. This theme of unpreparedness is similar to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. Note also the anxiety connected with wedding feasts in other parables of Jesus, such as Matthew 22 and Luke 14. Similarly, we sin by our lack of faith and readiness to receive our Lord. We, too, need to repent, for if Christ were to return this instant, none of us on our own would be ready. Only by grace are we made acceptable in His sight.

Learning about the lack of wine, Mary turns to Jesus for help. And Jesus gives it. There were six large stoneware jars that were meant to hold water for the Jews' many ceremonial washings. Jesus commanded the servants to fill the jars with water, and then He turned that water into about 110 gallons (estimates vary) of premium wine, astonishing the steward, the groom, and all present.

The text concludes by saying that there were two results of this miracle, or sign. One is that it revealed the glory of the Lord and demonstrated the divinity of Jesus. That is the function of all miracles—to confirm the truth of the words of the prophet. The second result is that the disciples believed in Jesus. So, too, when we learn of the signs that Jesus did, we find that God strengthens our faith by the power of His Word.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 1

Jesus Changes Water into Wine

John 2:1–11

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray Heavenly Father, through His first miracle, Jesus revealed Himself to be one with You, Your one and only Son. Continue to reveal Yourself to us through the Word and earthly means of water, bread, and wine, imparting the forgiveness Christ earned for us. In His name we pray. Amen.

Say 1. We see the true humanity of Jesus in His attendance at the wedding at Cana, where He no doubt enjoyed the delicious food and wine and had a wonderful time with His friends. At another time, we see Jesus go off into the wilderness to fast for forty days. And later, we see His great agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and in His Passion. How are these different parts of Jesus' life typical of our own lives?

Like anyone, Jesus experienced the ups and downs of life. So it is with us. God blesses us with wonderful and happy times, when it is right to feast on the gifts He gives. Other times, we must focus on fasting and prayer. And He also sends us times of famine, when we struggle and mourn.

In all these things, our lives are being conformed to the pattern of Christ. We neither "[feast] sumptuously every day" like the rich man (Luke 16:19), nor fast all the time like a works-righteous monk, nor suffer pain and deprivation continually, but we experience the full range of human experience as Jesus did.

Say 2. Jesus performed an amazing miracle at the wedding at Cana by changing water into wine. This demonstrated His divine attribute of omnipotence, that is, being all-powerful. How does Jesus use His omnipotence today for our benefit?

Jesus upholds creation with His almighty power and protects us from all harm and danger. We can take great comfort that the One who has redeemed us with His own blood also uses His power for our help and protection.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Say 3. In order to interpret John's Gospel, it is important to understand how he arranges his material. As we see in the outline, the Book of Signs is made up of seven signs, the number 7 often indicating completeness in the Bible. John 2:11 tells us that the miracle at Cana is the "first of His

signs.” What is the significance of the sign He performed at Cana? How did this sign function for His disciples? See John 1:50 and 2:11. How does it function for us? See John 20:30–31.

I. Prologue (1:1–18)

II. Book of Signs (1:19–12:50)

- A. Miracle at Cana (2:1–11)
- B. Healing of the official's son (4:46–54)
- C. Healing at Bethesda (5:1–17)
- D. Feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15)
- E. Walking on water (6:16–21)
- F. Healing of the blind man (9:1–41)
- G. The raising of Lazarus (11:38–44)

III. Book of Glory (13:1–20:31)

- A. Hour of glorification (12)
- B. The farewell discourse / high priestly prayer (17)
- C. Passion (18–19)
- D. Resurrection (20)

IV. Epilogue (21)

This is the first narrative of Jesus' activity in John's Gospel, so clearly, it is of fundamental importance. It demonstrates Jesus' divinity and functioned to reveal who Jesus is to the disciples with the result that they believed in Him (or that their faith in Him was strengthened). All of John's signs reveal things about the person of Jesus and describe the resulting belief of His followers. The point of all of John's stories is to focus on Jesus as the one sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world.

What shines through in the signs is Jesus' glory, fulfilling the promise made to Nathanael in John 1:50, "You will see greater things than these." John explicitly describes the purpose of the signs—and the purpose of his entire Gospel—when he says, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30–31).

Say 4. We have seen that the purpose of the miracle at Cana—and all the other signs—is to reveal Jesus' glory and to strengthen the faith of His followers. Read Isaiah 25:6 and Amos 9:13, two prophecies related to the expected age of the Messiah. What about Jesus' miracle at Cana, in particular, revealed His glory and showed that the Messiah had come? This miracle demonstrates that the messianic age is at hand because of the amazing quality and abundance of the wine Jesus makes. The Jews expected that one characteristic of the messianic age would be a great abundance of fine wine. According to Psalm 104:15, wine is a sign of joy and gladness from the Lord. Isaiah 25:6 says that the Lord will make for all peoples—Jews and Gentiles—"a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine." Amos 9:13 says that "the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it." Jesus' miracle is a sign that these prophecies have been fulfilled in His very person.

Say 5. The first part of John's Gospel is called the Book of Signs and the second is the Book of Glory. Read John 1:14; 2:11; and 8:54 for references to Jesus' glory in the first part of John. Then reread John 12:23–24 and 17:1. Why is it significant that the words *glory* and *hour* appear together in these verses? Read John 19:2–3, 19. In what way is Jesus portrayed as a king? Why is it so shocking that Jesus' glory is to be found at the hour of His crucifixion?

John 1:14 shows that Jesus' glory is that He is "the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth," who has become flesh and dwells among us. In John 2:11, He manifested His glory as the Son of God through the miracle at Cana. In 8:54, the fact that He is God's Son is reiterated, showing the source of His glory. John 12:23–24 says that the hour of Jesus' glorification is at hand, and He speaks of His crucifixion when He describes a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies. In 17:1, right before Jesus' Passion, Jesus prays to His Father, "the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You." The linking of the words *glory* and *hour* reminds us that Jesus' glory will be in His sacrificial death for sinners.

In John 19:2–3, Jesus is portrayed as a king as He received a crown of thorns, a purple robe, and mocking praise from the soldiers. In 19:19, Jesus is called "King of the Jews." As kings are normally given much glory, the surprise of John's Gospel (and of *the Gospel*) is that the Son of God's true glory is revealed in a crucifixion. He had revealed the glory He possessed as God through various signs, but then turned everything upside down by showing that the hour of glory He had moved toward was the hour of the cross.

3 Share (10 minutes)

Say 6. We have learned that Jesus' signs reveal who He is for the disciples and for us. Yet not everyone got His signs. Often, people missed the underlying meaning. Read John 6:26, 34–35. Why were the people seeking Jesus? What was the true meaning of the sign that He had performed (the feeding of the five thousand)? How does focusing solely on the miraculous nature of Jesus' signs continue to lead people astray today?

Signs reveal who Jesus is, but that does not mean people will receive them and believe in who He is. God reveals Himself in His Word, but He does not compel people to believe it; He lets Himself be rejected. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He encountered many who witnessed His miracles but did not grasp the underlying sign. After He fed the five thousand, the crowd and disciples came looking for Him. "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves'" (John 6:26). They wanted to make Him a bread king, one who would always keep them well fed (John 6:34). But in that case, the real point of Jesus' miracle was to reveal that He is the bread of life (John 6:35). Those who were concerned only for their bellies did not believe in Him. Thus, making visible or revealing does not always end in belief.

Today, many people still want Jesus to perform miracles for them, such as healing their diseases or turning around their finances. While He *could* do these things, He has revealed in the Gospel that He wants to save people from their sins and to be the bread of life, not simply bread that spoils.

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it during the week in preparation for next week's class.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their child's Sunday School Leaflet together at home. Also encourage the class to study the Small Catechism at home regularly, especially if they have children.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, urge participants to thank God for the gift of marriage and pray for those who are married.

Lesson 1 Student Page

Jesus Changes Water into Wine John 2:1–11

- ① We see the true humanity of Jesus in His attendance at the wedding at Cana, where He no doubt enjoyed the delicious food and wine and had a wonderful time with His friends. At another time, we see Jesus go off into the wilderness to fast for forty days. And later, we see His great agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and in His Passion. How are these different parts of Jesus' life typical of our own lives?
- ② Jesus performed an amazing miracle at the wedding at Cana by changing water into wine. This demonstrated His divine attribute of omnipotence, that is, being all-powerful. How does Jesus use His omnipotence today for our benefit?
- ③ In order to interpret John's Gospel, it is important to understand how he arranges his material. As we see in the outline (on the next page), the Book of Signs is made up of seven signs, the number 7 often indicating completeness in the Bible. John 2:11 tells us that the miracle at Cana is the "first of His signs." What is the significance of the sign He performed at Cana? How did this sign function for His disciples? See John 1:50 and 2:11. How does it function for us? See John 20:30–31.
- ④ We have seen that the purpose of the miracle at Cana—and all the other signs—is to reveal Jesus' glory and strengthen the faith of His followers. Read Isaiah 25:6 and Amos 9:13, two prophecies related to the expected age of the Messiah. What about Jesus' miracle at Cana, in particular, revealed His glory and showed that the Messiah had come?
- ⑤ The first part of John's Gospel is called the Book of Signs and the second is the Book of Glory. Read John 1:14; 2:11; and 8:54 for references to Jesus' glory in the first part of John. Then reread John 12:23–24 and 17:1. Why is it significant that the words glory and hour appear together in these verses? Read John 19:2–3, 19. In what way is Jesus portrayed as a king? Why is it so shocking that Jesus' glory is to be found at the hour of His crucifixion?
- ⑥ Jesus' signs reveal who He is for the disciples and for us. Yet not everyone got His signs. Often, people missed the underlying meaning. Read John 6:26, 34–35. Why were the people seeking Jesus? What was the true meaning of the sign that He had performed (the feeding of the five thousand)? How does focusing solely on the miraculous nature of Jesus' signs continue to lead people astray today?

Lesson 1 Student Page

Through the Week

Outline of John's Gospel

I. Prologue (1:1–18)

II. Book of Signs (1:19–12:50)

- A. Miracle at Cana (2:1–11)
- B. Healing of the official's son (4:46–54)
- C. Healing at Bethesda (5:1–17)
- D. Feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15)
- E. Walking on water (6:16–21)
- F. Healing of the blind man (9:1–41)
- G. The raising of Lazarus (11:38–44)

III. Book of Glory (13:1–20:31)

- A. Hour of glorification (12)
- B. The farewell discourse / high priestly prayer (17)
- C. Passion (18–19)
- D. Resurrection (20)

IV. Epilogue (21)

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their Sunday School Leaflets together, sharing with one another what you learned about today's Bible story.

The wedding at Cana provides a wonderful picture of both the true humanity of Jesus and His true divinity. The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed also clearly confesses Jesus' two natures. This week, recite the Apostles' Creed during your family devotions and also say Luther's explanation of the Second Article together.

Personal Reflection

The Rite of Holy Matrimony in the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* begins:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and before His Church to witness the union of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. This is an honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in paradise, before humanity's fall into sin.

In marriage we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee.

It is worth reminding ourselves often that our Lord has given such a ringing endorsement to marriage. Every Christian marriage should be a sign to the world of the love of Christ for His Church.

This week, consider including in your daily prayers a petition that God would uphold the marriages of your friends and family. If you are married, say a prayer of thanksgiving for God's wonderful gift of marriage.

Preparing the Lesson

Jesus Clears the Temple

John 2:13–22

Key Point

Jesus' cleansing of the temple carries a twofold message: He is the Lord of the temple in the flesh, and even more important, He is the true temple, through whom our sins are paid for and we are made heirs of eternal life.

Law/Gospel

I sin when I do not honor God's house or when I disturb the worship of others. **Jesus is my holy temple who, by His sacrifice on the altar of the cross, cleansed me from sin and made me a member of His Body, the Church.**

Context

John recounts this cleansing at the forefront of his Gospel in order to highlight it. Other evangelists place a similar cleansing later, during Holy Week (e.g., Matthew 21:12–17). When worshipers arrived at the temple, usually from far away, they exchanged their "unclean" Greek currency for Jewish coinage. They used this cash to purchase animals for sacrifice rather than leading a lamb or ox all the way from their often-distant homes.

Commentary

There are no figurines of Jesus brandishing a whip. That wouldn't fit well with our modern-day sentimentality about the Savior. But there's the real Jesus, lashing here and there to drive out the livestock and their owners. Over go the tables, "sacred" coins littering the ground. They have turned His "Father's house" into "a house of trade" (John 2:16). So Jesus brings them down like a house of cards.

None too happy with Jesus, the Jews demand a sign to verify that this troublemaker has the right to cause such a mess. To them, His reply was preposterous: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19). The Jews can't believe their ears. How can Jesus possibly think that He can raise from the rubble an edifice that took nearly half

a century to construct? But they miss the point, for "He was speaking about the temple of His body," John says (v. 21), which He would "reconstruct" within seventy-two hours after the Romans tore it down with hammer, spike, and spear.

The cleansing of the temple carries a twofold message. First, the true Lord of the temple was there, in the flesh. He came to purify what others had dirtied with their devotion to the god of currency. But second, and more important, He came as the true temple as well.

All the victims for sacrifice, all the blood and flesh burned upon the altar—indeed, the altar and temple themselves—would very soon reach their expiration date, as happened when Jesus expired on the cross, breathing out His Spirit. For the temple was no longer a place of wood and stone, but of flesh and bone. He was the temple, priest, and sacrifice—the fulfillment of all that Leviticus had foreshadowed.

Unlike every other sacrifice in the past, this Lamb would emerge from the altar ashes and rise from the tomb, the temple of His body flawless, save for the scars. But those wounds are the tokens of our healing, sacred tattoos etched into His hands, feet, and side to testify to the world that this once-destroyed temple has been rebuilt to house our own wounded bodies, perfect them, and raise them up to be like His.

To hear an in-depth discussion of this Bible account, visit cph.org/podcast and listen to our Seeds of Faith podcast each week.

Lesson 2

Jesus Clears the Temple

John 2:13–22

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray Heavenly Father, in Your ancient temple, You were present for Your people Israel and foreshadowed the eternal presence of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that by His sacrifice in the flesh, we would be rescued from greed, idolatry, and all sin, and rise up with Him unto eternal life, through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Say 1. Read John 2:13–22. What feast is being celebrated at the time of these events? What is the meaning and significance of this feast?

John notes in verse 13 that the Passover is being celebrated in Jerusalem at this time. The feast of the Passover was instituted not only as a remembrance of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt but also as a remembrance of the *means* by which the Lord delivered them. (The Lord commanded the Israelites to slay a lamb, eat the meat, and cover their doorposts with its blood. He then passed over those households, not slaying the firstborn sons [Exodus 12:1–14].)

Just like the other sacrifices instituted by the Lord through Moses, especially as described in Leviticus, the Passover anticipated the sacrifice of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7). By His death and the pouring out of His blood, the Lord does not hold our sins against us but passes over our penalty of death, granting us the forgiveness of new life.

John mentions three distinct celebrations of the Passover in his Gospel. First is this celebration in John 2. Second is the reference in John 6:4, prior to the feeding of the five thousand. (The Passover was the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, a feast that reminded the people of their sojourning on this earth and reliance on God for all their provision, both bodily and spiritual.) Third are the several references beginning at John 11, when Jesus is crucified.

Each time, Jesus shows that He is the fulfillment of the Passover. In the second, He is the Lord that provides bread, both for our bodies and for our souls. In the third, He is the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us. But how is He the fulfillment of the Passover in this first account? Keep this question in mind as you study the text.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Ask 2. Who is gathered in the temple? Why are they there? What is the problem with what they are doing?

The animals used for sacrifice, the people selling the oxen, sheep, and pigeons, and the money changers were all in the temple. Find a diagram of the temple online

or in a Bible commentary or Bible to show the class. Point out that these traders were stationed in the court of the Gentiles, just inside the boundaries of the temple. These traders ideally were there to offer an important service: providing animals used for the temple sacrifices. Travelers who might not bring an animal with them or those who did not raise animals would sell whatever goods or services they produced, using the funds to buy a sacrificial animal for their offering.

Yet as important as providing these animals was, the traders had encroached upon God's holy space. The temple was a place for God to dwell with His people and for the people to respond in faith and thanksgiving by offering sacrifices, hearing the teaching from the priests and Levites, and praying. Even this outer court, the court of the Gentiles, was established for worship, not for trade and profit.

In fact, by setting up their booths in the court of the Gentiles, these traders were infringing on the only space the Gentiles had to participate in the temple worship of the true God. (Remember that Gentiles could not enter the inner courts of the temple because they had not submitted themselves to the full law of the Jews, such as undergoing circumcision and embracing dietary restrictions. So, this outer court was their place of worship.) But having the traders set up in this court turned God's house into a marketplace, displacing and distracting the Gentiles from worshiping Him. Where God had established a place for even the Gentiles to hear His Word and pray, instead merchants were calling out to customers, examining goods, and driving bargains. Imagine the noise, sights, and smells. This was not the best setting for worship!

There is a place for all good occupations and activities. There is a place for buying and selling, for caring for the earthly needs that we have, for being a good steward of the earthly gifts God gives us. But what God has set apart for the worship of Him is truly holy. His space, His time, and the things He gives through His Gospel, these are to be dedicated to Him, received with thanksgiving, and handled reverently. God's holy gifts continue today in the preaching of the Word, in Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion, and these things should continue to be treated with reverence and received with thanksgiving.

Say 3. Describe what Jesus does in verses 15–16. Does this seem characteristic of Jesus when compared to the other parts of the Gospels? Consider the perceived inconsistencies in Jesus' behavior, and discuss how His actions really are consistent with the rest of His ministry.

Unlike many encounters with His opponents, Jesus does not restrict Himself to words here (see Matthew 22:15–23:39). In this case, He makes a whip and forces the merchants and money changers out of the temple while pouring out their money and overturning their tables. He dismantles the whole setup in order to make room again for the worship of God by the Gentiles. Jesus affirms again the sanctity and exclusivity of the place of worship; nothing should detract from it.

Why does Jesus use force here? First, we should note that Jesus is no respecter of men (He does not fear what they will do to Him); instead He carries out the will of His Father regardless of what others think of Him (Matthew 22:16; Luke 4:23–30; John 10:17–18). Jesus always works to do the Father's will and to defend God's plan of salvation. So it is not that Jesus is a pacifist or that Jesus is violent. Rather, Jesus does what is required to bring about repentance and salvation in men.

In all of the situations where He confronts opponents but does not use force to oppose them, He still does not allow His opponents to hurt others. He is able to refute His opponents with His teaching or call them into repentance by His very presence. He does this when He keeps the people of Nazareth from stoning Him (Luke 4:23–30) and when He prevents the temple guard from capturing or killing any of His followers in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:3–9). When He does not need to coerce, He does not do so.

But in this case, the holiness of His Father can only be defended by His forceful removal of those who desecrate the temple, so He drives them out. This shows us that Jesus is not weak. Rather, Jesus is resolute. He does what His Father calls Him to do. He obeys the commandments: both those to love and honor His Father and those to love and defend His neighbor. He uses His Word to beckon, call, and create faith. Yet when necessary, He defends His Father and His neighbor by force, out of love for God and for people—in this case, the Gentiles.

Say 4. Jesus’ very act of cleansing the temple is a sign: it confirms the prophetic words of Psalm 69. Yet the Jews stubbornly seek another sign. What is the significance of their question and Jesus’ answer?

The Jews will not accept the sign already given by Jesus: obedience to God’s commands to honor the Sabbath and have no other gods. These laws in the Ten Commandments are plain and applicable for all. Only Jesus obeys them, however, by once again making the temple a place of worship rather than a marketplace. Jesus alone defends the commandments of God and, by this defense, becomes the object of testing, scorn, and reproach by the Jews.

The Jews will not accept the “sign” that Jesus offers: His obedience. They do not accept what He says, so they demand another sign. They test the Lord in their rebellion, finding excuse after excuse not to receive what is offered to them.

Yet Jesus is patient and long-suffering. He does, indeed, offer another sign, even though they—we—do not deserve it. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Another ludicrous-sounding sign, but it points forward to His resurrection. Although they do not see it now, Jesus points to Himself as where God is. Jesus is the temple. He is where God dwells with His people. Should the mere building be destroyed, God will never raise it up. But when Jesus’ body is destroyed in death on the cross, He raises Himself up again in three days.

The Jews miss the point, thinking He is speaking of the building. But when Christ is raised, it will become clear to all who will listen that He was speaking of His own body. His disciples remembered and believed. All who would be His disciples still hear this word and believe it.

Share (10 minutes)

Say 5. In the days before Jesus was born, God was worshiped in His temple. Where do we worship God today? In what ways do we make our Father’s house a house of trade?

Today, Christ has given us the church as the place of worship. The church is not primarily the building, but it is wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, where the Gospel is preached and taught, His Baptism and Supper are celebrated, Christians love and serve one another, and God is praised (see Acts 2:41–47).

But we make His church a house of trade whenever we peddle things—when we seek after the desire and profit for ourselves at the expense of our neighbor and in rejection of God's teaching and forgiveness. While this can certainly happen by turning the church into a profit-making enterprise, it also occurs when we make the church a place of entertainment, a spot for mere socializing, a false community (where individuals come together for an hour a week but don't really serve one another), and any other way in which we despise or downplay the forgiving work of the Holy Spirit in preaching, Baptism, and Communion. Encourage group members to suggest problems they have seen or experienced.

Ask 6. What is the significance for us that Jesus is the temple of God?

Temple means “the place where God dwells.” Jesus is God in the flesh, God who has taken on human nature and made it His own. This means not only that God obeys the Law perfectly as a man and suffers the punishment of mankind, but also that He becomes a companion and friend. He is not a nebulous spirit, someone or something channeled through a mystical experience. He is a person like us. We hear Him speaking to us, and He interacts with us in Baptism and feeds us with His body and blood. What's more, this temple of His body is not limited to a location, like the building of old was. That building was an imperfect example of God's presence. But Christ the man is present wherever two or three are gathered (Matthew 18:20), hearing His teaching and living in His Baptism (Matthew 28:19–20).

Christ's life, suffering, death, and resurrection—His existence as our temple—shows that God is reconciled to us and we are reconciled to God. Our sin is no longer held against us. He has destroyed this sin in His own body and has given us life in His resurrection (Colossians 2:9–14). He has suffered all things that we have—and even more—and He knows what we are going through (2 Corinthians 1:3–5). As long as we may suffer here, He never leaves us or forsakes us. He is the temple: God before us. God for us. God with us, forever.

4 Send (5 minutes)

Give participants the text for next week, and encourage them to read it during the week in preparation for next week's class.

For the **Family Connections** section, encourage the adults with children in Sunday School to review their child's Sunday School leaflet together at home. Encourage them also to learn by heart the first three questions and answers from the Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism. Be sure group members understand how all the benefits of the Gospel flow out of the forgiveness of sins.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, be sure the emphasis remains on the Gospel. Reflection on our sins and sorrow over them should drive us to the Gospel, not frighten us into fleeing the Gospel.

Lesson 2 Student Page

Jesus Clears the Temple John 2:13–22

- ① Read John 2:13–22. What feast is being celebrated at the time of these events? What is the meaning and significance of this feast?
- ② Who is gathered in the temple? Why are they there? What is the problem with what they are doing?
- ③ Describe what Jesus does in verses 15–16. Does this seem characteristic of Jesus when compared to the other parts of the Gospels? Consider the perceived inconsistencies in Jesus' behavior, and discuss how His actions really are consistent with the rest of His ministry.
- ④ Jesus' very act of cleansing the temple is a sign: it confirms the prophetic words of Psalm 69. Yet the Jews stubbornly seek another sign. What is the significance of their question and Jesus' answer?
- ⑤ In the days before Jesus was born, God was worshiped in His temple. Where do we worship God today? In what ways do we make our Father's house a house of trade?
- ⑥ What is the significance for us that Jesus is the temple of God?

Lesson 2 Student Page

Through the Week

Family Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over their leaflets together, sharing with each other what you learned about today's Bible story.

Learn by heart the first three questions and answers from the Sacrament of the Altar in the Small Catechism. Discuss with your children the benefits of the Lord's Supper (forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation), and point out how all benefits grow out of the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness wipes out sin, which brought death. Therefore, life is restored when the cause of death is eliminated.

Personal Reflection

This week, reflect on the Third Commandment and its meaning. Consider your sin, but as you do so, don't flee from Christ or try to send Him away, but flee to Him. Think about the power of Christ's death and resurrection to take away your sin. Do not let your sins keep you from being comforted by your pastor's preaching or from receiving the Lord's Supper, but eagerly seek after these things and receive them as your balm and healing.