Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's house is for worshipping God. Ask God for the zeal Jesus had, a love for His house that won't let anything crowd out worship.
Bible passage: John 2:13–17. Students read it out loud themselves, then read on in John 2:18–22.
Memory verse: "And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." *John 2:16 (KJV)* and "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." *John 2:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read John 2:13–22, Psalm 69:9 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Used Right, Used Wrong (5–10 minutes)

Write four things on the board: a hammer, a phone, your voice, a church. For each one, students call out one way to use it right and one way to use it wrong. Ask: *What happens when something good gets used for the wrong purpose? Who decides what something is for?* Say: "The one who made it decides. Today Jesus walks into God's house and finds it being used for the wrong purpose."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: John 2:13–17. Students take turns, a verse or two each. Old words in this passage:

- **passover** (2:13): the feast remembering how the LORD passed over Israel's houses in Egypt (Exodus 12:27); **at hand**: near
- **oxen** (2:14): cattle; **changers of money**: people who traded one kind of money for another
- **scourge of small cords** (2:15): a whip of small ropes; **overthrew**: turned over
- **hence** (2:16): away from here; **merchandise**: buying and selling, a market
- **zeal** (2:17): a strong, burning love; **hath eaten me up**: has filled me completely

Look closer. Point out these details with the class:

- **God's house, full of business.** God's law told people to bring offerings of the herd, the flock and doves (Leviticus 1:2, 1:14). John doesn't say why the sellers were in the temple; Jesus said they had made it "an house of merchandise" (2:16).
- **On purpose.** John says Jesus first made the scourge, then drove them out (2:15). He drove them out; John doesn't say He struck anyone.

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- **The disciples remembered Scripture.** When they saw it, they remembered Psalm 69:9: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). God's Word helped them understand what Jesus did.
- **Read on: John 2:18–22.** Asked for a sign, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). "But he spake of the temple of his body" (2:21). After He rose from the dead, His disciples remembered, and they believed (2:22).
- **God's temple today.** Paul wrote to believers, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). What Jesus cared about in the temple, He cares about in us.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The temple was made for worship, but it had become a market (2:16). How can something good slowly drift from what God made it for?
2. Jesus made the scourge before He drove them out (2:15). What does that tell you about what He did?
3. What do you think "the zeal of thine house" (2:17), a burning love for God's house, looks like in a twelve-year-old?
4. What crowds out worship for you when you come to church? What could you do about it?
5. The disciples understood more after they remembered Scripture (2:17, 2:22). How does knowing God's Word help you understand what God is doing?
6. If "ye are the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16), what might Jesus want to clean out of your life?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **hence** means away from here; **my Father's house** means God's house; **merchandise** means buying and selling. In John 2:17, **zeal** means a strong, burning love, and **hath eaten me up** means it filled Him completely.

Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say John 2:16 this week; keep working on John 2:17 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus spoke of the temple of His body, and He rose from the dead (John 2:21–22). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. When I come to God's house, what is my heart really focused on?
2. What is one thing that crowds out worship in my life, at church or at home?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to give you zeal for His house and to clean out anything that doesn't belong.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: come to church ready to worship: put your phone away, sing, and listen to the Word. Read Psalm 69:9 and John 2:17 side by side.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your house and for making us Your temple. Give us zeal for Your house like Jesus had, and clean out anything in us that doesn't belong. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: John 2:15 says Jesus "drove them all out." It doesn't say He struck anyone, and the lesson doesn't say it either. Jesus never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Matthew 21:12–13 and Mark 11:15–17 tell a similar account; this lesson follows John 2 only, so every detail comes from John.

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