



H

HIGHLIGHT: 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

¹⁶Don't you yourselves know that you are God's sanctuary and that the Spirit of God lives in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him; for God's sanctuary is holy, and that is what you are.

E

EXPLAIN

Leaders: Feel free to use any of the “Explain” materials to guide discussion as it is needed or to expound on a certain area of the text as it comes up during your Life Group time, but the purpose of this section is to deepen your own personal understanding of the Word. Your members have access to all of this material as well.

God's desire in the whole of Scripture is to dwell with His people. In the Old Testament, the Israelites traveled through the desert with a Tabernacle, then built a Temple so that God could be in the midst of His people. But then the most miraculous thing happened—God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We no longer have a Temple to find the presence of God; God's people *are* His Temple.

v.16 In verses 5 through 15, Paul used the metaphor of constructing a building to describe the work that God's servants do: someone lays a foundation, another person constructs walls, another will decorate it, etc. He explains that the foundation on which we build is Christ Jesus, alone, and that the “edifice” of His Temple is the body of the Church. God does not reside within the walls of a church building, but within the hearts of those who make up His Church.

The Greek word for Sanctuary here is *naos*, which is different than the general word for the temple complex. It actually refers to the place in the Temple where God dwelled among His people. The Old Testament states that God could not be limited by a temple built by human hands (1 Kings 8:27; Is. 66:1-2), but He also promised to dwell among His people. Now, the Temple built by human hands has been replaced by something God built, Himself: those who believe in Jesus.



- v.17 The word *hagios* is the word translated here to mean “holy,” and it denotes separation from sin and dedication to God. If God’s Sanctuary—His people—is used for the opposite, though, God will judge it harshly.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Verlyn D. Verbrugge wrote, “What if, rather than inspire the people into living a lifestyle of holiness and consecration to God and into doing his work, they entrap believers more and more into patterns of behavior that are linked with the foolish wisdom of the world? What if they advocate divisions and champion ‘jealousy and quarreling’ (3:3)? Sadly, church leaders have been known to do such things. As far as Paul is concerned, such activity will ‘destroy God’s Temple.’ As a result, God will have little choice but to punish such leaders with some form of destruction.”

One of the main themes throughout Scripture is God’s desire to dwell among His people. In the Garden, He walked with Adam at the cool of the day. In the desert, the Israelites constructed a mobile Tabernacle so that He could live with them even as they wandered. When they got settled, they built a Temple that housed His presence in one place.

In 587 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar II was laying siege to Jerusalem, he sacked the Temple and took the Ark of the Covenant which resided in the Holy of Holies and housed God’s presence. Over the next 500 years the relationship the Israelites had with God was rocky and grew increasingly corrupt—perhaps due to the fact that even though they rebuilt the Temple, the Ark was never returned. The Priesthood grew corrupt and, at the end of Malachi, God finally ceased communication with His people, who had deserted Him.

But that lack of communication was not permanent: John 1:14 tells us that the Word of God took on flesh so that it could dwell, or Tabernacle, among us. And when Jesus, Who was the Word-made-flesh, died, the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was torn.

Jesus then sent His Spirit to take up residence in the hearts of those who believe in Him. We no longer require a Holy of Holies to access God; the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and God is accessible by all who have Jesus as their new, perfect High Priest.

A

APPLY

*Your Leader Guide will have material that the member guides do not have. The **bolded** material is what the people in your group will have, the other material is only for you to help guide discussion.*

This guide can be as strict a script or as general a resource as the leader needs it to be.

- 1. What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?**
- 2. When you hear the word Sanctuary, what do you think of? What do you think it means that, as believers, we are God’s sanctuary? Why is it important to you that we don’t have to go somewhere in order to experience God?**

A Sanctuary is a place that is set apart from sin for the purpose of worshipping God. When He sacrificed Himself in our stead on the Cross, Jesus tore down the barrier



between the place where God dwells and those who worship Him—and then He sent His Spirit to live inside of us. Through Him, we have constant access to the Father. We don't need special rites or fancy words in order to find Him; those who believe in Christ have everything they need already.

3. How does being God's Temple affect how you see yourself? How is this different than how the world tells us we should see ourselves?

If we see ourselves as the Temple of the Living God, we recognize that we have a bigger identity than our shifting culture could provide for us. We hear all sorts of things about who we should be from everywhere around us; meanwhile, God tells us something infinitely more important: we are His Sanctuary.

4. What do you think it means to be "set apart?" Tell about something you "set apart" for a specific purpose—whether it be a set of silverware, an hour of your day, or the contents of a piggy bank.

Almost everyone has something they set aside for special use. Some have a jar that they will only fill with money for plane tickets or gas money for trips. Some have sets of china they will only bring out for certain guests. If you set money aside for a trip, for instance, that money could have been used for any number of purposes, but the purpose you have in mind is singular and special. In the same way, we are to be the Sanctuary of God—a vessel set aside for use by God to make His glory known.

5. The word Sanctuary implies a place that is set apart for holy use. How do you think being God's Sanctuary should affect our day-to-day lives? How do you think it should affect how we treat the people around us?

R

RESPOND

Challenge your group to do this:

- **What are three action steps you can take this week to set yourself apart for use by God?**

Encourage one another through email, text messages, or coffee dates throughout the week to build up and encourage each other.

