# John 2:12-25 – Turning the Tables

When I was growing up, the church youth group often raised money by selling candy bars, candles, or magazines. Most people in the church were very supportive, but there was one couple that I knew not to ask. Many people would say no to buying items, but the one time I asked this couple, I got a very stern lecture about how it was wrong to be a money changer in the temple and make it into a marketplace.

There are a few issues with their stance. First, if they felt that way, a polite no would have been enough, or if they were really upset, they could have talked to the pastors who approved the fundraiser. Secondly, the church is not a temple, scripture is clear that, as Christians, WE are the temple of God. Finally, they totally missed the point of why Jesus took the actions he did.

The Jews were required to bring a purse sacrifice to the temple. Before they could make a sacrifice, the animal had to be approved by a priest. When someone brought in an animal to sacrifice, the priest could use any flaw to say that the animal was not acceptable. The priest would then send them to the people selling animals where they could sell the “defective” animal and buy one that was guaranteed to be accepted as pure. Of course the salesmen would pay far less for the “defective” animal than they charged for the pure animal. The priests had a scam going with the merchants and if they saw indications that the animal was purchased from the temple merchants, they would overlook the inconsequential flaws, but if the person brought an animal of their own, they would be extremely picky. The merchants would then take the animals that they bought for a reduced price today, and bring them back to sell as guaranteed pure animals the next day.

The money changers also had a scam going. The Jews did not allow non-Israeli coins to be used in the temple because they had the images of false gods or emperors on them. When someone brought non-Israeli coins to the temple the money changers would exchange them at a rate far worse than could be obtained further away from the temple. While the normal exchange rate was one shekel for 3 denarii, the temple money changers might sell one shekel for 4 denarii. The people who had to buy a pure animal often only had Roman coins available, because that is what was used in general commerce, so now they not only had to pay excessive money for the replacement animal, but they also lost money by exchanging their Roman denarii for Israeli shekels.

In the context of Jesus attending His first Passover with his disciples, we see how Jesus connected to His disciples. We then see how he cleansed the temple and declared He was more important than the temple. Finally, during the Passover celebration we see how Jesus interacted with the people who saw His miracles. From this, we learn that discipleship starts with connection, discipleship requires cleansing, discipleship involves remembering and understanding and that to be a disciple, belief is not enough.

## Discipleship Starts with Connection John 2:12-13

“**12** ¶ After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. **13** When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

We miss the time frame here, but walking from Cana to Capernaum is about 8 hours, a full day. Then they rested for a few days, followed by walking another 4-5 days to get to Jerusalem. They were together for about a week and a half. No distractions from TV or intranet, nor even a real way to be away from each other. We should also note, we tend to think of going up as North. In Israel, Jerusalem is higher in elevation than most places, so no matter the compass direction, Jerusalem was considered up.

What do you think that they did during those days? I am sure that there were times of silence. There were probably times of humor, times of singing, times of telling stories and sharing experiences. Ultimately, they were connecting with each other and getting to know each other.

I have had many enjoyable days going downtown and talking to people on the street about Jesus, some of them even prayed to receive Christ, but if any of them meant it, I have no way to know. On the other hand, in college I spent hours with a young man named Andrew. At that point he was an atheist and didn’t believe in Christ, but was attracted to people who were part of our Christian organization. By the end of our second year in college, his doubt had changed to faith. To this day, from time to time, he credits me with leading him to follow Christ. I didn’t pray with him to accept Christ. I didn’t walk him through a gospel tract. My friends and I got to know Andrew and be friends with him, while never hiding that God was central in our lives and giving honest answers to his questions. We showed him that it was possible to have fun without swearing, drinking, or carousing. We showed interest in the things that interested him, including his overwhelming store of saxophone trivia. Eventually a minister name Rick led Andrew to follow Christ, but his change of heart started with connection.

As you consider the people around you, you may know a lot about them, but have you connected with them? Have you looked for what interests them and shown how their interests align with yours? Have you let them see how Christ has influenced your life?

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship begins before someone becomes a Christian. Discipleship begins with connection.

## Discipleship requires Cleansing John 2:14-17

**14** In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. **15** So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. **16** To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!" **17** His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

I don’t think that God has a problem with fundraisers in the church, but I do think He has problems when the commerce is dishonest or becomes more important than the worship that is supposed to be our focus. The church is not the same as the temple, in fact the temple rules were far stricter. So, when Jesus saw the temple sales and the dishonesty, He was upset. They were not just selling things in the temple, they were preventing other people worshiping. The structure of the temple had several layers. In the middle was the holy of holies where only the high priest entered once per year. In front of the holy of holies was the holy place where select priests would go to burn incense and keep the menorah continually lit before the Lord. Around this was the inner court or the court of the men where Jewish males went to participate in sacrifices and where the brazen altars were. Then we go out to the court of the women where Jewish women and children would worship God. Finally the outer layer was the “temple courts” or the court of the gentiles where non-Jewish people could come if they wanted to worship God. The people selling animals and changing money were preventing the gentiles the chance to worship God.

When it says He made a whip, we miss what it means. Depending on the materials used, it could have taken six to eight hours to make a whip. This was not impulsive, it was methodical. And the whip was not likely used on the people, but it was the most effective way to get the animals to move out of the temple courts.

Change was needed and what Jesus did highlighted the needed change. While Jesus had to clear the temple a second time later in His ministry, by the time the Talmud was written in 350 A.D. brining any money into the synagogue was seen as improper.

God wants to clean up our lives as well. If we are listening to His guidance, it can be a gentle process, but if we refuse to listen, He may need to use a metaphorical whip to drive the things out of our lives that prevent worship. What prevents worship in your life? When God asks for sweeping changes in your life, will you follow or resist.

The Bible tells us that no discipline seems pleasant at the time but later on it produces righteousness and peace (Hebrews 12:11). It is this discipline that makes us more like Jesus. Whether it is the discipline to avoid a distraction, the discipline of a parent for a disobedient child, or the discipline to practice playing piano, proper discipline requires that we are intentional in our effort to do what is proper. Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship may be sweeping and requires intentionality.

## Discipleship Involves Remembering and Understanding John 2:18-22

**18** Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" **19** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." **20** The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" **21** But the temple he had spoken of was his body. **22** After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

The Jews’ question is like a bunch of kids arguing and one saying, who put you in charge. The High Priest was appointed by God to be in charge of the Temple with the assistance of other Priests. By the time of Jesus, the power behind the Temple had moved to a group of priests called the Sanhedrin which was served as a congress, a court, and as bureaucrats in the Jewish system. Since Jesus was not a Levite, let alone from the Priestly Kohathite family, they denied that He should have any influence on how the temple was run…unless he was the Messiah. So they were saying either prove you are the Messiah or shut up.

Jesus offered them proof, His resurrection from the dead, but they were unable to comprehend what He could possibly mean. They thought He was talking about rebuilding the physical building. It appears that the disciples did not understand at that time either. John records that after Jesus was raised from the dead they remembered. With the new context of His resurrection, rebuilding the temple now made sense.

One of the most common things that pastors hear is along the lines of, “I don’t understand the Bible as well as you do.” I have even had people tell me, “I don’t know enough to be in a discipleship program.” Here’s a secret, I don’t know or understand the Bible as well as I wish I did. There are people I am around from time to time that know it far better than me. But the important thing is not what you know now, a disciple is a student, a learner. If you already knew it all, you couldn’t be a disciple. Instead, our goal is to understand Jesus more now than we did in the past and more in the future than we do now. There will be times that you read a scripture or experience something from God that makes no sense. Then later, maybe even decades later, something will happen to bring that confusing thing to mind and it will make perfect sense because you now have the background to understand it.

There is more good news in this regard. Jesus promises that

“[…] the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (Joh 14:26 NIVUS)

There are times that we have to work to understand and remember, but the Holy Spirit will help us and when we need to remember He will remind us of the things we have learned. He will teach us far better than any pastor, Sunday school teacher or seminary professor ever can.

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. We become more like Jesus as the Holy Spirit works in us to teach us and remind us of the things He has said. Discipleship is about remembering and then understanding, it is not about already knowing.

## For Discipleship, Belief is not Enough John 2:23-25

**23** ¶ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. **24** But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. **25** He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.” (Joh 2:12-25 NIVUS)

The only miracle that has been recorded so far in John is the turning of water into wine, but we know from this that it is not the only miracle that Jesus performed. Many people saw the miraculous SIGNS he was doing and believed. But what did they believe? Did they believe He was the Messiah coming to conquer Rome? Or maybe they believed He was going to provide them with food or healing? Maybe they even believed that He is God. But believing is not enough. The demons believe that Jesus is God. They recognized Him and asked Him not to cast them out. James 2:19 says the demons believe so much that they tremble, but they are not saved. Jesus knew what was in them, we would say He knew what was in their hearts. Because He knew what was in their hearts, He did not trust Himself to them.

God wants more than intellectual agreement. He wants you to have faith, not only that He is God, but also that He died for your sins, rose from the dead and is in charge of your life. Romans 10:9 phrases it as “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.” If you believe in your heart, He WILL trust Himself to you.

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. This is more than agreeing with the facts, it is allowing your whole life to love Him. The Bible says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The heart of a person is their core being, the central motivations that guide them. Their soul is the choices they make and things they believe. Their mind is the things they know. Their strength is the things they do.

If you put your heart, soul, mind and strength into following Christ, you are a Christian and, as Romans 10:9 says, you WILL be saved. Bit if all you have is a belief in your mind and actions that you take, it is not enough. Jesus said,

“**22** Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ **23** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Mt 7:22-23 NIVUS)

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship takes a changed life, not just agreement.

To follow Christ, give Him your whole life! When you give Him your whole life, He will turn the table in your heart, but in a good way!

# John 2:12-25 – Turning the Tables

## Discipleship Starts with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 2:12-13

Τhey were connecting with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and getting to know \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As you consider the people around you have you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with them?

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with connection.

## Discipleship requires \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 2:14-17

Change was needed and what Jesus did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the needed change.

When God asks for sweeping changes in your life, will you follow or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship may be sweeping and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ intentionality.

## Discipleship Involves \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Understanding John 2:18-22

The Holy Spirit will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and remind you John 14:26

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship is about remembering and then \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

## For Discipleship, Belief is not Enough John 2:23-25

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is not enough James 2:19

If you believe in your heart, He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ trust Himself to you  
 Romans 10:9

If all you have is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in your mind and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that you take, it is not enough  
 Matthew 7:22-23

Discipleship is the changing of a life to be more like Jesus. Discipleship takes a changed life, not just \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

When you give Him your whole life, He will turn the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in your heart, but in a good way!