

A JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

BUILDING THE TEMPLE (X2)



SHEPHERDCHURCH

Lesson 9: Building the Temple

Welcome

Choose one of the following questions to share:

- **If you could design your dream home, what fun and/or memorable features would it have?**
- **What's the most beautiful building you've ever been in and what made it so memorable?**

These WELCOME questions tie in with the theme of the temple and buildings, but they're really just meant to be fun and get people talking. Keep it light and playful. If your group isn't sure how to answer, you can throw out some examples to get the conversation rolling.

For the dream home question, you might suggest things like having a home theater, a huge library with a spiral staircase, a rooftop garden, or even something silly like a kitchen with unlimited snacks. The goal is to let people dream a little and share.

For the most beautiful building question, you could mention walking into a cathedral with stained glass windows, visiting a place like the Taj Mahal, stepping inside a historic theater, or even a family home that just felt cozy and welcoming. The point is to highlight what made it memorable—whether it was the design, the atmosphere, or the feelings tied to it.

Encourage everyone to have fun with their answers—it's a relaxed way to open up and ease into the bigger theme of God's presence dwelling with His people.

Worship

When it comes to your spiritual growth in a Life Group, honest transparency is foundational. Pretending like "you have it all together" is like building on a shaky framework—it may look fine on the outside, but eventually, it will collapse under pressure and hurt those closest to you. So, if the Lord leads you, share an area of your life that feels like it's under construction—or maybe even buried in rubble. While you don't have to lay out the details, remember that you weren't meant to rebuild alone. Afterward, spend time in prayer—lifting up both the struggles that were spoken and unspoken.

Budget about 5-10 minutes for this section. As you lead your Life Group through the WORSHIP section, remind everyone that honesty and vulnerability are keys to authentic spiritual growth. Encourage your Life Group members to share an area of life that feels "under construction" without feeling pressured to give all the details—*sometimes just naming the struggle is enough.*

After sharing, move into a time of prayer, asking God to bring healing and strength in the areas mentioned, and also lifting up the unspoken struggles that people may have kept private.

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There are 10 questions/prompts in the WORD section. Your Life Group doesn't have to cover every question below. Life Group Leaders may select the ones that best fit your group. You can also use the remaining questions as personal reflection throughout the week.

Word

Before your Life Group meets, read as much of **1 Kings 6; Ezra 3; Nehemiah 2; and John 2:13-22** as you can before your Life Group meets

The building of the temple in the Old Testament was one of the most significant moments in Israel's history. Although King David desired to build a temple for the Lord, God told him that his son would be the one to do it (**2 Samuel 7**). That promise was fulfilled through King Solomon, who built the first temple in Jerusalem around 966 B.C. This magnificent structure was designed to be the permanent dwelling place for God's presence among His people—a central place for worship, sacrifices, and festivals. The temple symbolized God's covenant with Israel and became the heart of their spiritual life.

However, the people of Israel and Judah repeatedly turned away from God, worshiping idols and ignoring His commands. As a result, God allowed judgment to come. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed Solomon's temple, burned Jerusalem, and took many of the people into exile. This event devastated the Jewish people—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Without the temple, they no longer had a central place to worship, and it felt as though their connection with God had been severed.

Decades later, God began to restore His people. After the Persians conquered Babylon, King Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem around 538 B.C. Under leaders like Zerubbabel and the encouragement of prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the second temple was completed around 516 B.C. Though it lacked the glory of Solomon's original temple, it marked the renewal of Israel's covenant identity and worship. Later, during the time of Ezra, spiritual reforms took place, and under Nehemiah's leadership (around 445 B.C.), the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, restoring the city's security and symbolizing a new beginning for God's people.

The rebuilding of the temple and the walls was more than a construction project—it was a spiritual revival. It reminded the Israelites of God's faithfulness and their calling to be a holy people. Despite exile, failure, and opposition, God was not finished with His people. The temple pointed forward to a greater fulfillment in Jesus, who would one day say, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (**John 2:19**)—referring to His own body. Jesus became the final and perfect dwelling place of God with humanity.

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1. **1 Kings 6:12** shows God's promise to dwell with Israel if they obeyed. How is your obedience connected to God's blessing in your life?

In 1 Kings 6:12, God speaks to Solomon during the building of the temple: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people, Israel." During this time, Israel had just begun a new era with the construction of the permanent temple in Jerusalem as the central place of worship. However, God's promise was not tied to the physical temple itself but to the people's obedience.

- The Hebrew word used for "obey" (רָמַשׁ, *shamar*) means to "keep, guard, or watch closely." It signifies careful, ongoing attention to God's covenant, not casual or partial obedience.

God's dwelling (וָשָׁן, *shakan*) among His people depended on their willingness to remain faithful to His Word. This idea runs all through the Bible. Even during a temple celebration, God values relationships over ritual. Our obedience is the pathway to blessing, not just our external acts of worship, such as singing and raising our hands.

- Consider Deuteronomy 28, where God outlines the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience.
- Or think about Jeremiah 7:23, where God says, "Obey my voice...that it may be well with you."
- Jesus echoes the same truth in John 14:23 when He says that anyone who loves Him will obey His teaching, and then the Father and Son will make their home with that person.

God's presence and blessing are always tied to walking in step with Him, not just checking boxes of religious activity.

When we "guard" (*shamar*) His word, we posture ourselves to experience His peace, provision, and guidance. Obedience doesn't mean life will be easy, but it does open the door to God's peace, guidance, and joy in the middle of whatever we face. When we take God's Word seriously and put it into practice, we're making our lives a place where His Spirit dwells. The real blessing isn't just material stuff—it's knowing that God is with us, transforming us, and leading us every step of the way.

2. How do **2 Chronicles 5:11-14; 7:1-3** describe God's presence and what do they teach about God's presence? When was the last time you had to pause your agenda because you were in awe of God?

In 2 Chronicles 5:11-14; 7:1-3, the writer describes the overwhelming reality of God's presence filling Solomon's temple at its dedication. Historically, this was a monumental moment for Israel—moving from the portable tabernacle in the wilderness to the temple, which would overwhelm, re-center, and remind them that He truly dwells there. "The house of the LORD was filled with a cloud" (2 Chronicles 5:13-14). This cloud connects to the later Jewish concept of the *shekinah* glory, rooted in a specific Hebrew word.

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- The Hebrew word שָׁכַן (*shākan*), meaning “to dwell” or “to settle.” It symbolized God choosing to dwell among His people.

In 2 Chronicles 7:1–3, God’s presence is shown again as fire falls from heaven to consume the sacrifices, and “the glory of the LORD filled the temple.” The people could only bow with their faces to the ground and declare, “He is good; His love endures forever.”

Literarily, these passages emphasize that God’s presence is not casual—it’s powerful and overwhelming.

- The Hebrew word for “glory” (כְּבוֹד, *kābôd*) comes from a root that means “weight” or “heaviness.”

God’s presence carries such *kābôd* that the priests could not even stand to minister. This shows us that His presence is not something we manage or control! His presence disrupts, humbles, and reorients us. While human devotion matters, God’s presence is His to give (as shown by worship and sacrifice, coupled with God’s fire and glory). He responds to sincere worship, not ritual.

Other biblical passages echo this same reality:

- When Moses finished the tabernacle, “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34–35) so powerfully that Moses could not enter.
- In Isaiah’s vision, the temple shook and was filled with smoke as a sign of God’s holiness (Isaiah 6:1–4).
- In the New Testament, the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4) overwhelmed believers with wind and fire, another tangible sign of God’s presence.

Again and again, when God chooses to reveal Himself, His *shākan* presence and *kābôd* glory leave people undone in awe.

For us, this is a reminder that God’s presence is not something to fit neatly into our busy schedules. It is holy, weighty, and worthy of reverence. Sometimes the right response is simply to stop, bow, and worship. Like the priests and the people at the temple, we are called not just to acknowledge God but to allow His *kābôd* to overwhelm us, re-center us, and remind us that He truly dwells (*shākan*) with His people today.

3. In Ezra 3:10–13, why do you think some people shouted for joy while others wept? Have you ever experienced joy and grief at the same time during a spiritual moment?

When we read Ezra 3:10–13, we see a powerful and emotional moment in Israel’s history. After decades of exile in Babylon, the people finally laid the foundation for the new temple in Jerusalem. Historically, this was huge—God’s people had been removed from their land, their first temple (Solomon’s temple) destroyed, and now they were back by God’s grace, rebuilding their spiritual and national identity. So, it makes sense that many shouted with joy: they were seeing God’s promises fulfilled and a new beginning after so much loss. At the same time, the older priests and Levites who had seen Solomon’s temple “wept aloud” (v. 12) because they remembered the grandeur of the original temple and could see that this new one would not compare in size or splendor.

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- The Hebrew word for “wept” here is **הָכָב** (*bākāh*), which means to “cry loudly” or “lament deeply.”

Their grief wasn’t quiet—it was a very audible and public cry! As such, it’s fascinating how Ezra mentions the mingling of sounds—“the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping” (v. 13).

- The Hebrew word for “shout” (**הַעוֹדָה**, *terû’āh*) often refers to a loud acclamation of praise, sometimes even a battle cry or trumpet blast.

The people cried out in victory and celebration, a declaration that God had brought them this far. Yet that *terû’āh* was woven together with *bākāh*, the raw grief of loss. The literary tension mirrors the spiritual tension: God was restoring His people, but the past losses still weighed heavily on them. This same dynamic is seen later in Haggai 2:3–9, where God encourages the people that the glory of the second temple would surpass the first because of His presence, not because of the temple’s external beauty.

This mixture of joy and grief isn’t unique to Ezra’s time. We see it in Psalm 126:5–6, “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.” Paul captures a similar paradox when he describes himself and other believers as “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

These passages remind us that in God’s presence, it’s possible to experience both emotions at once—joy over what He is doing, and grief over what has been lost or broken. Moments like this happen to us more often than we realize, like when believers die, there’s deep grief in the loss, but also joy in knowing they are with the Lord. Also, when someone overcomes a long battle with sin, the joy of freedom can still be mixed with tears over wasted years.

One of the takeaway principles is:

- God is BIG enough to hold both our *terû’āh* (shouts of joy) and our *bākāh* (cries of grief).

Spiritual growth doesn’t erase our past pains, but it does give us hope and perspective. The challenge is to let both emotions drive us toward God, who meets us in the midst of our humanity.

4. Read [Nehemiah 2:17–18](#). Nehemiah wasn’t a king, priest, or prophet. He was an ordinary person with an extraordinary burden whom God called to be a decisive leader. What can we learn from his example when it comes to stepping into spiritual leadership?

In Nehemiah 2:17–18, we find Nehemiah addressing the people of Jerusalem after surveying the broken-down walls. Nehemiah wasn’t a king, priest, or prophet—he was the cupbearer to the Persian king. He was an ordinary man in a government job who carried an extraordinary burden from God. What makes this passage striking is that Nehemiah saw the need, took responsibility, and called others to join him in the rebuilding efforts.

- The Hebrew word for “rebuild” in verse 17 is **הִנָּב** (*bānāh*), which means not only to construct but also to restore and establish.

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Nehemiah's leadership was not about personal glory but about *bānāh*—restoring God's city and God's people to dignity. The words that Nehemiah speaks show both realism and faith. He says plainly, "You see the trouble we are in," acknowledging the ruins, but immediately moves to hope, declaring that they could rebuild because "the gracious hand of my God" was upon him.

- The Hebrew word translated "gracious" in 2:18 is **טוב** (*ṭōb*), meaning "good, pleasant, or favorable."

Nehemiah is essentially saying that the favorable hand of God made this work possible. This echoes other passages where ordinary people stepped into extraordinary roles through God's favor, such as Moses in Exodus 3–4, Gideon in Judges 6, or even the disciples in Acts 4:13, who were recognized as "unschooled, ordinary men" but filled with God's Spirit.

Three lessons that Nehemiah's example teaches us are:

- Spiritual leadership isn't about holding a title—it's about carrying a God-given burden and stepping forward in faith.
- God loves using ordinary people with open hearts.
- When we respond to God's call, His hand (*ṭōb*) will guide and empower us.

Many times, we hesitate to lead because we don't feel qualified. Whether it's leading a small group, mentoring someone younger in the faith, or simply setting a godly example in our workplace, the principle remains the same: God paces with us and equips us. Leadership in God's Kingdom is less about position and more about obedience and courage.

5. In the video lesson, Tim said, "A building, in the Kingdom, is a physical reflection of a spiritual reality." How have you seen this truth reflected in your own life or in the church?

Here are some examples of how someone might answer that question in a personal and reflective way:

- **Personal Transformation**

"I think about my own life—before I came to Christ, I felt like I was in ruins, kind of like a building falling apart. But as I've followed Jesus, He has been rebuilding me from the inside out. When people see me now, they see more patience, joy, and hope than I could ever produce on my own. My life is becoming a physical reflection of the spiritual work God is doing."

- **Church Community**

"I've seen this in the way our church building is used. Yes, it's just bricks and mortar, but every time I walk in and see people worshiping, praying, or serving, I'm reminded that the building reflects something deeper—it's a picture of the body of Christ alive and active in the world. It's not just a structure; it points to the reality of God's Spirit dwelling among us."

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- Everyday Witness

"For me, it's when I see how Christians live out their faith at work or in their neighborhoods. A Christian business owner, for example, runs their company with integrity and generosity. Their office becomes more than just a workplace—it becomes a reflection of God's Kingdom values, a building that shows a spiritual reality of God's presence and goodness."

- Family Life

"I think about my home. We try to make our house a place of peace and love where guests feel welcome and our kids feel safe. That physical space reflects the spiritual reality of God's presence in our family. It's not perfect, but it's a small picture of the Kingdom breaking into everyday life."

There are many other ways that Life Group members might answer this question.

6. How does **John 2:19-22** dramatically shift the Old Testament understanding of where God's presence dwells?

In John 2:19-22, Jesus makes a shocking statement: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." In the 1st century, the Jewish people understood God's presence as dwelling in a specific place:

- The tabernacle in the wilderness.
- And later, the temple in Jerusalem.

These structures were where the glory of the Lord filled the space, and where sacrifices were made to atone for sin. For generations, the temple was the center of Israel's worship and identity. So, when Jesus referred to Himself as the temple, He dramatically shifted the understanding of God's dwelling place from a building to a person. Later, John clarified that Jesus was not speaking of the physical temple but "the temple of his body" (John 2:21).

- The Greek word for temple here is **ναός** (*naos*), which refers specifically to the inner sanctuary, the holiest part of the temple where God's presence was believed to dwell.

By using the word *naos*, John highlights that God's presence was now found fully and uniquely in Jesus Himself. The resurrection—Jesus being raised in three days—proved that His body was the true dwelling place of God. This fulfills and surpasses the Old Testament shadows, like when God's glory filled Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-3) or when Isaiah saw the Lord seated in the temple (Isaiah 6:1). This theme carries throughout the New Testament. In John 1:14, John writes that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

- The Greek word **σκηνώω** (*skēnoō*), meaning "to pitch a tent" or "to tabernacle," is the word translated as "dwelt among us" in John 1:14.

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Jesus Himself became the living tabernacle of God's presence. Later, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that believers' bodies are temples (*naos*) of the Holy Spirit, showing that God's presence now dwells not in buildings but in His people through Christ. Revelation 21:22 even concludes the story by saying that in the new creation, there is no temple, "because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."

Today, you and I don't have to travel to a specific place or holy land to find God. We see God's presence through Christ—He is with us wherever we go. At the same time, it calls us to live with reverence, because our lives, like the temple, are meant to reflect God's holiness. The shift Jesus introduced means God's presence is no longer confined to stone walls but is alive in Him and, through His Spirit, alive in us. That truth should change the way we view worship, daily life, and even our bodies—as living reflections of the *naos* where God chooses to dwell.

7. What do **1 Corinthians 3:16-17** and **Ephesians 2:19-22** teach us about the dwelling of the Holy Spirit?

In 1 Corinthians 3:16–17, Paul reminds the church in Corinth that they are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in them (Jesus said the same in John 14:23). The historical context is important because Corinth was a city filled with ornate temples dedicated to pagan gods, so Paul's language would have stood out.

- Paul uses the same Greek word for "temple"—**ναός** (*naos*)—that was used in John 2:21. The word refers specifically to the innermost sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, where God's presence was believed to dwell in the Old Testament temple.

Basically, Paul is saying that the church itself is now the *naos*, the very dwelling place of God's Spirit. He warns that anyone who destroys God's temple will face judgment. His words echo the Old Testament where God's presence filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–35) and Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:1–3). Now, that same presence is not confined to a building but to the gathered people of God.

Ephesians 2:19–22 further develops this concept by describing believers as members of God's household, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." The imagery here is architectural—the community of faith is like a temple being constructed together.

- Paul uses the Greek word **συνοικοδομέω** (*sunoikodomeō*), meaning "to be built together," to describe how believers form a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Instead of walls and stones, God's ultimate temple is composed of Christians united in Christ (see also 1 Peter 2:5). God's presence once filled the physical temple in Jerusalem, but now dwells in us individually and corporately as a community of believers worldwide.

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8. Read **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. What does it mean to treat your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit? What are some ways to do this?

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul basically tells Christians living in the city of Corinth, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?”

- The Greek word for *Corinth* can be translated as “to fornicate.”

As such, the city of Corinth was well-known for its sexual immorality, especially in connection with its pagan temples. Paul uses this backdrop to show the believers that their bodies are not their own—they belong to God. Since the Greek word for temple means the inner sanctuary where God’s presence dwells, Paul is saying that our bodies now serve as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Just as God’s glory once filled the tabernacle and the temple, so now His Spirit fills believers individually.

While Paul is making an argument against sexual immorality, the principle extends beyond that:

- To “treat your body as a temple” means recognizing that your body is a sacred space that God set apart for His purposes.

Then, there’s a word in 1 Corinthians 6:20 that we need to pay attention to:

- The Greek word for “bought” in verse 20 is ἀγοράζω (*agorazō*), which refers to purchasing something in the marketplace.

Paul ties this to redemption—believers were bought at the price of Christ’s blood. Because of this, we are to “honor God” with our bodies, which means aligning our physical actions with His holiness. We see Paul saying something similar in Romans 12:1, where Paul urges believers to “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”

Treating your body as a temple means taking care of it:

- Resting
- Making healthy choices
- Avoiding things that harm it
- Keeping it pure from sin, whether that’s in how we handle sexuality, what we consume, or what we allow into our minds and hearts.
- Using our bodies in worship, service, work, etc.

Today, our culture often says, “It’s my body, I can do what I want,” but Scripture reminds us that our bodies belong to God. The Spirit’s presence makes our lives holy ground. We cannot divorce our decisions in life from our faith. Every choice we make—about health, sexuality, work, or rest—can either honor or dishonor Him. When we live with this awareness, even ordinary actions like eating, exercising, or resting become ways to worship and glorify the God who dwells within us.

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9. What part of your life feels like rubble right now (*rubble* = an area needing rebuilding)? How might God be inviting you to let Him restore it?

While this is a very subjective question, it's designed to tie together many of the concepts discussed in this lesson. Try not to skip over it, and allow some time for your Life Group members to respond. Not only will this help them process the lesson thus far, but it also gives your Life Group an idea of what to pray for in each other's lives.

10. In the video lesson, Tim said, "God doesn't just build buildings—He builds people." Then, he challenged us to join God in building others. Who has God used to build you up? How can you do that for someone else this week?

Like the previous prompt/question, this one is subjective and leads into the WITNESS section by focusing on how we can serve and share Jesus with others.

Witness

Rebuilding the Temple wasn't just for personal spiritual growth—it was a witness to the world that God was still present, powerful, and involved. Who in your life feels like they've been "ruined" or forgotten? This week, reach out to that person with encouragement. Invite them to church or simply remind them that God can rebuild what's been broken. As a group, take time to pray for the names shared—and ask God to give you opportunities to reflect His presence to them.

Budget about 5-10 minutes for this section. When you walk your Life Group through the WITNESS section, begin by reading the prompt out loud and then give everyone a moment to reflect on what they heard. Ask them to think of someone in their life who might feel "ruined" or forgotten right now—maybe a friend going through a hard time, a coworker who feels overlooked, or a family member who's hurting. Invite them to share names or situations as they feel comfortable, but remind them to keep things respectful and not to share details that might be too personal.

Then, as a Life Group, talk about what it could look like to encourage those people this week. It could be as simple as sending a text, writing a note, grabbing coffee, or inviting them to church. The point is to be a reminder of God's presence, not to try to fix everything.

Finally, move into prayer. Collect the names that were shared and pray over them as a group. You might start by praying first, then give others a chance to offer short, simple prayers. Let people know it's totally fine to just pray silently if they don't want to pray out loud.

After the prayer time, encourage everyone to follow through with actually reaching out to the person they thought of this week. Next time you meet, take a few minutes to check in and hear how it went. End by reminding your Life Group that just like the rebuilding of the temple showed the world God was still present and powerful, their simple acts of encouragement can show the same truth today.