



Date: _____
Series: God's Big Gift
Winter Year 2, Lesson 43

We Are God's Temple

Primary Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Don't you know that your body is a temple that belongs to the Holy Spirit?"

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids are growing. They most keenly measure their growth physically. Learning to take care of one's body during the early years of growth is essential. Even more important than taking care of their body, kids need to see their body as a temple that belongs to God. Living inside is the Holy Spirit. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we are promised that the Holy Spirit dwells within us bringing us the very presence of Jesus. As kids understand this, they can see that proper health and care for their bodies honors God, for it is his residence. Let's encourage our kids to be growing temples of the Holy Spirit!

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Today's scripture reminds us that we were bought with a price. Jesus paid that price through his body broken for us. Because of that event on the cross, we are put back in relationship with God. Now we can use our bodies for God's glory.

Jesus in us: Through the power of the Spirit, Jesus fills us with his presence. This is just as God filled the temple with his presence in the Old Testament.

Jesus through us: The Old Testament temple was a focus point that drew people from far and near to come and experience the God of the Israelites. God uses us as temples in a similar way today. Through our actions and messages of love, people can be drawn to our God who dwells within us.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Props needed: four streamers attached to sticks, a picture of a temple or incense to burn

Show a picture of an Old Testament temple. Another option might be to light incense, as this was done in Old Testament worship. Incense reminded the people that their prayers rise like incense to God and he hears them.

In Old Testament times, people worshiped in a temple and they experienced God coming down and filling the temple with his presence. One time, God came down like a great cloud and filled the temple with his glory. The Bible says that it was too wonderful even for the priests to stay inside and minister. (2 Chronicles 7:2)

**That temple no longer stands. Instead, God said that people are temples. People are temples that hold God's presence, and people can worship God wherever they are. The Bible verse says, "Don't you know that your body is a temple that belongs to the Holy Spirit... So bring glory to God in the way you use your body."
(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)**

Give the praise streamers to four kids who love to worship. Then explain the following.

In the old days when kings lived in castles, there was always a very important place at the top of the castle for the flag. When the flag

was raised high, the king was in residence. (That means that he was in the castle.) When the flag was down, it meant that the king was not there.

When you think about the King of kings, Jesus, living in you, would you put the flag up or down? Of course, you would put it up. The King of kings is in residence here. Let's sing about that.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of music.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Prop needed: a broom

Hold up the broom to give the visual imagery of the heart/house cleaning we need to do regularly.

Do you think God would want to live in a dirty house? No. He certainly did not want dirty temples when they were built for him thousands of years ago. He also does not want dirty houses today. After all, God wants to live right inside of us.

God doesn't worry about dirt on the outside of us, but dirt on the inside. This dirt is the sin in our lives. If we are the temple of God and we do things against God, we need to be cleaned out. This needs to be done because God, himself, will live there.

Let's admit to God some of our sins so that he can sweep them all away. God does this through what Jesus Christ has done for us. His blood has cleansed us and our temples.

Invite the kids to list different kinds of things that God needs to forgive and get cleaned out of his temple (our lives). Pronounce God's forgiveness with 1 John 1:9.

"If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we've done wrong."

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

A possible teaching during offering is to remind kids of Old Testament offerings. The people would bring offerings to God when they sacrificed sheep, bulls, goats, or doves. When they did this, they always brought the very best they had. By doing that, they were showing God that he was worth their very best.

We show God we want to give our very best when we give him back some of what he gave us.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

“Betcha Can’t Whistle”

Supplies needed: saltine crackers and two large clear bowls or glass jars

Start the game off with the dare, **“betcha can’t whistle.”** Have several good whistlers give a demonstration. Then bring them up front and give them a new challenge. Give them four small squares of saltine crackers. Ask them to eat the crackers. After they eat the crackers, ask them to whistle. Say:

We are talking about our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. Our body is where the Holy Spirit dwells. Because of that, we want to take care of our bodies so that we can better honor God with them.

If we treat our bodies badly, like eating bad food, getting no exercise, or taking bad drugs, then we are not a very good vessel for the Holy Spirit.

Just like the Holy Spirit has lots of joy to blow into our lives like a whistle, if we fill our lives with the wrong junk, it gets in the way of that joy. It is just like how saltine crackers get in the way of being able to whistle.

Divide the kids into small groups and give them some saltine crackers. Let kids have a contest among themselves as to who can be the first to whistle after eating several crackers.

Bible Reading:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Props needed: two large clear bowls, junk food and healthy food snacks (see below), a small paper cup for each child

The following is an interactive teaching, which invites the kids to provide examples of ways we might harm our bodies and ways we take good care of our bodies. The most important learning point is that we want to take care of our bodies because they do not belong to us.

On the table for the presentation place two large clear bowls or glass jars. Both jars will represent our bodies and how we are temples filled with the presence of God. We are like the glass bowls.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

“Don’t you know that your body is a temple that belongs to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit, whom you received from God, lives in you. You don’t belong to yourselves. You were bought for a price. So bring glory to God in the way you use your body.”

If our bodies are going to be filled with God and used for his purposes, what kind of things should we do to help our bodies grow and be nourished? What kind of things should we put in our bodies? What are some things that may not be good? What are some things that may be good?

At this point, invite kids to come and give different examples of things that we put in our bodies that are good or bad. These could include things we eat, exercise we get, rest we get, medicines/drugs we take, or ways we clean and groom our bodies.

As the children come forward to give examples, begin filling the corresponding glass bowl with the following concoction. To the bowl filled with things that are harmful, add the following elements: cheese balls, sugar, pop, Milk Duds, and potato chips. Yuck! Who would want to eat that?

To the bowl filled with things that nurture our body, add the following ingredients: popcorn (place in first), Chex, Cheerios, raisins, and peanuts. This will be a snack mix that the kids can eat immediately following the lesson. After the children have completed putting the object lesson together, each is given a small cup. They can dip the cup into the bowl and get a snack mix that reminds them of how they are God’s temples. They can be filled with good things. Say:

Remember, our bodies belong to God. He paid the price for us by giving his Son, Jesus. Because of that, he has his Holy Spirit dwelling in our lives so we can be filled with the very best.

Application:

Read the story “The Courageous Twins” (see attachment) while kids eat their snacks. When you get to the final “covenant” the boys make at the park, have the kids in Kids Church gather in clusters and repeat after you as you read Michael’s words promising to never smoke again.



Witness

Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Ask if anyone knows someone who God helped to quit smoking or some other bad habit.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

This would be a good time for kids to pray for loved ones who smoke, and to thank God that he forgives all sins, even those that harm the temple of his Holy Spirit.

Options: (select one from the options below)

_____ **Prayer Line Option:** Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

_____ **Prayer Chair:** Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit in the chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees and take turns praying.

_____ **Popcorn Prayer:** The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

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Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- four streamers attached to sticks
- picture of a temple or incense to burn

Learning Game:

- saltine crackers

Bible Reading:

- two large clear glass bowls
- junk foods (cheese balls, sugar, pop, small candies, potato chips)
- healthy foods to make trail mix (popcorn, Chex cereal, Cheerios, raisins, peanuts)
- cup for each child

The Courageous Twins

David and Michael were twins – identical twins. David was older, but Michael was slightly taller. Unless you knew them well, you couldn't tell them apart. They each had straight brown hair and greenish-brown eyes. And when they smiled, people just wanted to smile back at them.

Both boys went to church and Sunday school every weekend when they were little. They went to the fellowship events on Friday nights at church when they were old enough. They had lots of friends – at church, at school, in their neighborhood. Sometimes they invited their school friends and neighborhood friends to church with them, and sometimes their friends came. That always felt good.

Michael hung out with one group of guys from the neighborhood, and David hung out with a different group. Michael's friends were pretty good kids, but as they got older, they started experimenting with things that were – well, they were just plain bad.

For example, one day when they were in 7th grade, one of Michael's neighborhood friends named Joey brought some cigarettes from his dad's stash in his study. Joey had watched his dad smoke for years, so he knew just what to do and how to do it. Joey took a big puff from the cigarette and sucked it into his lungs, then blew it back out. The other guys all giggled and said, "Let me try it."

Finally, it was Michael's turn. He nervously put a cigarette in his mouth, while Joey lit it with a match. Michael sucked air through the cigarette into his mouth. It tasted terrible! And he immediately started to cough and hack. He bent over and doubled up, coughing and hacking, tears welling up in his eyes, while all the other guys roared with laughter. "Why do people do that?" he wondered as the coughing slowed down and finally stopped, and the tears cleared from his eyes.

Joey clapped Michael on the back and said, "Way to go – now you're a man!" Michael smiled sheepishly, thinking to himself, "I'm not a man. What a stupid thing to say." But he laughed and high-fived the other guys in celebration for doing such a daring thing. Inside, Michael wished he had never done it. But on the outside, he laughed and celebrated just like the others. He didn't want to be the only one to say, "No."

The next day after school, Joey brought the cigarettes again, and everybody smoked again. This time Michael coughed again, although not as hard; it still tasted terrible. And he smoked a little more than yesterday. But he still couldn't figure out why people smoked. It was awful!

That night Michael and David were getting ready for bed. They shared the same room. During the spring and summer months, David got the top bunk, while Michael got the top bunk in the fall and winter. David leaned his head over the edge of the bed and looked down at Michael and asked, "What were you guys doing after school over at the park?"

Michael didn't want to say. He wasn't proud of what he had been doing, and he knew David wouldn't approve. "Oh, nothing – just hangin' out."

"It looked like you were smoking cigarettes or something," said David. "Were you?"

"No," Michael lied. "What if we were? It's a free country."

"Yeah," David replied, "I guess if you want to pollute your body with chemicals that'll eventually kill you, you're free to do that."

Michael had a hard time going to sleep that night. When he finally did get to sleep, he dreamed about haystacks burning and the firemen couldn't put out the fires. He woke early the next day, still tired and kind of nervous.

That afternoon, Michael met his buddies at the park again. What do you think they did? You guessed it – they smoked and laughed and acted tough, and it didn't burn his throat quite as bad, and he didn't cough quite as much as the day before. The bad taste wasn't quite as nasty as he remembered, either. Maybe this smoking wasn't as bad as everybody says, Michael thought to himself on the way home.

When he walked through the front door, David and his mom and dad were sitting in the family room, talking quietly. His mom looked like she'd been crying. Dad never got home this early.

"What's going on?" Michael asked.

His mom took Michael's hand and pulled him close and hugged him. This made him a little nervous. Ever since he got into middle school, he and his parents didn't hug as much as they used to. It felt somehow too... childish. It was obvious to Michael something was wrong.

His Mom just held him a little longer. His dad spoke first. "Your mom's brother Frank died this morning of a heart attack." Tears welled up in Michael's eyes. Uncle Frank was his favorite uncle – always laughing or playing some practical joke.

"He wasn't that old, was he?" Michael asked, his voice quivering. "How could he die so young?"

His mom stopped hugging him but kept her hands on his shoulders, looking him right in the eyes. "He was my oldest brother, but he was only 53. He didn't take good care of himself. We tried for years to get him to stop smoking, but he always said, 'Oh well, we all gotta die sometime.' I sure didn't think his *sometime* would be so soon. I guess he didn't either." She hugged Michael harder than before. He could feel her body shake as she cried. That just made him cry harder, too. And then they were all four holding each other and crying.

After a little while, they pulled away from each other, and Mom asked, "Who was around cigarette smoke today?" Dad answered, "I ate lunch with Fred Smith this noon, and he smokes, so we sat in the smoking section." David's eyes met Michael's, and Michael quickly looked away. His heart was racing and he felt guilty.

That night, Michael tossed and turned all night long. He dreamt he was smoking and he died and he was tumbling through the air, all filled with smoke. He woke up once in the middle of the night and thought about praying. But he felt so guilty that he didn't think God would forgive him.

The next morning, before going off to work, their dad stopped and said to Michael and David, "Boys, I love you and I'm proud of you. I hope you never ever start smoking. Promise me you'll never smoke."

David said, "I promise, Dad, I'll never smoke – ever."

Michael added sheepishly, “Me neither.” But inside he wasn’t so sure. What would his friends say? He had a lump in his throat as his dad walked out the door. His heart raced and he felt hot under his collar.

That day after school, Michael joined his friends at the park just long enough to explain that he had to go home. His family was leaving that night to go to his Uncle Frank’s funeral.

The next day several hundred people gathered at Uncle Frank’s church. Many of Michael and David’s cousins were there. People cried. A man the boys didn’t know stood up and said some nice things about Uncle Frank. Then the preacher got up to speak. Everybody was quiet.

After reading several Bible verses, the pastor gave the message. Near the end he said, “We all know Frank was a heavy smoker. Most us tried to get him to stop at one time or other. But he always said, ‘We all gotta die sometime.’ If that were the end of the story it would be so sad. But it’s not the end of the story. Because Frank knew Jesus, he knew Jesus died on the cross to take away his sins. He knew Jesus rose from the dead. And Frank is with Jesus right now, in heaven. We’re sad here, because we miss Frank. But he’s not sad. He’s laughing right now out of sheer joy to be in the company of Jesus. And he’s waiting for you to join him there. So Frank’s words to each one of us today are: Believe in Jesus Christ and be saved.”

After the funeral, Michael and David got together with their cousins and talked and even played and laughed a little. The sermon about Jesus and eternal life made everybody feel better. Michael noticed that even his mom seemed to be less sad as they were eating lunch with the family in the church basement.

After they got home that night, the twins’ dad announced that he had something important he wanted to talk about. “Boys, you know your mother and I love you very much. We want to make a promise to each other, right here, right now.” Their mom opened a Bible and read these words from 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Don’t you know that your body is a temple that belongs to the Holy Spirit?” She said, “Michael, and David – Let’s promise to each other that we’ll never ever smoke a cigarette – that we’ll never ever pollute the Holy Spirit’s temple with something that could kill us. OK?”

Michael and David said, at the same time, “OK!” The four of them stood in a circle and put their hands together, like players on a basketball team. Dad said, “Repeat after me: I promise / I’ll never / suck nasty old smoke / from a nasty old cigarette / for the rest of my life / because my body / is a temple / of God’s Holy Spirit / AMEN.” They repeated AMEN with a shout, and they threw their hands up in the air as if to send their promise to heaven.

Michael went to the phone and called Joey. He told Joey all about his Uncle Frank and his body being the temple of the Holy Spirit and about the promise he made with his family. Joey’s response was, “Wow! That’s cool! Let’s do that with the guys tomorrow after school!” Michael was so excited and so happy, he had to tell David. Then, he realized there was one thing he still needed to do. He knocked on Mom and Dad’s bedroom door. “Come in.”

“Mom, Dad – there’s something I have to tell you...” And with that he told them the whole story, from the beginning. When he got to the end, he said with conviction: “I’m sorry I smoked and then lied about it. I promise you I’ll never smoke again, and I mean it.”

His parents hugged him and told him they loved him and they were SO proud of him. Then they joined hands and prayed that God would help Michael and Joey tomorrow at the park with the other boys. After that, Michael went to bed – and slept like a log.

The next day after school, Joey and Michael asked David to join them at the park. They knew it would be easier if they were all three there to support each other. When they got to the park, the other guys said, “Joey, where’s the cigarettes?” Joey and Michael explained everything – about Uncle Frank, and Jesus, and eternal life, and their bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit. Then Joey told about how Michael’s family made a pact together. “Let’s make a pact among us, right here and now – we’ll never smoke another cigarette, ever again.” Michael was amazed when the other guys said, “That’s cool. Let’s do it.”

So they did it. They made a pact to never ever smoke another cigarette. Michael led them, one phrase at a time, their hands stacked one on top of the other in the center of the circle.

“Repeat after me: I promise / I’ll never / suck nasty old smoke / from a nasty old cigarette / for the rest of my life / because my body / is a temple /

of God's Holy Spirit / AMEN." They repeated AMEN with a shout, and they threw their hands up in the air as if to send their promise to heaven. Then they high-fived each other and every last one of them felt oh-so-proud.

And not one of them ever again smoked another cigarette. And they never forgot that their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit. Ronnie and Joey started going to church with David and Michael. Ronnie and Joey came to believe that Jesus died for them, and they were baptized. And they all remain friends to this very day.

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