

Centered Set Church

01 Return of the Temple

INTRODUCTION

Jesus' arrival signaled an end to one way of relating to God and the beginning of something entirely new. Jesus instructed us to love one another as well as those who won't love us back. Over time and across cultures, different churches have tried to live that out in different ways. But when you reduce the church to its irreducible minimum, it is a group of people doing their best to follow Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you hear the word "church," what comes to mind? Why?
2. What are some things you think people today find resistible about Christians and the church? Is their assessment fair? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever felt rejected or unloved by a church? If so, how did it affect the way you viewed God or Jesus?
4. Name some lines you have drawn towards other people. Where did that come from? How do you think that affected the people outside the church?
5. Do you tend to think of the church as an institution or a movement? How do you think that influences the way you think about and relate to God?
6. In what ways do you find yourself tempted to relate to God based on the temple model—focused on sacred places, sacred texts, or sacred men? What is one thing you can do better to love God and your neighbor?

MOVING FORWARD

The arrival of Jesus signaled an end to the Temple Model and the beginning of something entirely new—no more sacred places and men. The Old Testament was fulfilled, and its laws were reduced to a single verb—love—to be applied to God and neighbor. The church got off to an incredible start, but over time the temple thinking resurfaced. It's still with us today. It makes the church resistible. But together, we will resist it.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34–35