



WEEKLY STUDY

Week Three

In week three of the And They Prayed series, we discovered the connection between Jesus' words and actions among the money changers in the temple and the words of the prophet Jeremiah hundreds of years before. Jesus emphatically pointed out that people were carrying their mixed-up understanding of control and power into the temple. The temple was not a place to grab for more for personal gain but instead a place to pray to God--to get out of a position of control and sit in prayer before God.

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected to a Providence Small Group visit prov.church/signup and click on Small Groups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then pray this or your own prayer.

Dear God,

I am often tempted to hold onto the seat of power or position that helps me feel like I'm in control. I repent. Move in my heart so that I might only desire the seat of worship and prayer before you. Turn over the tables of my heart and call me into continuous conversation with you.

I am yours. My life depends on you.

I am grateful. You provide what I need.

I am strong. My strength comes from you.

Come and rule on the throne of my heart.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: JEREMIAH 7.1-4

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² "Stand at the gate of the LORD's house and there proclaim this message:

"Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD.

³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let

you live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!"

- Sometimes we go through the motions. Sometimes we walk into the church completely out of habit. That's not a terrible thing--it's part of a life of discipline. But we are also being transformed through these repeated actions of dedication. God wanted Jeremiah to provide a wake up call to God's people. He called them out for their ways that were inconsistent with a life of faith. The house of God, the house of prayer forms us and not the other way around. What are some ways or some times you have found yourself just going through the motions? How have you seen consistency in attending church or in prayer change your life or others lives around you?
- *Pray for the transforming power of God to meet you in your times of prayer and worship.*

TUESDAY: MATTHEW 21.12-13

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"

- This well known scene of Jesus' seemingly aggressive behavior reveals his passion for God's people to sit before God in an attitude of prayer. He unsettled their furniture so they couldn't just sit back down after his demonstration. Their seats were turned over. Jesus is telling them they are in the wrong seat, they should look instead for a seat of prayer. Have you ever found yourself doing something or in a position where you knew you were in "the wrong seat"? What are some things in your life that prevent you from praying to God more consistently--things you may need to overturn?
- *Invite Jesus to remodel your heart--to turn over the places you settle into out of habit, so that you can sit before Him.*

WEDNESDAY: JOHN 13.3-5

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

- Jesus demonstrated humility by serving even though all things were under his power. How is humility related to a life of prayer and worship? How else did Jesus demonstrate humility in his life and actions? When discerning whether or not we need to change seats, we should ask, "Will this allow me to reflect the way of Jesus?"
- *Thank God for His willingness to take a seat of humility in order to save you.*

THURSDAY: MATTHEW 9.9-13

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

- This is one of many times that Jesus was judged by the Pharisees for sitting down with sinners. He was in what they considered to be the "wrong seat". But sometimes that kind of seat is the place we are called to be. Have you ever found yourself in this kind of "wrong seat"? Where is God calling you to represent Christ to those who need a doctor, who need His healing and salvation?
- *Pray that your faith would become more than religion. Pray for boldness to follow Jesus wherever he leads.*

FRIDAY: MATTHEW 22.37-40

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- When God rules every aspect of your life, it impacts how you treat your neighbor. When we focus on God, we see others. I love the image of God as our hiding place. Sometimes I just need to be fully immersed in God's presence and let go of fears and worries. Yet, the closer we get to God the more clearly we see our neighbors. Who are your "neighbors"? How can you love them better?
- *Pray for a God-focused view of your neighbors.*

SATURDAY: ISAIAH 56.6-7

[F]oreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

- For centuries the Jewish people thought the Messiah was just for them. But Jesus, and here the prophet Isaiah, make clear that the Good News is for everyone! Those who were once outside of God's blessing are invited in. Those who love God and stay in covenant with God will find joy in God's house of prayer. God hears our prayers and promises to answer us. Have you experienced joy in the house of prayer?
- *Thank God for His heart for the outsiders like us. Pray for a growing understanding of what it means to hold fast to His covenant.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob shared a story about his reaction to his first daughter's birth. He remained in the nursery by her side until a friend pointed out that he is not responsible for her every breath. In that moment, his proper "seat" was one of awe and thanksgiving and the first step of giving up control to God. What moments are the most difficult for you to let go of control? How do you practice surrender to God?