

LETTING GO

LENT 2024 | DIOCESE OF ATLANTA

WEEK 3: LETTING GO...OF THE CHURCH

These reflection guides are designed to supplement the videos, for use in a small group Bible study. They are created for the leader's ease of use, and with links to free web-based resources.

REFLECTION

We followers of Jesus have to let go of some of the ways we practice church so we can recapture Jesus' vision for the organization that bears his name...

Lord, save us for wanting to build and sit at the tables You would throw over!

...we hold the organization too tight sometimes and Jesus not nearly tight enough.

~Bishop Wright

SCRIPTURE

Read John 2:13-22. Jesus clears out the Temple of those who forgot the real reason for being there.

Read Exodus 20:1-17: The 10 commandments. The first is about idolatry. How do we turn the Church into an idol? What "sacred cows" do we have?

Read BCP 854-855. The Church is described. How might this help us recenter Jesus in any of the ways the Church has drifted from that center?

DISCUSSION

- What examples have you witnessed of how we hold the organization of the Church too tightly, instead of centering Jesus?
- Think through some practices of church: welcoming and incorporating newcomers, how people can offer their gifts & get connected to ministry and service, the ways we practice liturgy, etc. What springs to mind as something that could potentially be a barrier to people drawing closer to Jesus? How might we change those practices?
- What tables do we sometimes want to sit at that Jesus would throw over? What tables do we instead need to build and invite people to? What does that look like in the life of your church? In other words, where are we putting our energy and where do we need to?

ARTICLES

For Further Study:

Read research from a national study from The Episcopal Church and Ipsos about Jesus' impact in America, the state of religion, and society's perceptions of Christians and today's issues:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/jesus-in-america/>

PRAYER

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen

~BCP 816

TAKE-AWAY

Be the Church. Write down a few ways the Church has impacted your life for good.

Write down three ways you can *be* THAT kind of Church in the world this week. (For example, if you've experienced unconditional love through church, how might you share unconditional love with someone this week? Conversely, if you've experienced harm from the church, you might consider how you can help bring healing to those who have also experienced church harm, and for them, be the experience of church they need)

Share what you did; reflect on it with a friend.