

INTRO

- How has the series so far shaped your understanding of God's character? What patterns have emerged?
- Last week we wrestled with God's holiness and the golden calf incident. How does this week's message about God "tabernacling" among messy people help you process that tension?

IDEA 1

Ash's central theme: We have a Holy God who keeps coming closer and closer and closer. A God with whom our mess can't seem to push back. From the tabernacle in Exodus to Jesus on the middle cross to the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, God's pattern is clear: He moves toward the mess, not away from it.

- **What was your initial reaction to the idea that "our mess can't push God back"? Does that comfort you, challenge you, or surprise you?**
- **When you think of God's presence, do you picture Him distant and waiting for you to clean up, or close and moving toward you?**
- **Why do you think God's goal wasn't just deliverance from slavery but relational knowledge of Him? What's the difference?**
- **Exodus ends with God's glory filling the tabernacle despite the people's betrayal. What does that reveal about God's character and commitment?**

IDEA 2:

John 1:14 says, "So the Word became human and made his home among us" (literally: "tabernacled among us"). Jesus is the ultimate mobile tabernacle—fully God in flesh and blood, touching, speaking, walking out His mission to seek and save the lost. We get a front-row seat to the visible image of an invisible God moving toward messy disciples who argue, misunderstand, and get stuck in selfish patterns. Jesus redeems all the messy aspects of human life. What does God do with messy people? He moves closer.

- **John uses the word "tabernacled" to describe Jesus dwelling among us. How does seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Exodus tabernacle deepen your understanding of the incarnation?**
- **Jesus moved toward messy disciples, lepers, tax collectors, and sinners. Who in the Gospels do you most relate to? Why?**

IDEA 2: CONTINUED

- **The crowd rejected Jesus, yet He still went to the cross. How does that challenge or comfort you when you feel like you've rejected or failed God?**

At Pentecost, God gets even more radical. Jesus said it would be good for Him to go so God could give us the Holy Spirit—God Himself dwelling in the middle of us. God went from "in the middle of US" (the camp) to "in the middle of ME & YOU" (individually). We are now the mobile tabernacle, carrying His light, love, peace, presence, and power everywhere we go—both as individuals and as the body of Christ together.

- **How does it change your perspective to know that you are the temple of the living God? Does that feel empowering, intimidating, or both?**
- **Paul calls the Corinthians to holiness even in their mess. How do we hold both realities—that God accepts us as we are and calls us to transformation?**
- **What "idols" (distractions, false comforts, old patterns) are you tempted to let stand side-by-side with God in your heart? What would it look like to surrender those this week?**

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

A Practice of Invitation and Temple Cleaning

Take a moment to invite the group into quiet reflection.

Part 1: Name Your Mess (5 minutes)

Ash asked: "Where is my mess? Where am I tempted to believe, 'God probably doesn't want to be near this part of me'? Is there anything I'm hiding, managing, or minimizing?"

Invite participants to silently reflect and complete this sentence in their hearts: "*God, here's the part of my life I don't want You to see... and I'm bringing it to You.*"

Prompt: "God is not waiting for you to clean up your mess before He comes close—He's already moving toward you. The question is... will you let Him into the middle?"

Part 2: Remember Your Identity (Scripture reading)

Read aloud together 2 Corinthians 6:16: "For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: 'I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

Read aloud John 1:14: "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unending love and faithfulness."

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

Prompt: "You are the temple. The Holy Spirit is 'tavek'—right in the middle of you. Your mess can't erase that. God has moved from the tabernacle in the wilderness, to Jesus on the middle cross, to dwelling within you by His Spirit."

Part 3: Gratitude and Invitation (Prayer)

In groups of 2-3, practice Ash's "3 Gratitudes" exercise:

1. Name one thing you're grateful for about who God is (His character, His faithfulness, His presence)
2. Name one thing from something ordinary in your day (a conversation, a meal, a moment of beauty)
3. Name one thing about a person in your life

Then pray for one another:

- Thank God for moving closer despite our mess
- Invite the Holy Spirit to do "temple cleaning"—to reveal and remove any idols or distractions
- Ask for courage to move toward the "messy places, spaces, or people" God is calling you toward

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Pick one or more of the following prompts to practice this week:

Name Your Mess Before God: Set aside time this week to journal or pray through Ash's question: "Where am I tempted to believe God doesn't want to be near this part of me?" Bring it to Him honestly. Don't let shame drive you away—let God draw close.

Daily 3 Gratitudes: Each day, name three things you're grateful for: one about who God is, one from something ordinary, and one about a person in your life. Gratitude trains your heart to see that God is already present—even in the middle of the mess.

Identify Your "Muddy Golden Retriever": Who in your life feels "too messy" to move toward? What place or space feels too chaotic or broken? Ask God: "Where might You be calling me to 'tabernacle'—to be present, to bring care and repair?" Take one small step toward that person or place this week.

Memorize 2 Corinthians 6:16: "For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: 'I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" Let this truth anchor your identity.