

# ESTABLISHING THE ALTAR

Altars are a reality of the spiritual realm—a gateway to the presence of God or the influence of darkness. When the altar was neglected by God’s people, they were unable to live for God or fulfill His purposes for them. When the altar was restored and maintained, there were spiritual breakthroughs, great blessing, protection and victory over stronger enemies, and the hearts of God’s people remained faithful Him. From the very beginning of the Church, a corporate prayer altar was maintained (Acts 1.14) and the presence and power of God was being experienced every day. As we have seen, prayer can often be simply an activity, but an altar is a place of communion; it is where the presence of God is sought and manifested. If we are content with prayer as an activity, we will always be living under the effect of circumstances, spiritual attacks, world influences. To live under the effect of God’s presence, we must build an altar.

Since we are the temple—the dwelling place—of God (1 Corinthians 6.6-19; Ephesians 2.22), anywhere we are is a place where God’s presence should be realized (cf. 2 Corinthians 2.14-15). As the priesthood of the new covenant, we are called to seek the presence and purposes of God in every sphere where we are present. Prayer altars, we have seen, are God’s strategy. From the personal altar, to the family altar, to the corporate altar, to the marketplace altar—as we establish our priestly ministry at the altar, we will begin to experience His transforming presence, from our personal lives to our nation.

## THE PERSONAL ALTAR—

The personal altar is the first and most essential altar, built in your heart. It will have practical expression in time and space, but it is established in the heart. When we really understand this, we will more carefully watch what affects our hearts and seek to strengthen our sense of communion and abiding in God’s presence.

- (1) **Prepare spiritually.** The more significant the spiritual work, the more diligent the preparation must be, so spend time fasting and praying, preparing the spiritual environment of your heart, asking God to reveal and help you pull down any idols or strongholds.
- (2) **Prioritize a time and a place.** Dedicate that time and that space, making it exclusive. Remember that this is a lifestyle and it needs a point of reference and enablement. Spending regular time in the presence of the Lord will enable you to walk in communion with God, overcoming the warfare, distractions, urges of the sinful nature.
- (3) **Saturate in the Word.** God declares the end from the beginning, and the Bible tells the story of God’s redemptive purposes from creation through each generation until the final Day of the Lord. Paul reminded Timothy of the importance and necessity of all Scripture. Reading here and there will only give us a fragmented picture of God’s nature and His purposes. God values His entire Word and so should we. As we saturate in the Word, it will renew our minds and transform us (Romans 12.2). Our faith will build above our weaknesses, doubts, and sense of limitation. It will become our first response of faith to everything we encounter (e.g. Jesus facing temptation).
- (4) **Minister to the Lord.** Praise and worship is not something that is a part of our altar—it is a posture, an attitude, that we maintain. It is our means of breaking through whatever would steal our focus and of setting our hearts on the Lord. It is enthroning Him, establishing His worth and preeminence. The authors of *Prayer Altars* write—

*“The more we remain in an atmosphere of praise during a prayer time, the more the depth of our prayer will increase. Even our intercession will be deeper. Instead of it coming from a deep place where we are crying out because we see God’s heart desire, it will now come from an even deeper place of faith and trust that God will answer our prayers because we are standing in His presence, confident in who He is, what He has spoken, and what He has promised.”*

*Remember that your heart is the altar. If you spend time in prayer and being before God, praising Him and saturating yourself in His Word and His presence, you will find your faith high, your focus clear, and your heart set on Him. However, if you go through your day without monitoring the fire on the altar of your heart, you will feel the presence of the Lord decreasing. You may notice yourself speaking out negative words of fear, discouragement, or criticism; becoming self-focused; becoming easily offended; and doing other things you normally wouldn’t do. These negative attitudes and behaviors are rising up because the fire of the altar of your heart is diminishing. . . .”*

An atmosphere and a posture of praise pervades the spiritual realm where God dwells. In contrast, where praise and worship is absent, darkness and confusion prevail. As we develop the capacity to minister more and more to the Lord, we will find His presence overshadowing every aspect of our lives; we will become more responsive to His presence and less reacting to other influencing factors.

- (5) **Anticipate warfare.** Remember that an altar is a gateway to the spiritual realm. The adversary wants to separate us from the presence of God, just as he did with Adam and Eve. He opposes every work of God and every endeavor toward God—especially anything that will increase faith and bring about the will of God on earth. Recognize distractions, conflicts, interruptions as attacks against the priority of your altar—an effort of the adversary to steal the presence of God from you. Like Elijah, you will have to contend for your altar, remembering, that the manifestation of God’s presence is at stake (1 Kings 18.16-39).

## THE CORPORATE ALTAR—

A corporate altar is where believers join together to seek a greater manifestation of the presence of God—in a family, a church, a city, a nation. The greater the strength of darkness, the greater the strength of the altar must be for the priesthood of righteousness to prevail. As we see in Scripture, corporate altars are part of God’s strategy (cf. Matthew 18.20; Acts 2.42; Colossians 4.2-3) and should be part of each believer’s life. Prayer is the only way of communicating from the physical realm to the spiritual realm. The authors write—

*“Everything you see in the physical realm is a manifestation of what has happened in the spiritual realm. If immorality, demonic activity, and the kingdom of darkness are overcoming the physical realm around you, then you know who is prevailing in the spiritual realm over the land. The destiny of your family and your nation is in your hands. It must first be won in the heavenly realm before it can be manifested in the physical realm.”*

Wherever we are—and wherever there is darkness—an altar should be established. Lot was grieved by the sin that was so prolific in Sodom (2 Peter 2.7-8), yet, unlike Abraham, he did not establish an altar and call on the name of the Lord; he was simply part of the cultural and economic life of the city (Genesis 19.1). Often as Christians, we are simply part of the business, school, or government system—resident, but not raising an altar to see the presence and purposes of God manifested. Unfortunately, like Lot’s family, the darkness may instead overtake us. Because the priority is God’s presence, it should be our ambition to see an altar that draws His manifested presence into our hearts, our homes, our churches, our land. It won’t happen simply because we are Christians or even because we pray, but it will happen as we purpose to follow the strategy God has given us. After all, we have His word on it!