

Back to the Altar

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[0 : 00] I want us to look at the chairs around us and people that aren't here. And some things we know about, some things we don't know they're going through. But I want us to take a moment.

I want us to pray for them. And I want us to pray that God would move in their life. Whatever they're going through or dealing with, that God would work out.

God would heal. God would disconnect from their life. Whatever it might be. I want us to pray that.

And because every one of us is going through something.

Every one of us is dealing with something on some level. And this is where the body comes together. And it begins to fight for each other. It fights for itself.

For healing in the body. Amen. Do you understand what I'm saying? When one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts. I mean, Brother Jose was walking upstairs, kind of limp because he was working out.

[1 : 04] He's kind of struggling right now. And I know what that feels like when I used to run back in the day. And when one part of the body hurt, the whole body hurt. But that's the thing about working.

That's the thing about putting the work in. Is that when you're putting the work in, something's going to get strained. That's where the rest of the body needs to come together. And support it.

Amen. So right now we're going to pray for those that are not here. And even those that are here and that maybe it's not named or mentioned what they're going through. We're going to pray right now. Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus, we come together, Lord, as the body of Christ, Lord. In the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. And by the authority and the power of the word of God. And I pray that you bring healing and restoration, God, to the body of Christ.

For those that are not here, God, I pray that you would lift them up, Lord. God, that you would lift their hands in their hands, oh, God. Their head that is down, oh, God.

[2 : 09] Their hearts that are hurting and are heavy, oh, God. Lord, we pray after you, oh, God, right now. Let's be healing in the body, Lord.

Let's be restoration, oh, God. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. God, we pray right now, oh God, hallelujah.

God, we love you today. Hallelujah, Jesus. Hallelujah, hallelujah, Jesus. We love you, Lord.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Could you feel that? Did you feel that was beautiful?

[3 : 59] And it was right. You know, when we come together, you know, it's not about, well, they're not here today, so oh well. Or I'm not able to make it today, so oh well.

It matters. I had to check my heart and make sure, I hope you hear what I'm saying for a minute. I had to check my heart and I said, God, you know every hair on my head.

What's missing? What's long gone? Lord, you know every person in this church. You know, who's here and who's not here. And I said, Lord, you can build this church.

I said, God, you can add to the church. You can do it. You could give us a building. You can do anything. I said, it's possible.

And I said, God, I don't want to be caught up in the numbers game. And hey, we had this many in service the other day.

[5 : 10] And I mean, numbers do matter because I believe God counts every person, every soul, every lamb, every heart. And it should matter to us. But I want to make sure my motives are right.

And so when you're here and when you're not here, it matters to all of us. And so everyone that's not here today, we pray for them. And we ask God to give them hope and strength and inspiration. Amen. Praise God. Now we all believe God is able, right?

God can do anything. Can he do anything? It's hard to believe sometimes. Let's be honest. Let's be real right now. Come on, church.

Hallelujah. But you know something? God is able to provide. God is able to heal. God is able to, you know what? Take care of any of our situations. God, I've seen it. I've experienced it. I've lived it.

[6 : 16] But God is able to do it. And out of the sincerity of our hearts, God, I believe, but you've got to help that part of my heart that doesn't really quite buy into it, Lord.

And the great thing about our God is that he's so gracious to us. He's so gracious and long-suffering to us. He gives us that space and that latitude to grow in our faith.

And what I think is happening right now in some of our lives, maybe all of our lives, he's wanting to stretch us. To stretch us.

You hear what I'm saying? To stretch us and see. Because he would not have called us without giving us what we needed to do it.

He would not have called you and I to this church if he didn't think there was a reason why we needed to be here. I'm just talking from my heart right now. What I feel.

[7 : 16] Every one of us matters in this church. Every creative thought you have. Every word you give.

Matters. To this church. You being here makes a difference in all of our lives. I tell Brother Seek all the time. You know. My kids see you faithfully showing up.

And it matters. Because they notice when you're not. They notice when you may miss a day or two. Which is very rare. And they'll say something. Hey, Brother Seek's not here. Because. He's a staple here.

You know what I mean? But every. Every. Creative thought. Every talent you have. Makes a difference. Amen.

Every word. Matters. It makes a difference. Amen. Amen. Amen. It really does. So we cannot.

[8 : 15] I know we look at the. We look at our numbers. And we say, well, he's here. Not here. And I think we should count. But. Here's. Here's what I want us to think about. Is that.

And I've said it before. And I'll say it again. I'll keep saying it. Don't count the few. But we're going to make the few count. Amen. And I want you to believe this.

And if you can't. If you have a hard time with it. I. I understand. God's taking us somewhere. And here's how it's going to go. Amen. Amen.

we need to show up.

Because humanity is like this. Our flesh is like this. Paul even talked about it.

[9 : 19] He says, I do the things that I don't want to do, but I don't do the things that I know I should do. And he vacillated between those two things. And that's the same for all of us. We all kind of go in between this and that and the other. But God is consistent.

There's no shadow of turning with him. The same yesterday, today, and forever. He's faithful. And what we're trying to do right now, hear me, we're trying to, let me just use both.

We're trying to align ourselves with him. Might look like some of your lives. We're trying to align ourselves with what God is doing.

And the best way that I know how that's done is getting back to the altar.

Getting back to the altar. And I know for some of us, we understand what that means, especially in our Pentecostal speak, in our language. But getting back to the altar is, I think one of the most essential things that we need to do as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, as a man or woman of God, as God's family, that has a walk with God.

[10 : 47] So today, you know, today is going to kind of, the message is going to be kind of, you know, kind of like some of us, up and down, up and down, up and down, okay? Because here's the thing, I feel very, I don't want to say I feel very emotional right now.

I just feel like God is trying to show us something. I was just walking around up front, just praying. I said, God, what are you showing me? What are you showing us?

What are you trying to reveal to us? And the Lord just prompted in my spirit, just keep watching, keep going, keep walking, just stay with me, align with me.

So that's, that's what this is about, is about aligning ourselves with God. Aligning ourselves, I mean, try to get a bunch of children in a line, or, you know, as best as possible.

I've, I've been a team leader for third graders, and for fourth graders, and fifth graders, and for kindergartners. I try to get them all lined up, it's a little, I've coached 10 year olds, and 11 year olds,

and there's little Johnny out in the right field, doing, looking at the butterflies, and a ball's hit to him, and he's not, I saw yesterday in my son's game, he was out, this kid, he's out doing this, you know, and a ball was hit out, kind of towards his direction.

[12:18] Hey, he didn't get the ball! That's some of us, we're kind of out right, we're just kind of, ah! But this is about aligning ourselves with God.

This is about aligning ourselves with one another, amen? With one another. Which is why I think it was important for us to pray for one another, and those that weren't here, because we all need each other.

We all need each other. I may like the Niners, and you may like another team, sorry for you. But you know, sister, we're not going to name names.

the Raiders, the Raiders got a few of my players that are in my fantasy league, so I got to root for them. But you know what?

It's put aside our preferences sometimes. Put aside what we want, preferences. Jesus, we thank you, Lord.

[13:19] Back to the altar. I'm going to read a few verses of scripture, just to, actually a quick recap of this series we've been in. So, the series we've been in is, you know, what God is here will still get us there.

Why don't you tell your neighbor, hey, what God is here will still get us there. And here's, here's the thing. We're looking at these spiritual patterns that moved God's promises forward.

These patterns in scripture, these patterns in history, these patterns in the early church that moved God's promises forward. And these same patterns, these same habits or disciplines or these same, these same things will still move the church forward.

We'll move our lives forward. You know, we've talked about hunger. I'm sure some of you are hungry right now. Thinking about your next meal. And week two, we talked about obedience.

We talked about one step closer to God. Just moving one step closer. And I hope today you're one step closer to where God wants you to be. I hope I'm one step closer to where God wants me to be.

[14:32] Amen? But today, we're going to look again at Abraham and kind of look at something that's, his life is pretty interesting. If you've read scripture any amount of time, Abraham's life is just, it's full of just interesting encounters.

Amen. Amen. But every time God moved Abraham forward, I want you to notice something about Abraham. an altar was built. Remember, say altar.

An altar was built when God was moving Abraham forward. Amen? Amen. And here's what I want us to really understand is that hunger brings us to God.

Amen? Hunger brings us to God. Obedience moves us forward. But it is, it is the altar of surrender. I should say, it's the altar where surrender really happens. You understand that? Hunger brings us to God. Obedience moves us forward. But it's the altar that aligns us with God and helps us surrender to Him.

[15:55] Amen. And I want to be surrendered to Him. I want to be surrendered to His will. I want to, God, not my will, but Thy will be done. And we can say that, but God, I really want to mean that, God.

Because what He has for us is so much better than what we can try and do with our hands. Amen. What we can do with our hands is only, will last for so long.

But what God would do in our lives will last for eternity. I feel a witness right now in the Holy Ghost. Because you, I really believe you, you believe that. I believe that.

I'm trying to believe that. I'm trying to live that out. And it's difficult, isn't it, with life? And those obstacles we have in our lives, those opposition to us, when we try to do the right thing and then someone comes along our way and says, hey, I don't think so.

Boom! We get knocked upside the head. Then we got to get ourselves together. And for some of us here today, that's exactly what we did. We just got back up from being knocked down.

[17:02] Before we walked into this church service, we were on the ground like this. But something inside of you said, I'm going to get back up again. I'm going to get back up again.

I'm going to keep moving forward to the promise of God. because I know that what God has for me in my life is so much greater and so much more powerful than what this world can offer me.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. God knows, sister. Hallelujah. In the name of Jesus. Can we give God praise? Can we give Him praise right now for His faithfulness?

Can we give God a name?

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Praise God. Praise God. Hallelujah.

[18:03] Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord Jesus. Don't you love his presence? It's just so good. But for Abraham, Father Abraham, and many sons, in Abraham's life, there was a pattern, a pattern of just building these altars.

Every time God was moving him forward or moving in his life, there was this pattern of building an altar. And we'll get to what an altar is and what a surrender is, but if we look at Genesis 12, 7, and the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed I will give this land, and there built he and Abraham an altar unto the Lord.

That was in Shechem. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel. There he built another altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

And then he returned to Bethel unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

[19:32] Genesis 13, 18. Then Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre and built an altar to the Lord on Mount Moriah.

We all know that place, don't we? With Isaac. And they came to, he and Isaac came to the place which God told him of, and Abraham built an altar. And so from the beginning of Abraham's journey, there was just this consistent pattern of building an altar.

until it comes to this really difficult one where he sacrifices his son. But let me ask you a question. How many of us feel like we're carrying too much right now? That's okay, you don't have to raise your hand. You don't have to raise your hand. We've seen, we've seen, have you seen somebody comically, I mean, try to carry too much?

You know what I mean? They got their cell phone. Always, always have their cell phone. That's the one thing we can, we just, we always have, right? It's always on us. No matter what we're carrying, our child, our children, our groceries, our books, whatever it might, we got our cell phone on us.

[20:57] But we got our cell phone in one hand, we got our kid in the other, we got our keys in one, we got our coffee bouncing on our elbow. I'm not going to try it. We're all trying to carry so much.

Trying to open the car door. But isn't it true, every time we try and do that, something falls?

Everybody ever drop their coffee? Oh, that is not a good start of the day.

Whether it's on the ground, or it's on us, we drop our coffee. I remember where I was getting, I wasn't even carrying very much. I was going to work. I grabbed my backpack, I had my coffee in one hand, and I think the coffee was open, because I was taking a sip.

And I grabbed it, wasn't careful, I just, and I don't know, I hit the door or something, it just went, right all over me. It just, you know, we try and do too much, or carry too much, it just, it happens.

But life feels like that sometimes. Amen? Hey, we're just going to be real here for a minute. Okay, or just this, we're just going to be honest. Okay?

[22:06] A lot, you know, life sometimes just feels like that. Like we're just trying to carry too much. responsibilities, family pressures, you might have, you might have something going on in your marriage right now, that you're really trying to, not hide, but you're just trying to put a really good face on.

With their children, there might be something happening with their children, and you're running to put a good face on. Maybe it's finances. Maybe it's finances. There's just, there's a lot, there's more bills than finances going on.

Decisions about the future. Maybe that's what's weighing on you this morning. And we keep stacking these things on our shoulders until eventually something just slips, and then there's this moment where we realize something, that we were never meant to carry life alone.

Hello? Hello? At some point, every person realizes two things. I need God. I need, I need friends. I need people in my life that care about me. Those two things are important. And here today, we need to, I want us, I hope we understand that, is that don't try and do life alone.

[23:28] Don't try and do life by yourself. Don't try and do life without God. Put God in every situation, in every decision, put God in every, and if you can't quite hear the Lord, take some counsel and a good friend.

Find a good friend. Don't find a buddy that just will tell you whatever you want to hear. But at some point, somebody, and I hope that we, that all of us here, you know, and some of us are still working

that out.

We need to realize that we, we need God. We need God. We need alignment with Him. Because our decisions may be over here, but God's saying, I want you to go over here.

But I need God. But as you read the scriptures, you read the Bible, the people who walked closely with God had this one pattern.

We just talked about it. This one pattern, when life got heavy, when life got confusing, when life got difficult, this is the pattern that every person had.

[24 : 29] Can you guess it? They built altars. You look through the scriptures, you look in the early church, you look in the early Pentecostal movement.

There was this desire to get in alignment with God. No matter how chaotic things were, and how much pressure there might have been on our lives, on their lives, there was this desire, God, I have to be in alignment with you.

They built altars, not buildings, not churches, but it was altars. Because altars matter. Because altars were, altars were places where everything stopped.

Hello? Altars were, were, were, altars were places where distractions were put aside. Altars were places where it was me, and it was God.

That's what it was all about, where everything stopped, and it was a place where lives were surrendered. Maybe not instantaneously, but it was where lives were surrendered.

[25 : 49] And when you read the life of Abraham, you notice, I mean, you notice that with Abraham, every time God moved Abraham forward, there was an altar built, which raises the question, I think we're all asking, why do I need an altar in my life?

Why do I need an altar in my life? And that's, and I understand that question entirely. I totally get that. And I've asked, I've, I've, I asked that question, why do I need an altar in my life?

Well, first question is, what is an altar? What is an altar? Altars in the Old Testament were very simple.

They were stones stacked up, stacked together with wood. Sometimes it was just earth, okay, some dirt put together into a huge mound, no roof, no walls.

It was just a place that was set apart for God. But, basically, an altar meant much more than a meeting place.

[27 : 00] An altar represented four things. It represented sacrifice, it represented covenant, an agreement with God, worship, and it represented encounter.

These four things, and something was then placed on this altar, something valuable or something costly and next week we're going to talk about, I'm going to talk about something very specific, but usually on the altar an animal was sacrificed, grain was sacrificed, but there was an offering of some kind and these altars represented surrender.

An altar will always cost something, but an altar is not where God takes your life away. An altar is where God gives your life purpose. An altar is a place where you find where God wants you to be. And God says, I'm putting purpose into your life. When the world wants to tell you you're nothing and you got nothing to offer, God's saying, I'm telling you, I've got something for you to do.

I've got something to give to you and something in your hands. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Praise God. An altar was also a place of covenant. Altars marked moments where people committed themselves to God and they said, Lord, I'm in agreement with you.

[28 : 19] Lord, I surrender to you, God, and we're going to do this together. Lord, my life belongs to you. Because an altar, think about this, an altar reminds us that our lives don't belong to us.

An altar reminds us that our lives belong to God. That God's in control of our lives. That God is directing our lives. An altar was a place of worship. Altars were moments where people, they honored God, they worshiped, they had this gratitude.

Lord, thank you, oh God, thank you for what you were doing in these moments in my life. And isn't it awesome how worship just has a way of lifting weight sometimes?

Because you know what you're doing? You're making God bigger than your situation. When you magnify the Lord, that's what you're doing, you're magnifying Him. Now that you can change Him, but you are in your own mind, in your own heart, you're magnifying Him greater than your problem. You're magnifying Him greater than your situation. Hallelujah. So when you magnify the Lord with me and exalt His name together, hallelujah, you are making it bigger than your situation.

[29 : 31] Hallelujah. And it's a reminder to us that no matter what we're going through, God is always greater. God is always more powerful. God is always able, hallelujah, to bring us through whatever it is that we're going through.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah, Jesus. Glory to God. Thank you, Jesus. And fourth thing was that an altar was an encounter with the Lord.

Don't you love encounters with God? And just encountering His power? See, the altar was a place where God spoke, where God revealed Himself, where He provided. It was a place to find peace and direction and strength and I believe many of us here today are needing that strength and that peace and that direction.

Hallelujah. And I want to tell you, you can find it today at the altar. I just want to stop and say you can find that strength that you need at the altar.

That peace that you need at the altar. Hallelujah. Praise God. Oh, hallelujah. I just feel this in the Holy Ghost. Hallelujah. Oh, Jesus, God.

[30 : 49] Hallelujah. Jesus. Can we pray for a minute? Can we pray? I'm just trying to find the Father, the leader, the Holy Ghost right now.

God, we love You today. God, give us strength, God. Give us strength and hope. Peace, oh God, at the altar. Lord, we love You, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah, Jesus.

Praise God. God. So, with Abraham, you know, you don't find just one altar. I mean, he built Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and then finally Mount Moriah.

Different places, different seasons, different circumstances, but it was the same pattern. Same thing, same pattern. But every time God moved forward, Abraham built that altar in his life.

But at some point, he came to this most difficult, I guess he would say the most difficult altar where he was going to sacrifice his son Isaac and the miracle child, right? The child God promised him in his old age and then one day God said, I want you to offer him to me.

[32 : 07] I want you to offer him and sacrifice me. I mean, think about the tension there. His old, his son of his old age, son of promise, and God said, I want you to sacrifice him.

I want you to offer him to me. Three days walking to the mountain, three days carrying the weight of this command on his shoulders, Isaac carrying the wood, Abraham carrying the knife, a lot of tension walking up to this place and then Isaac asked, where's the lamb?

And Abraham replies, God's going to provide that. God's going to provide it. And they reach the mountain and they gather stones and they build this altar. But this time, the surrender for Abraham, hear what I'm saying?

The surrender for Abraham is deeper. This time, the sacrifice is really personal, super personal. And just before the sacrifice, God stops him.

We know the story. I hope we do. If not, he's bringing the knife down and God stops him and then a ram appears in the thicket. But I want you to notice the order with Abraham and with Isaac is that the altar came first and then surrender came next.

[33 : 22] Then the miracle appeared. Hallelujah. You see, and that's the pattern with God is that God provides after surrender, not before that.

That God provides and brings in after the surrender. But here's the next question. What's surrender? What does it mean to surrender to God?

I mean, I don't know if you've been in trouble with the law. We know what it's like. I surrender. I surrender. You know? Good deal. Good deal. Good deal. All right.

I surrender. I surrender. I don't know if you know somebody or you've lived that life. I don't know. But basically, you're saying, okay, I'm done.

I'm done. Whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. That's what you're doing. I don't want to get shot up. I don't want to, you know. But surrender means trusting God enough to place your life into His hands.

[34 : 25] Hello? That's it. I say that's it. But I don't mean that, you know, like, that's it, everybody. We got it.

But surrender means trusting God enough to place your life into His hands. I say, Lord, I don't understand, but I'm trusting you.

Whatever it costs me, God, I'm trusting you. The future's unclear, but God, I'm trusting you. Surrender is trusting God more than you trust yourself.

Because some of us like to control stuff. not this church, though. Not these people. Not you. Not me. We don't struggle with control.

Thank God for that. Hallelujah. But for those, those other people, surrender is trusting God more than you trust yourself. But what does an altar look like today for us?

[35 : 30] We don't stack stones. We don't stack wood. But the principle of altars still remains a stain. An altar today is where we stop everything.

An altar for us today is where we just stop everything. We take the distractions and we and we surrender ourselves to God.

It might happen in a church service. It might happen in your living room. It might happen in your bedroom. It might happen in your car. I remember a pastor was telling a story when he was on his way to work and he was praying and he just he was speaking in tongues and he's I don't know I don't know if he said this but you know he talked about who knows who was driving by and people looking at him speaking in tongues.

I don't know if you've ever spoken in tongues in your car and you know people are driving by and they're like having a double take and seeing what's going on. But it's the power of God.

But that could happen in your living room. In your car. Besides your bed. In a location the location doesn't matter. The surrender is what's important.

[36 : 51] Hello? Praise God. Thank you Jesus. And when I say hello I don't mean like you're not trying to get a response out of us.

I'm just saying you know what? God's just so good. I don't want us to miss what God is trying to do for us. See because altars are places where burdens get lighter.

Altars where hope rises again. An altar is where tired hearts find strength. And can I tell us for some of us we need God to lift up our hearts.

We need God to lift up our hands and our minds and our spirits. We need inspiration. I believe even this morning we need God to help us today. And the place where that's going to happen is not in a bottle.

It's not it's not in a joint. It's not going to be in a line. It's going to be at the altar. because that whatever what I just mentioned is not going to last.

[37 : 54] But your encounter at the altar is going to last. Let's all stand. Look I know today was all over the place. But I just wanted to bear my heart.

Let's all stand. Let's all stand.

Everybody in this place. Why do altars matter?

Because life gets heavy. Why do we need an altar? Because life is like a wave.

And it feels like it's just crashing on us over and over again. because the pressures of life are a lot.

[39 : 23] Pressures of relationships can be a lot. Pressures of finances can be a lot. Decisions can be a lot.

Why do I need an altar in my life? Because I need God.

Because I need the Lord. I need to be in alignment with Him. No one's going to make any of us do this.

No one's going to make you build an altar. No one's going to go to your house and say, did you build an altar today? You're not going to knock on your door and say, hey sister, did you build an altar today?

You're not going to get a text from me saying, did you build an altar today? Hey, Brielle, did you build an altar today? No one's going to be doing that.

[40 : 30] And if they are, you let me know. I'll handle them. But the bottom line is, I want to be in alignment with God.

And at the altar is where it happens. At the altar is where our burdens are lifted. It's where He, the Lord, steps beside us and He begins to carry the burden for us.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. It's where the peace of God begins to wrap His arms around our lives.

Hallelujah, Jesus. I don't know if you feel that right now, but I feel the Holy Ghost that's reaching for some of us here this morning that said, hey, would you let me carry that for you?

Would you let me hold up your hands here today? But you know what we need? If that's what you want, come to the altar.

I want to invite, I want to invite those of you that want your life a little lighter. I didn't say easier.

[41 : 47] I didn't say easier because life is difficult. But with Jesus, it's a little lighter. this altar is open.

Can we get back to the altar, church? Can we get back to the altar? Can we get back to the altar? Hallelujah.

Can we get back to the altar? And Lord, would you carry this? Lord, would you hold this? God, would you help me, lift up your name?

Would you help me? Lord, I come to give you all my praise. Lord, I come to give you all my praise.

I surrender to you, Lord. For you, Lord, I surrender to you. I surrender to you, Lord. For you, For you, the honor. the honor. the honor. For you, For you, For you, the honor. For you, the honor.

[42 : 53] For you, the honor. Lord I come to lift up your name.