

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

Meeting God at the Altar

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Psalm 43:4

SYNOPSIS

The altar is a place of sacrifice and worship, where we meet with God.

HIGHLIGHTS

Music and lingering at the end





☞ MEETING GOD AT THE ALTAR

Have you ever had a moment so holy, so unforgettable, that you wished you could somehow bottle it and remember it forever? I've had a few of those times, when God met me so powerfully that I didn't want to leave that spot. I've shared my story about bible camp and growing up in church, experiencing God's presence, both of which included times around the altar. And, interestingly enough, the people in the Bible built altars when God met with them and they experienced his powerful presence.

Last week we talked about Returning to the Altar. It's a place of encounter, surrender, and heavenly fire. God is calling us to return to the altar to experience his presence and power. And, as your pastor, I want you to know God more than just as a theological concept. I want you to know him personally. I want you to have that experience of actually sensing his presence and power.

☞ Psalm 43:4

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

Throughout Scripture, when people had a heaven-on-earth experience with God, they would build an altar in that place. When Israel had the tabernacle, and then the temple, there was an altar within, and those were holy places where priests would offer sacrifices and meet with God. Today, the bible says that all believers are priests and we can each meet with God at the altar of our heart.

☞ The Altar is a Place of Sacrifice

Even though the altar today doesn't require an animal sacrifice, it is still a place of some kind of ☞ sacrifice... something you give. And not just any old gift; biblically, a **sacrifice was always something of value.**

When God told Abraham to place Isaac, his son (and the fulfilment of God's promise) on the altar, (Genesis 22), he was definitely offering something of extreme value. Abraham tied down what he loved most and lifted his knife in surrender. Why? Because God told him to, and he believed God was worthy even if it cost him everything. He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice because he trusted God. And, he was right, because God came through, providing the ram in Isaac's place. Because of his willingness to sacrifice so much, God blessed Abraham for generations.

Romans 12:1 urges us, *"present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true worship."* That means worship isn't just a song, it's surrender. It's putting yourself on the altar. As flawed human beings, we are all prone to selfishness and self-centeredness. But God calls ☞ us to **give ourselves to him.** The altar is a place of sacrifice.



What is God asking you to place on the altar today? Your plans? Your need to control? Your comfort? Your sin? I know that last one doesn't sound like a very lovely item to place on the altar, but sin is definitely something we struggle giving up because our human nature actually likes and enjoys it.

Altars always cost us something, but on the other side of sacrifice is God's blessing of purity and a deeper revelation of who God is. The altar is a place of sacrifice, but it's worth it.

☞ The Altar is a Place of Worship

Throughout Genesis, the Patriarchs built altars simply because God had been good. Genesis 12 says Abraham built an altar "to the LORD, who had appeared to him." No miracle, no request, just worship.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, *"A person will worship something, have no doubt about that... That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives and our character.*

*☞ Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for **what we are worshipping, we are becoming.**"*

☞ John Piper said, *"**True worship is a valuing or a treasuring of God above all things.**"* Church, are we building a lifestyle of worshipping God? Do our homes, our habits, and our schedules tell God, "You are worth my best"? What dominates your thoughts and imagination? Are you valuing God above all things? True worship isn't just an event... it's every decision you make that says, "Jesus, you come first because you are worthy."

Thanking God for his goodness is a significant part of worship. I think it would be appropriate to pause right now for a moment to personally express gratitude to God.

☞ The Altar is a Place of Meeting

Altars weren't just about what people gave to God, they were about connecting *with* God. And, when people met with God, he often gave them something as well. When Gideon built an altar (Judges 6), God met him in his fear and commissioned him. When Elijah rebuilt the broken altar (1 Kings 18), fire fell from heaven in undeniable power, confirming Elijah's words.

☞ Church, God still meets people at altars. It may not be fire from the sky, but **one moment in His presence can change you forever**. Like those in the bible, you can meet with God, too. Those people took time to build an altar. Here again, we see that some time is required, which is hard for us who are so accustomed to instant everything. You can meet with God, but it will likely take some time. When was the last time you lingered long enough for God to speak?



☞ Have you **made time to truly meet with God**... not just rush in and out? Your times of meeting with God shape your character, your confidence, and your commission. We all need those times of meeting with God!

☞ The Altar is a Place of Covenant

Jacob had his life forever changed at an altar in Bethel (Genesis 28 & 35). God promised him blessing, destiny, and protection. And, Jacob made a vow in response. Altars remind us of covenant; that God is not just a momentary help, or a one-time encounter, but a lifelong Father.

This concept of the altar of covenant continues to this day. Weddings typically place at the altar, and during the ceremony, vows are made... vows to love and cherish, for better or worse; vows of lifelong commitment. And, in a good marriage, you remember those vows and put in the effort to keep them.

Likewise, every time you open your Bible, kneel beside your bed, participate in communion, or ☞ linger at the altar, you are coming again to the place of covenant. **Don't let your relationship become casual.**

☞ So, put in the effort and **keep your vows**. Remind your heart of His promises to you as well as your promises of commitment to him.

☞ The Broken-Down Altar

1 Kings 18:30 says Elijah "repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down." Before fire could fall, something had to be rebuilt. Maybe today your passion has cooled, your prayer life feels dry, ☞ or your Bible has more dust than fingerprints. The good news is **broken altars can be rebuilt**. So, start again. Put the wood of the Word back in place and add the fuel of prayer and worship.

Church, are you willing to rebuild your altar even if it means clearing away rubble first? Sometimes our passion, prayer life, or devotion crumbles, and needs to be rebuilt.

☞ It's time to **rebuild: repent, restart** your prayer life, and **return** to your first love. Don't let the altar of your heart remain a pile of rubble. Build it back up.

☞ Your Personal Altar

Today, God isn't dwelling in tents or temples; He lives in *us* (1 Corinthians 6:19). That means **your heart is the altar. You carry his presence wherever you go**. So, the question is, "what is the condition of your heart?" Is it still offering up a sacrifice and worshiping wholeheartedly? Is it still meeting with ☞ God and fulfilling your vows to him? **Is it still on fire for God?**



Church, from Genesis to Revelation, God meets people at altars... places of sacrifice, worship, meeting, covenant, and rebuilding. Today, He's inviting *you* to build or rebuild your altar. If you know God is calling you to surrender afresh... if your altar has grown cold... if you long for fresh fire... I want to invite you to step out from where you are and meet God at *this* altar.

I know that I've said the altar is primarily within your heart. But there is also something powerful about physically coming to the altar to meet with God. It takes courage and humility to move from your comfortable seat to kneel before the Lord on these not-so-comfortable steps of the altar.

🎵 *(music starts)* Come **lay down what needs to die**. Come **pick up what needs to live**. As you come, whisper to Him: "**Lord, here's my life, make me an altar.**" Let's take time again today to linger and meet with the Lord.