

Dare to Draw Near

RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION

Lesson 8 Reflection: *The Golden Altar*

Reflections

We are on a journey drawing nearer to God using the ancient Hebrew Tabernacle as our model. This week we consider the Golden Altar of Incense. This altar was small, about the size of a podium with only enough room for one person to stand before. This was the place within the Tabernacle where twice a day the priest offered incense mixed with glowing embers from the bronze altar. The fire burned continuously. The aroma from the incense filled the tabernacle and penetrated the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

We looked at several passages from the Bible and learned that the golden altar with its burning embers and sweet incense pictures the kind of prayer that was modeled for us by the Lord Jesus. He was beaten and crushed and poured out for us just as like that incense and now He always lives to make intercession for us, **Hebrews 7:25**.

We are called to follow His example. We are challenged to not just say rote prayers, not just pray through a list of requests, but to wait on the Lord for His heart about a matter. This kind of prayer doesn't tell God what to do, it waits on His burden then prays that burden back to Him, with the Holy Spirit fueling and leading our prayer. This is **Romans 8:26** prayer where the Spirit helps our weakness since we do not know how to pray as we should. The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. When we pray like this our prayers go up before God carried to Him like a sweet aroma. This kind of prayer may not change your circumstances but it will change you and draw you into conformity with God's will.

When our will lines up with God's heart, then our actual lives become that sweet incense that rises up to Him. Jesus' life models this for us - He denied self and walked to the cross and willingly laid down His life. He gave up his human will - he was fully human and fully God, so He had a human will just like we do. We see this exemplified in His prayers in Gethsemane - Jesus' struggles with his human will. "Father, remove this cup from me." And we see him surrender His human will to God's will, "not my will, but your will be done."

Jesus gives us further direction in **Mark 8:34**,

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

These three things are critical: deny self, take up the cross of Jesus, and follow Him. This is the pathway to exchanging your will for God's will.

The very next verse in **Mark 8** Jesus continues to say,

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

God is asking us to lay down our will because He knows that in doing so we reap the benefits. In losing our selves to Him, we gain everything! It is in this surrendering brings glory and honor to the Lord.

If we look at **Romans 12:1**

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

It's in the offering up of ourselves that we worship God. And with our lives fully submitted to Him, our prayers become that sweet aroma from the burning incense on the Altar of Incense.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God....**II Corinthians 2:14-15**

Prayer Exercise

1. Journal asking the Lord to show you any areas of your life that are not submitted to Him.
2. Whatever He reveals, will you accept the invitation to present that part of your life before the Altar of Incense and lay it down before the Lord? Take some time to do this now.
3. Then wait before Him and see what He wants to give you in exchange for what you are surrendering.