
Life Group Guide: Building an Altar to the Lord

Based on the Message by Pastor Layla Nahavandi

Overview

In this message, Pastor Layla drew from the account of the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel, where Elijah built an altar to the Lord and called down fire from heaven, resulting in the people falling on their faces and declaring that the Lord is God. Using her own powerful testimony of how faithful believers built "altars" in her school and on her street, leading to her family's salvation, Pastor Layla challenged us to make our lives altars to the Lord through prayer, obedience, and consecration.

Key Takeaways

- In the Old Testament, an altar was a place of consecration, sacrifice, obedience, friendship, and presence. In the New Testament, the altar becomes a posture of our lives. As living stones, we ourselves are built into a spiritual house where God dwells.
 - God does not need a perfect environment or a perfect person. He needs one willing, consecrated life through which His fire can fall.
 - It does not matter where you come from, what your background is, or what you have done. God wants to take anyone from anywhere and use them to build an altar for His glory.
 - The connection point between heaven's possibilities and earth's realities is prayer.
 - Simple obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit can set off a chain of events that changes a person's eternity.
 - Consecration means being set aside for holy use. When we daily surrender our will to God's will, our lives can be marked by the miraculous.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Go around the group and briefly share: Who is someone in your life who built an "altar" for you? In other words, who prayed for you, shared the gospel with you, or demonstrated the love of God to you in a way that impacted your faith?

Section 1: It Only Takes One

Pastor Layla noted that Elijah was one prophet standing against 450 prophets of Baal, and yet God used him powerfully.

1. Have you ever felt outnumbered or alone in your faith, whether at work, in your family, or in your community? What did that feel like?
 2. Pastor Layla said, "All God needs is one who would build an altar to the Lord and call down fire from heaven." How does that statement challenge or encourage you personally?
 3. In her testimony, Lynette and Kevin were ordinary believers on an ordinary street who prayed in a life group and shared the gospel with a neighbor. What does their example teach us about the kind of people God uses?
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Section 2: A Life of Prayer

Pastor Layla referenced James 5:16-18, which speaks of the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person accomplishing much, and points to Elijah as an example of someone whose prayers changed the weather.

4. Pastor Layla said, "Prayer is the place where heaven's possibilities collide with earth's realities." What does your current prayer life look like, and how does it reflect that belief?
 5. Are there people in your life, perhaps unsaved family members, coworkers, or neighbors, that you have stopped praying for? What would it look like to re-commit to interceding for them consistently?
 6. The life group that prayed for young Layla and her family did not know the full details of her situation. They simply prayed for a little girl at school. How does that encourage you to pray for people even when you do not know everything about what they are going through?
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Section 3: A Life of Obedience

Pastor Layla shared the story of praying for individuals in a small Persian church in Paris, including a woman with two cancerous tumors who was healed as they stepped out in simple obedience.

7. Pastor Layla described a moment where she felt the Lord prompt her to pray for each person individually, even though the environment felt chaotic and the circumstances felt discouraging. Can you think of a time when you sensed God prompting you to do something that seemed unlikely to "work"? What happened when you obeyed or when you held back?
 8. The circuit rider lyric quoted in the message says, "Simple obedience changes history." What is one area of your life right now where you feel God is asking for simple obedience?
 9. In the story of Adam at the airport, two separate strangers obeyed the Holy Spirit's prompting on the same morning and spoke to him. Neither of them knew the full picture of what God was doing. What does this teach us about our role versus God's role in reaching people around us?
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Section 4: A Life of Consecration

Pastor Layla referenced Joshua 3:5, where the people of God were called to consecrate themselves before witnessing the miraculous works God was about to do among them.

10. Pastor Layla defined consecration as "being set aside for holy use." In practical, everyday terms, what does a consecrated life look like for someone in your season of life?
 11. She said, "When we surrender our hearts and lives to the Lord daily and say, Lord, not my will but your will be done, our lives can be marked by miracles." Is there an area of your life where surrendering your will to God's will feels particularly difficult right now? How can the group support you in that?
 12. Pastor Layla closed by praying for those who feel God stirring fresh vision, whether for missions, ministry, business, or their local community. Did anything stir in your heart during that time? Share it with the group if you feel comfortable.
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to commit to this week:

- **Identify your altar.** Think about the specific sphere God has placed you in, your workplace, neighborhood, school, or family. Write down two or three names of people God is calling you to pray for consistently. Begin praying for them by name this week.

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- **Practice obedience to one prompting.** Ask the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to His voice this week. When He nudges you to encourage someone, share your faith, or step out in some act of service, do it without waiting for the "perfect" moment.
 - **Establish or strengthen a prayer habit.** Set aside a specific time each day this week dedicated to prayer. Use that time to pray for the lost, for your church, for your city, and for your own heart to remain consecrated before the Lord.
 - **Share your testimony.** Pastor Layla's testimony, and the testimonies of those she shared, were powerful tools for the gospel. Consider writing out your own testimony this week in a way that you could share it naturally in conversation. Practice telling it in two to three minutes.
 - **Consecrate yourself intentionally.** Begin each morning this week by praying a simple prayer of surrender: "Lord, not my will but yours. Use me today as an altar for your glory. Let your fire fall."
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Closing Prayer

Close your group time by praying together. You may use this prayer as a guide:

Father, we thank You for Your Word spoken over us today. We thank You that You are not looking for the most qualified or the most prepared. You are looking for the willing, the consecrated, the surrendered. We ask You to make our lives altars to Your glory. Teach us to pray with faith and persistence. Give us the courage to obey Your promptings, even when the circumstances look impossible. And Lord, let Your fire fall on every area of our lives so that the people around us would see that You are God. We give You all the praise and all the glory. In Jesus' name, amen.