

Small Group Guide: The Altar of the Home

Series: Altars | Week 2

Overview

This week's message focused on what it means to consecrate our homes -- to intentionally set them apart for God's presence, purposes, and purposes. Drawing from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Joshua 24:15, we explored how every home has an altar, and the question is not whether something occupies the center of our family life, but who or what that something is.

Key Takeaways

- Every home is organized around something. The question is whether that something is God.
 - We consecrate our homes when we intentionally make them places where God's presence is honored, his word is practiced, and his purposes are pursued.
 - Consecrating our home begins with a consecrated heart. What God establishes within us begins to shape the environment around us.
 - Discipleship is not primarily an event. It happens in the ordinary, daily rhythms of family life.
 - The church should reinforce what is being formed in the home, not replace it.
 - A consecrated home is not a bunker. It is a launching point for God's mission in the world.
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Icebreaker

Think back to a home you spent time in growing up -- whether your own or someone else's. What was the atmosphere like? What did that home seem to value most? Share briefly with the group.

Discussion Questions

Opening the Conversation

1. The sermon described how every home has an altar -- something around which family life is organized. Without overthinking it, what would an honest observer say is at the center of your home right now?
2. Timothy Keller's concept of "functional saviors" was referenced -- the idea that whatever we place our hope and trust in is functioning as our savior in that moment. Where do you find yourself most tempted to look for worth, security, or approval outside of God?

Digging into Scripture

3. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 together. Moses instructs the people to talk about God's commands when sitting at home, walking along the road, lying down, and getting up. What does this suggest about where and when discipleship is supposed to happen?
4. Read Joshua 24:14-15 together. Joshua's declaration -- "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" -- was a public, deliberate choice. What would it look like for you to make that kind of intentional declaration over your own home or household today?
5. The story of Obed-Edom in 2 Samuel 6 shows that when the presence of God was welcomed into a home, that home and household were blessed. What does it mean practically to welcome and honor God's presence in a home -- beyond just having Christian symbols on the walls?

Going Deeper

6. The sermon made a distinction between the church supplementing the discipleship happening at home versus replacing it. How does that land with you? In what ways might you have been relying on the church to do what is meant to happen at home?
7. The pastor shared that the Amish retain 97 percent of their young people after Rumspringa, while evangelical retention sits around 30 percent. He connected this to the power of intentional, lived-out rhythms in the home. What rhythms -- however small -- are currently shaping the spiritual formation of your family?
8. The sermon said that a consecrated home is not a place to hide from the world but a launching point for mission. How does that challenge or reframe the way you think about your neighborhood, your street, or your workplace?

Personal Reflection

9. The pastor was honest about his own struggle with people-pleasing and about family devotions that did not go as planned. What is one area of your home life where you know things need to change, but you have been hesitant to address it?
 10. He offered this question for all of us: "If people see our family, what would they identify as the most important thing to us?" How would you honestly answer that question right now?
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Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Pray together as a household. Start small if needed. Before a meal, at the end of the day, or in the car on the way to school or work -- make prayer a normal and expected part of your family's rhythm rather than an exception.

Speak God's word in ordinary moments. When a challenge comes up this week, resist the urge to handle it entirely on your own. Open the scriptures together or reference a biblical principle in the conversation. Let the word be part of how your family processes life.

Practice grace out loud. If you make a mistake this week, go back and say so. Model confession and forgiveness for the people in your home. Do not let pride keep you from leading in that way.

Open your home to someone. Invite a neighbor, a coworker, or someone from church into your space this week -- not for a formal event, but simply to share a meal or spend time together. Practice hospitality without pressure.

Name your family's identity. The pastor described telling his daughters each morning, "We are kind and encouraging and we look for lonely people." Consider having a conversation with your family about who you are and what you stand for. Write it down somewhere visible.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying specifically over each group member's home. Ask the Lord to make each household a place where his presence is recognized and honored, where his word shapes daily life, and where his purposes are pursued. Pray that each home would become both a place of refuge and a launching point for mission.

Looking Ahead

Next week the series continues with the altar of the church. As you go into the week, consider: what does it mean for a community of believers -- not just an individual household -- to be consecrated for God's purposes?