

# The Altar of Family

*Big Idea: Family is a gift from God, but it becomes an idol when it takes the place of God. Healthy families are not built by putting family first above everything. They are built by putting God first and placing the family on the altar in surrender to Him.*

## Main Texts

Genesis 22:1–12

Matthew 10:37

Joshua 24:15

Luke 14:26

Ephesians 5:25, 6:4

## Lesson Goal

To help people examine whether family has become a higher loyalty than God, and to call them to lead their homes by surrender, obedience, and trust.

## Lesson Flow (30 Minutes)

1. Opening Icebreaker and Introduction (5 minutes)

Start with this question:

“What are some good things that can become dangerous when they take the wrong place in our lives?”

Let them answer:

money

work

comfort

success

relationships

family

Then say:

Family is one of God's greatest gifts.  
It is sacred.  
It is precious.  
It is worth protecting.

But even a gift from God becomes dangerous when we worship the gift more than the Giver.

We live in a culture that says:  
protect your family at all costs  
make your children your whole identity  
build life around family first  
do whatever makes your household happy.

*That sounds noble, but there is a subtle danger in it.*

God never called us to worship the family. He called us to lead the family to the altar.

There is a difference between:  
putting your family first above God  
and putting God first for the good of your family.  
One produces idolatry.  
The other produces order, peace, and blessing.

## **2. Read the Main Passage (5 minutes)**

Read Genesis 22:1–12

Focus on Abraham taking Isaac to the altar.

Then explain:

Isaac was not just Abraham's son.

Isaac was promise.

Isaac was legacy.

Isaac was future.

Isaac was everything Abraham had waited for.

And yet God said, in effect:

“Will you trust Me with what you love most?”

This story is not about God being cruel.

It is about God exposing whether the promise had become more important than the Promiser.

Abraham had to settle this question:

“Do I love God because of the gift, or do I love God above the gift?”

That is the question every family must answer.

### **3. Teaching Point 1 — Family is a gift, not a god (5 minutes)**

Matthew 10:37

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...”

Jesus was not teaching hatred of family.

He was teaching order of love.

God does not compete with family for second place.

He demands first place.

When family gets out of order, people begin to say things like:

“I know what God wants, but my family comes first.”

“I can’t obey God because of what my spouse wants.”

“I can’t serve because my kids have to be involved in everything.”

“I can’t fully follow God if it makes family uncomfortable.”

That sounds practical.

But spiritually, it reveals a problem.

Anything you consistently choose over obedience to God has become an altar in your life.

Family is a blessing.

But family makes a terrible god.

#### *Discussion Question*

What are some ways family can slowly move from being a blessing to becoming an idol?

Possible answers:

structuring life with no room for God

excusing sin to keep peace in the house  
compromising convictions for children or spouse  
being more committed to family success than spiritual health  
treating family happiness as the highest good

#### **4. Teaching Point 2 — Putting God first is the best thing you can do for your family (5 minutes)**

This is where people get nervous.

They hear “don’t put family first” and think that means neglect family.

No.

Not at all.

Putting God first does not make you love your family less.

It teaches you how to love them rightly.

*Joshua 24:15*

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Notice Joshua did not say:

“As for me and my house, we will do whatever makes us comfortable.”

He said:

“We will serve the Lord.”

That means the home has direction.

It means somebody decided that God sets the tone.

A family without God first becomes:

emotionally led

culturally shaped

convenience driven

spiritually weak

But when God is first:

love becomes healthier

discipline becomes clearer

peace becomes deeper

priorities become cleaner

the home gets a foundation

*Ephesians 5:25 / 6:4*

A husband cannot lead his family well if he does not submit to Christ. Parents cannot raise children well if they do not first fear God themselves.

You do not help your family by making them your god. You help your family by making God your Lord.

*Discussion Question*

*Why do you think people sometimes confuse “God first” with “family neglected”?*

### **5. Teaching Point 3 — Real love puts family on the altar, not on the throne (5 minutes)**

Go back to Abraham.

Abraham was willing to place Isaac on the altar.

That did not mean he loved Isaac less.

It meant he trusted God more.

To place your family on the altar means:

“God, my spouse belongs to You.”

“God, my children belong to You.”

“God, their future belongs to You.”

“God, their safety belongs to You.”

“God, their calling belongs to You.”

“God, I will not cling so tightly to them that I stop obeying You.”

Some parents worship their children.

Some spouses worship each other.

Some homes are built around protecting relationships instead of obeying truth.

But surrendered families say:

“Lord, this home is Yours.

Lead us.

Correct us.

Direct us.

Interrupt us.

We will not place our desires above Your will.”

That is hard.

Because surrender always is.

But what sits on the altar is what God can bless.

What we refuse to surrender often begins to rule us.

### *Discussion Question*

*What does it practically look like to place your family on the altar?*

Possible answers:

praying over them daily

refusing to compromise convictions for peace

making church and spiritual growth a real priority

teaching children obedience to God, not just success in life

letting God call family members wherever He wants

trusting God with outcomes instead of controlling everything

### **6. Heart-Level Application (3 minutes)**

*Ask the group to reflect quietly on these questions:*

Has my family become my excuse for spiritual compromise?

Do I want my family happy more than I want them holy?

Am I leading my home around God’s Word or around comfort and convenience?

Is God truly first in my home, or just verbally honored?

What am I afraid will happen if I fully surrender my family to God?

*Then say:*

Many people do not reject God outright.

They just slowly build life around something they love more.

And often, that something is family.

But the family does not belong on the throne.

God does.

And when God is on the throne, the family is finally safe in the right hands.

## **7. Closing Challenge and Prayer Response (2 minutes)**

### **Challenge**

This week, make one concrete shift that says:

“God, You are first in this home.”

Examples:

start family prayer at home

reestablish church faithfulness

repent for compromise

have a conversation about spiritual priorities

remove something that has become an idol in the schedule

intentionally surrender a child, spouse, or situation to God in prayer

### *Closing Prayer*

*“Lord, forgive us for the times we have taken a gift and made it a god. Forgive us for putting family on the throne instead of placing them on the altar. Teach us to love our families rightly by loving You first. Lead our homes. Rule our hearts. Be first in this house. We surrender our spouses, our children, our future, and our fears to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

### **Optional Leader Notes**

#### *Key Line to Repeat*

“We are not called to put family first above God. We are called to put God first and lead our family to the altar.”

A few one-liners you can use

A blessed family is not a family worshipped. It is a family surrendered.

If God is not first, something else will be.

You do not protect your family by replacing God with them.

The altar is where love is purified.

What you won’t surrender, you may eventually start serving.

### Simple Discussion Wrap-Up

End by asking:

“What is one thing you feel God is asking you to reorder in your home?”