

ALTARS

NAME:

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We hope this devotional journey will help you spend intentional time with Jesus this week.

Let the Spirit guide you as he gently untangles the strings of your heart and sets you free to love God and love others completely.

Our intention in this booklet is not to be prescriptive but to provide launch points for us to pray into and through these areas as God leads.

ALTARS

Altars have always been places of consecration and encounter.

Since Genesis they have been places where people have worshipped God and dedicated themselves fully and permanently to him in response to his goodness and what he has done.

This week, as we focus on five altars our approach is as the psalmist in Psalm 139

‘Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting’.

We come not to persuade God to do something but to consecrate ourselves, people and places, submitting ourselves to his lordship in each area. We worship him for who he is and what he has done, asking that he reveal what needs to be sacrificed at each altar.

Our purpose is to ask that at each altar God take his rightful place, competing altars and idols be torn down and that we would be fully surrendered, possessing nothing but having gained everything.

DEVOTIONAL ONE

ALTAR OF THE HEART

The heart is the hidden seat of our affection.

We can say we love and are devoted to many things, but the heart knows the real score.

What is enthroned in the hiddenness of our heart will direct all of our decisions, or as Scripture puts it,

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23

So today, let's start our conversation with God at the altar of our heart.

What do we really love most?

That can be a hard question to answer.

Supplementary questions like, "What do we want most?" or "What do we think about most?" might give us clues to the secret obsessions of our hearts.

The aim of the Christian life is to have an undivided heart.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to things you may not be able to see for yourself as you navigate these questions with him.

Lord show me the distractions in my heart?

Lord show me my disordered desires (longings that are badly prioritised) in my heart?

Lord show me the disobedience in my heart (rebellion that we are emotionally attached to and unwilling to release)?

My prayer of consecration for the altar of my heart

May my heart be a place where...

DEVOTIONAL TWO

ALTAR OF THE HOME

Physical space is important in the scriptural narrative.

The boundary lines of the Bible are not just theoretical but material.

The square-footage that you call home can become a place where God's kingdom reigns and the atmosphere of Heaven is cultivated by decisions that honour him.

Whether that is a room in your parent's house, a flat share, a rental, or a property you own, the space you occupy can be offered to God in devotion.

So today, let's have a conversation with God about the altar of our home.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to things you may not be able to see for yourself as you navigate these questions with him.

Lord show me the distractions in my home?

Lord show me the disordered desires (longings that are badly prioritised) in my home?

Lord show me the disobedience in my home (rebellion that we are emotionally attached to and unwilling to release)?

**My prayer of consecration for the altar of my home
May my home be a place where...**

DEVOTIONAL THREE

ALTAR OF THE FAMILY

Who do you consider to be family? Parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, partners, children, friends that have become family.

Family in the biblical narrative is a broad concept.

Jesus himself redefines family when he says,

“...whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Matt 12:50

Whomever you consider to be family, the Lord cares about those relationships.

He is not merely interested in the space within us being a place of devotion, but also the space between us.

His kingdom can come there powerfully when that space is submitted to him and honours him.

So today, let's have a conversation with God about the altar of our family.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to things you may not be able to see for yourself as you navigate these questions with him.

Lord show me the distractions in my family relationships?

Lord show me the disordered desires (longings that are badly prioritised) in my family relationships?

Lord show me the disobedience in my family relationships (rebellion that we are emotionally attached to and unwilling to release)?

**My prayer of consecration for the altar of my family
May my family be a place where...**

DEVOTIONAL FOUR

ALTAR OF THE CHURCH

The Church is the love of God's life. He is deeply committed to her regardless of her many flaws.

Our relationship to his Church is important to him.

In an individualised culture, we must fight the "just me and Jesus" narrative at all costs and remind ourselves daily that when His Church flourishes we flourish because we are part of that bride.

The altar of the Church (local and historic/global) is our responsibility.

While we are alive, it is our turn to man that altar.

Perhaps some of you already have a deep love and concern for the Church, but if not, today let the Lord expand your heart and show you his bride as he sees her.

Today, let's have a conversation with God about the altar of the Church (CFC and the global church).

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to things you may not be able to see for yourself as you navigate these questions with him.

Lord show me the distractions in the Church?

Lord show me the disordered desires (longings that are badly prioritised) in the Church?

Lord show me the disobedience in the Church (rebellion that we are emotionally attached to and unwilling to release)?

**My prayer of consecration for the altar of your church
May your church be a place where...**

DEVOTIONAL FIVE

ALTAR OF THE ISLAND

Together we find ourselves on this little island of ours, placed by God for such a time as this and therefore responsible for stewarding the altar of our island.

As you pray today, remember that we are joining with Christians from all four corners of the island who have dedicated 2024 as a year of prayer for Ireland, coordinated by 24/7 Prayer Ireland.

Every hour of the year, someone is praying for this little landmass. Let's join in.

Today, let's have a conversation with God about the altar of our island.

As you listen and talk to him, you may find your attention drawn to a particular region.

Dig into that with him.

PRAYER

Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to things you may not be able to see for yourself as you navigate these questions with him.

Lord show me the distractions on our island?

Lord show me the disordered desires (longings that are badly prioritised) on our island?

Lord show me the disobedience on our island (rebellion that we are emotionally attached to and unwilling to release)?

**My prayer of consecration for the altar of this island
May our island be a place where...**

NOTES

FASTING

CONSIDER FASTING

During this week we encourage you to fast from something for all or part of the time e.g. Food, TV, Social Media

There can be many benefits to fasting:

- Heightened sensitivity to the Holy Spirit
- A fresh insight into our own heart
- A fresh revelation of God's heart
- A humbling before God as we relinquish control of everything to him
- Breakthrough in prayer

Ultimately the purpose of fasting must be centred on God.

We fast with our eyes fixed on Him, with the sole intention of glorifying Him.

We encourage everyone to make fasting a regular discipline as well as joining together to fast as a church in weeks such as this.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN FASTING

Fast Sensibly

If it's your first time, try missing one meal to start with or fasting from lunchtime one day to lunchtime the next or a partial fast with soup in the evening.

Whatever you do, it should serve to release time and focus on prayer.

- Drink plenty of water
- If you are pregnant, suffer from diabetes, a heart or other medical condition, on certain medications, or suffer from an eating disorder – do **NOT** fast from food (or only with your GP's consent)

Fast Sensitive

Take time to listen and hear God speak to you personally, for others and for the church.

Words and prophecies for the church can be passed on to your Connect leader, an elder or emailed to info@thisiscfc.com.

Fast Sacrificially

Let it cost us something.

Fast Specifically and Expectantly

Ask God to direct our focus each day and expect answers.

Fast Supernaturally

We need God's supernatural grace and power.

PREPARING TO PRAY

PREPARING TO PRAY

As we prepare ourselves to pray it is important to remember that in prayer there is no formula or method and there are no rules.

We are simply setting ourselves before God and surrendering to him who loves us beyond all measure, totally, utterly, completely and unconditionally.

For some this is an established rhythm for others it is somewhat new and so the following are neither formula nor rule but simply some things you may find helpful as you begin to find your way in prayer.

Start Small

Just like becoming a marathon runner starts with getting up and going for a walk we need to be realistic about where we are.

Space

Find a comfortable, quiet space. Using the same space each time can be helpful.

Pause

Take a few minutes to slow down and breathe, our lives are often so busy that it takes a minute or two to settle our minds and our hearts.

It may help to pray short prayers whilst inhaling and exhaling.

Something as simple as 'I'm here for you' or 'Come Holy Spirit' or simply just repeating the name 'Jesus' can help us focus and let go of distractions.

Listen

It is important that as we pray we listen and respond. God will often guide our prayers, so pay attention to an inner sense of where you are being led and then follow.

If you're using a prayer guide it's fine to only get part way through. You can always come back to it if you want – it's just a guide.

Posture

It can be helpful to mirror the posture of your heart in your body.

1. Sitting – A posture of seeking & fellowship
2. Standing – Respect, readiness
3. Kneeling – Acknowledgment of God's superiority and our total dependence on him
4. Bowing – A sign of respect and honour in the face of majesty
5. Lying Prostrate – Humility, awe, overwhelmed by a sense of God's glory
6. Hands Raised – Praise, adoration, offering

Focus

If you have a limited time it may be good to set a timer so you don't spend the whole time wondering how long you have left.

Return

Don't worry if you get distracted. As a wise person once said 40 distractions are 40 opportunities to return to Jesus.

Be yourself

CFC

Christian Fellowship Church
thisiscfc.com