

ALTARS

NAME:

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

We are staying on the theme of Altars, but changing the emphasis in line with what we feel the Spirit is doing in this time.

Let the Spirit guide you as He reveals the areas of our lives that he wants to move into, and the parts of our land that need breakthrough.

Our intention this year, not just in this booklet or this week of prayer and fasting, is to set a course in our hearts to persistently cry out for God to move in fresh and new ways and for His Kingdom to come in us, in our city, in our nation and the nations.

We want to be intentional as we cry out to God to move in specific ways for the sake of His Kingdom, His power and His glory.

ALTARS

Altars hold a significant place in the biblical narrative mentioned nearly 400 times across the old and new testaments. The key uses portray them as places of sacrifice and worship, covenants, and divine communication. This is where mankind extended their devotion towards God, sought forgiveness, and established pacts embodying divine-human relationships.

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. As God's story unfolds and we find our time and place within it, we want our lives to count. To be a people who lay our lives down as living sacrifices for a God who is worthy.

Altars at their very essence are a recognition that He alone is God, He alone is worthy, He alone is Holy, Holy, Holy and we need him. Altars are places of divine encounter and acknowledge God's presence as the most important thing in our lives. This week we get to bring our hearts, our church, our land and the nations to our God as we cry out for Him to move in these days.

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.

DAY 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.

Tim Keller famously described the heart as an "idol making factory". Anything that is taking or has taken the place of God, that has absorbed our thoughts and imaginations more than God is an idol.

What are the idols in our hearts?

What are we spending our time on?

What is occupying our thoughts, energy, effort?

Is God on the throne of our lives?

Let it be true of us this week and in the year ahead as the Psalmist writes in Psalm 119 v 145 that we cry out to Him "with our whole 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 idols that occupy my heart?

Lord what needs to be taken out of my life, to allow more of you in?

My prayer of consecration for the altar of my heart

May my heart be a place where...

DAY TWO

ALTAR OF OUR CHURCH

Our church family, the part of the body that we are located in really matters. Within it is where much of our formation into Christlikeness happens. We believe in the church because Jesus did, he established it on the rock of his Lordship, He is the cornerstone and the head and it is advancing and nothing can stop it.

We have 6 sites across this country, each one unique and located in different places but with the same express purpose of seeing God's love making an impact through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Take the time to ask the Spirit to lead you in prayer for the sites within our CFC family.

Our site pastors have shared specifics about what we can pray into this week and the year ahead.

PRAYER

What do you feel the Lord is saying about our sites?

Is the Spirit leading you in a specific direction or putting something on your heart to continue to pray into?

ANTRIM

Please pray for our children and young people in Antrim. We have a growing number of children engaging in our children's ministry and we would love you to pray for our children, our children's volunteers and leaders. This is such an important ministry within our church as more families are joining our church.

We would also ask you to pray for our youth ministry. This is also a growing ministry and we have launched a Friday night senior youth group for young people in our church and their friends. Please pray for the young people and all our youth volunteers, and for those leading this ministry.

With a growing congregation we want to see more people finding a place within our Connect Groups. Please pray for the Connect Hosts who are currently leading groups and also for new leaders to rise up and lead in this key area of pastoral care and discipleship.

EAST BELFAST

In recent months we have had a huge influx of young people from our community into church youth on Friday nights. Our kids rooms have also experienced huge growth. Many have come to faith and need disciplined while many still need Jesus to be revealed to them.

Please pray for the teams for wisdom and grace as they seek to walk alongside the next generation and steward this moment well, and for a rising up of more people from our church community who will join this adventure.

HOLYWOOD

In Hollywood we find ourselves placed in a town in which there are good relationships between the local churches. There are some spaces where that unity is expressed, but there is still room for it to grow further.

Please pray for an increased sense of unity between the churches in Hollywood as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the town and be his hands, feet and eyes to those who don't yet know him.

INNER EAST BELFAST

Recently, we have sensed a growing call to pray for transformation in inner East Belfast. There is a deep need for hearts to surrender to God, breaking cycles of addiction, fear, and division. Many in our community live under oppression or struggle with loneliness and anxiety, needing God's peace and connection.

We long to see broken relationships and families restored, hope replacing despair, and lives renewed. Pray for a spiritual awakening, for Jesus to be known to many, and for God's kingdom to be revealed.

SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNITY

Pray for growth and revival within the deaf community, including families of young children.

Lift up BSL Tots (0-4) and SLC Kids (Sunday School) in prayer, asking for their impact to grow.

Pray for the establishment of a Bible translation project in Northern Ireland using British Sign Language (BSL).

Ask for unity across East CFC, fostering an inclusive environment for everyone.

Pray for interpreters to have wisdom and clarity as they deliver sermons at CFC East on Sundays.

Intercede for the lost in the deaf community, where 98% remain unreached in Northern Ireland alone.

Seek God's guidance and wisdom for effective outreach to connect with and reach the deaf community.

SOUTH BELFAST

Pray for renewal and revival across South Belfast.

Thanksgiving for our kingdom partnership with the Belfast YMCA. Pray for the continued flourishing and growth of our community hub and kids and youth work as we partner for His glory.

Pray for our Kids and Youth work both on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings, that our teams would be blessed and each young person would have a revelation of who God is and who they are in Him.

Pray for our Parents and Toddlers group meeting on Thursday mornings asking for it's growth and impact among families in our local community.

Pray for God to grant us favour in our local neighbourhood and region, for connections to form and for bridges to be built, for strategy for effective outreach.

Ask God to build His church, for many to come to faith and be disciplined, for God to add to our number, and for His likeness to be formed in us.

DAY THREE

ALTAR OF OUR MISSION

The Kingdom of God is among you....

The endemic issues faced across our city and province include broken relationships, addictions, poverty, poor parenting, housing, crime, paramilitary extortions, drugs, suicide, education.

Voluntary sector organisations provide many of the key support structures for individuals and families. Many of the agencies we support struggle to compete for funding and find themselves stretched as demand grows.

Here are just some of the agencies we support through our Compassion fund:

Life House

Starling Collective

East Belfast Mission

Home Plus

The Larder Social Supermarket

South Belfast Food Bank

The Turnaround Project

Hollywood Family Trust

Antrim Community Hub

Antrim Food Bank

Antrim Women's Aid

Oasis

Macs Supporting Young People
in Care

Flourish

Ballysillan Youth for Christ

Townsend Outreach Centre

Surestart

Barnardos

Simon Community

Mindwise

Belfast Women's Aid

Made for More

British Red Cross

Embrace

Migrant Help

Why not consider the list and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to one or two of the groups, look them up online and see exactly what they do and then pray blessing on the work they undertake, their staff and volunteers and the people they serve.

DAY FOUR

ALTAR OF OUR ISLAND

Prayers for churches in Ireland: Tobar family of churches

What is Tobar? Tobar means deep well in Irish and is a family network of churches across Ireland which we are a part of. Tobar connects, resources, provides support and unites Kingdom minds as we seek His rule and reign across our land. Some of the churches in the family have shared how we can pray for them, this is a small representation of over 20 churches which are now part of Tobar.

CORNERSTONE CHURCH, DERRY, CO LONDONDERRY

Pray for key partnerships in the city as the church has an Isaiah 61 heart for compassion, and to wash the feet of the city.

Pray for their Kings table initiative which feeds and lavishes love on those who have not always experienced this in their lives.

Pray for their work with those with addiction and housing issues in the city.

CORNERSTONE SLIEVE BLOOM, TULLAMORE, CO. OFFALLY

Pray for the youth and children's ministry as it grows.

Pray for wisdom to manage the growth that is happening in the church and that people can be faithfully disciplined.

Pray for connections and partnerships within the broader church in Ireland.

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, BALLYNAHINCH, CO DOWN

Pray for the new café church venture that was birthed out of Alpha, foodbank and life skills courses.

Pray for wisdom to navigate buildings and facilities in growing church.

Pray for the launch of inter-church Alpha in January and the Life skills courses in the new year as well.

GRACE CHURCH, RICHHILL, CO ARMAGH

Pray for building space as the church grows and reaches the town.

Pray for the high school age kids in the area.

Pray for the new prayer rhythms that are being established.

HARBOUR CHURCH, BALLINA, CO. MAYO

Pray for the group who are meeting as this church begins, that they will be formed into the ways of Jesus together.

Pray that their building space will be open and used every day for people to find community and a place to pray. Pray for finance to allow this to happen.

Pray for an anointed, spirit filled worship leader to join as they pioneer and establish a worshipping voice in the area.

Pray for the breaking of the destructive curse of death in the region, a lot of premature death has been the story for many families. Pray instead for the life of the Kingdom and the heritage of the region to spring again, this is a place where St Patrick baptised many and monastic community was once strong here.

DAY FIVE

ALTAR OF THE NATIONS

In fulfilling CFC's aim to impact the nations, our overseas mission goal is to serve our partnerships, resourcing them with knowledge, skills and finances that will equip, educate and empower pastors, workers, children and young people increasing their knowledge, skills and understanding spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

We work with three key partnerships and support Julia McConnell from our Antrim congregation who lives and works in Thailand:

INDIA - UNITED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF INDIA

Financial

Prayer

Pastors training

Children's weeks

Youth weeks

ETHNOS/CHRIST TO THAILAND MISSION

Financial

Prayer

Ministry Bible School

Children's weeks

EARTH MISSION ASIA

Financial

Prayer

Member Care

Training for medics and tech students

HR Support

JULIA MCCONNELL

Financial

Prayer and pastoral

Ministry to the bar workers

Prison Ministry

Working in children's home

Why not take a moment to review the list, ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, and look up the organizations online or on our website? Learn about what they do, and then pray blessings over their work, staff, volunteers, and the people they serve.

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