

ALTARS

Title: ALTARS

Date: January 7, 2024

Leader's Notes:

1. Start and end the life group on time.
2. Facilitate discussions with your group and **give all attendees opportunities to share their thoughts**. Encourage participation.

Life Group Discussion Proper

WORSHIP: (15 mins)

Option 1: In person - Home gatherings

Suggestions: Assign someone to lead worship or play two praise & worship songs from You Tube.

Option 2: In person gatherings at a public place (at the park, school campus or café) or Online home gathering (via Zoom or other online meeting platform)

Suggestions: Ask three to four people to share testimonies of answered prayers or ask the question: Ask the group, "What are you thankful to God about this past week?"

Main Text: Genesis 8:20-22, Genesis 9:1-3, Genesis 9: 8-17

Intro:

Q: What is an Altar?

An altar is any construction of various designs, for the placing of gifts or sacrifices in a ritual to deity. (Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*). In the Hebrew Bible, altars, were typically made of earth unfinished, rough stone. Altars, has so many significant importance in the Bible as well as in our lives today. The first mention of the word "altar" in the Bible is found in Genesis 8:20, which Noah built after leaving the Ark, along with the seven other people with him and all the animals.

WELCOME:(15 mins): IWC - Introduce yourself. Welcome guests/first-time visitors. Cheerfully call someone to do the same.

Ice-breaker: Ask the group and give time for participation.

- > *Is there anyone who would like to share a verse you have memorized this past week?*
- > *Is there anyone who would like to share something you received from your daily devotions this past week?*

WORD (30–45 mins)

1. Atonement –

What is Atonement? - To "atone" means to **cover**. It is the process of causing a transgression to be forgiven or pardoned. At the cross Jesus covered our sins with His blood – which means He made atonement for us. He covered us with His precious blood. We're secured! Through the burnt offering of clean animals offered by Noah, the whole human race and all living creatures, were given a second chance of life on earth. This practice was later formalized in the Mosaic law. **Read Leviticus 1:3-4, 9 NLT**

Today, atonement or forgiveness of our sins can only be experienced through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Jesus was the sinless and pure sacrifice offered by God on the altar of a wooden cross to pay for our sins. **Read Romans 3:24-26 NLT**

Discussion Questions:

- Q:** How important is the fact that Jesus Christ has made atonement for our sins?
- Q:** How will you respond to God knowing our sins have been atoned for or forgiven?

Continuation:

2. Covenant

Q: What do you mean by "Covenant?"

A covenant is a relationship between two partners who make binding promises to each other and work together to reach a common goal. They're often accompanied by oaths, signs, and ceremonies. Furthermore, a covenant is an agreement that God makes with us - His creation. In the case after The Flood, He did it with humans and all living beings. It was a serious and binding relationship with God.

Two things about the covenant God made with us:

a. God promised not to destroy the earth and all living beings by a flood again. Assuring that the seasonal cycle will continue while the earth remains. (Read Genesis 8:20-22)

Read Genesis 9:8-11, "8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9 "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." (the Noahic Covenant)

Discussion Questions:

Q: What do you think The Flood symbolized? Do you think it's important for The Flood to have occurred? Why or why not?

Q: What do you think convinced God not to flood the earth again and eventually established a covenant with Noah?

b. God commanded Noah to replenish the earth

Read Genesis 9:1-3, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. 2 The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. 3 Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything..."

Discussion Questions:

Q: How important is doing a "start-over" in life? Do you think it's easy to have a fresh start?

Conclusion: In the OT, altars served as locations where individuals could draw near to God, offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins and to establish a covenant relationship with Him.

Today, we can continue to seek God in repentance and establish a covenant with Him through Christ's triumphant sacrifice on the cross. Our repentance and submission to God are truly meaningful when offered at the altar He chose, the cross of Jesus Christ.

Just as God remained faithful to His covenant with Noah and all living creatures up to this day, He will steadfastly honor those who approach Him in repentance and surrender through Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed on the wooden cross at Calvary—an altar of divine significance.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST TAKE-AWAY FROM THE LESSON?

Tell your group to partner with someone and ask this question to their partner.

WORK: The Challenge & Closing prayer (15 mins.)

1. Memorize a verse from your devotions this week and be prepared to share it on our next gathering.
2. Please take time in your smaller groups to pray for one another. If there are specific needs, take time to lift them up to God in prayer as well. Ask each other, "**what can I pray for you?**"

Leader's Notes:

1. Please remind your group the schedule for the next gathering.
2. Please ask your group to invite people for the next gathering.
3. Please encourage the group to remember to pray for one another during the week.