

The Power of the Altar

Subtitle: Giving Kids the Chance to Drill Down Deep with God

Overview: When you drill down deeper and ask people to be more specific about where and how they were called by God, or when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, or where they really connected to God, often there is one common answer... “when I was at the altar.”

Objective: To help teachers and leaders recognize the power an altar holds and that an altar can happen wherever there is a humbled heart.

Icon Definitions:



Advance to a new slide in the presentation.



Allow Discussion - Many of these can be done using a “Pair Share” where you encourage participants to talk with a neighbor to share their insights. After a set period of time (often about 45 to 90 seconds depending on the number of people and the type of question), the facilitator can use reflective listening to capture responses.

Survey: We value your feedback! Please take this short survey and share your thoughts with us as we continue to improve on these trainings.

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When you ask Christian teens and adults when they were called into the ministry, or when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, or when they were impacted by God the most, often their answer is, “at kids camp.” This lecture could be about kids camp. But that’s not the correct topic.

When you drill down deeper and ask people to be more specific about where and how they were called by God, or when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, or where they really connected to God, often there is one common answer... “when I was at the altar.”

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Giving Kids the Chance to Drill Down Deep with God

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The altar is a place of few distractions:

- The altar is a time and place when kids shut their eyes, bow their heads, and shut out everything but God. In a classroom, this can occur by having the kids turn around and kneel in their chairs or simply having them bow their heads. In a kids church, it can be done by calling the kids forward to the altar area, by having them turn and kneel in their chairs, or even by having them find a quiet spot in the room to pray. It is a time when kids say to God, “It’s just me and you.”

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The altar is a place where time with God is preeminent:

- The altar is a time and place where the message of the day has a chance to be acted upon. Kids get a chance to tell God what they heard, what they learned from it, and how they will live from this day forward.
- It is a time and place where they can pour out their deepest hurts to the One who cares. It is a time and place where the “ears of their spirit” suddenly are wide open. Every child has an equal chance to be impacted by God when time is given for them to pause and wait on God to speak.

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The altar is a place of filling:

- Like a car at a filling station, the altar is the time when the nozzle to our spirits is the most “wide open” to God speaking to us. Usually most Christian leaders will agree that God speaks to them when they are in an altar place. As well, one usually leaves the altar experience feeling filled with God’s peace and presence. When kids are asked how they know God is real, one of their top answers is, “I have felt Him.” This happens at the altar.

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KIDS must have time in the presence of God.

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The spirit of a child pauses and receives from God at the altar.

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The Filling of the Altar

The altar is the secret place where God places His Spirit upon the lives of kids.

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It's a Gas Station

- As mentioned before, altar time is often like filling your car up with gas. The empty feeling is replaced with a fullness of God's Spirit, a fresh plan for life, and a confidence to move forward in God.

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It's a Power Source

- It is around the altar where the vast majority of kids are filled with the Holy Spirit. It doesn't just happen at camp. Kids are filled with the Spirit in Sunday School rooms, mid-week classrooms, and in kids churches all the time. It happens in churches that give kids time to spend at the altar seeking God and this great gift. As well, the altar is where daily lives of Christians are sourced with the power and strength of God.

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It's a Place of Prayer

- As you can see, the altar is much like a person's prayer closet. In fact, the altar is the "beginner's prayer closet." When kids first ask Christ to be their Savior, it is "with heads bowed and eyes closed." In other words, right there in their seats an altar experience is formed. Usually this experience is carried deeper by asking kids to come forward and kneel and talk to God. This is how the altar experience is born.
- When kids are taught to come to the altar in every classroom, at the end of every children's church, the message of the day is solidified in their hearts. The kids are given a chance to respond to what God had been saying during that classroom or service. **The altar at kids camp is only unique because we make time for it! Make time for it in your classrooms and services! Give time for the Spirit of God to go deep!**

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It's a Place of Worship

- The altar is the best place for deep and meaningful worship. When kids come forward and allow themselves time to be alone with God and worship Him, that is when they connect the most deeply with God. Each of us can picture kids around the altar singing songs to God with tears rolling down their faces as they experience the presence of God through worshipping Him at the altar.

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It's a Place of Peace

- There is something about the altar experience that causes peace. When kids leave the altar, they feel that peace, knowing that God is there and is in control. They know that they have heard from Him and that He will guide them.

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It's a Place of Instruction

- Often leaders will say it was at the altar that God spoke to them and gave them instructions for the rest of their lives. God is always speaking, but it's at the altar where kids listen more clearly and hear His voice. Once they learn to hear His voice, they are more apt to hear Him speak throughout their daily lives.

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It's a Place of Healing

- Many of the times when God miraculously heals us is when we gather at the altar for prayer. Give kids this opportunity, especially when physical or spiritual healing is needed.

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It's a Place of the Holy Spirit

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When kids hear from the Holy Spirit, their spiritual depth will grow exponentially.

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Waiting on God produces a relationship with Him.

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The Place of the Altar

The best place for the altar is where you are right now.

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An Altar Can Be Anywhere

- The altar can be kneeling at a chair in a classroom, gathering around the front of a kids church, or a place to be alone with God at home. It is a place where we bow our heads, kneel, or both. It is a physical act with our bodies to signify that we are now alone with God. Teaching kids to experience the altar at church will teach them to find their own altar place at home.

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An Altar Can Be Any Time

- In church settings, altar time is normally at the end of the service. But when we run out of time, the altar experience gets rushed or even missed. Instead of waiting until the end, put your altar time two-thirds of the way through your class time. That way, if it goes long, you have time. If the altar time finishes with time left, have the kids gather back together and finish the session with additional teaching, games, songs, etc.
- The altar time can even be the entire service. If teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, one week could be the teaching and the next week the entire class can be at the altar seeking it. At home, the altar can happen any time. Teach the kids to find a spot to stop, bow, kneel, and spend time before God.

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An Altar Can Be for Any Reason

- Remember, the altar is for strength, wisdom, peace, healing, repentance, power, etc. Make it your plan to use the altar every single week. Some days it may be for a short time and other days an extended time. Let the Holy Spirit lead. Set aside time so that the altar period can be extended if the Holy Spirit is moving. Don't worry if the lesson time is shortened—this IS the lesson.

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Kids need to seek God's direction, seek His power, and seek Him.

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Conclusion

- If our kids are going to truly become believers who will live for God the rest of their lives, they will need to learn the power of the altar. They will need to learn to stop, pause, kneel, seek God, seek His direction, His strength, and His instruction, and then stand and live for Him.
- Too many classrooms are powerless because they are altar-less. Most standard classrooms show kids where to truly find strength but fail to give them time to gather that strength. The habits formed and modeled at church—teaching kids to seek God at the altar—will be replicated throughout their lives at home as they learn to seek Him.
- **The altar at kids camp is only unique because we make time for it! Make time for it in your classrooms and services! Give time for the Spirit of God to go deep!**