

# LITTLE ALTARS FOR FEB. – “MARRIED TO THE SACRIFICE”

As we take our monthly steps together in building our little altars, we stand together as the Lord's one corporate Bride, holding each other in His love and care. The Lord has impressed on several of our hearts the importance of starting from the right place, (which is from our union with Christ). In Revelation the church is called “The Lamb's wife”. Her clearest defining attribute is that she (the church) is married to the Lamb (*Rev. 21:9*). Another way of putting that could be to say that she is “married to The Sacrifice”. That can mean a lot to someone who is on a journey of building little altars! If we believe that WE must be the sacrifice, then all the pressure and focus is on us acting and reacting sacrificially. Good luck with that! We will turn our attention upon ourselves and begin trying to modify our behavior. This is only an exercise in frustration! We must understand with our hearts that we are not the Sacrifice, but we are married to Him! When we see that only The Sacrifice Himself can fulfill any altar, our burden becomes light because we are yoked to Him Who is meek and lowly and able to respond in love in all these little altar situations.

Revelation 14:4 tells us that there are those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These have chosen to be His in the manner in which they walk, and have heightened their sensitivity to the movements of His Life within them. Their focus is on “whithersoever He goeth” and not “what should I do in this crisis”. Their eyes see the Lamb and their hearts are aware of His motivations and movements. Their sensitivity has turned from the frustrating issue or person to the Lamb they love. This becomes key for any altar builder. If we are motivated by the need, pressure, guilt, the law, fear, or anything other than love for Jesus FIRST, we will find ourselves unable to bring forth the attitudes necessary to truly release Christ into that situation. As we “abide as a bride” in Christ, we find ascendancy above the altar issues. Our hearts become filled with Him Whom we love, and His love begins to replace ours. We become prepared to “go back down” into the situation filled with His attitudes and self-giving love.

We can see this principle at work in the book of Esther. Before Esther was able to embrace her altar situation and say “If I perish I perish”, she had to spend 12 months in preparation and purification soaking in the nature of the Lamb (*Esther 2:12*). Her first 6 months were spent saturating in oils of myrrh. Myrrh is an ointment that many associate with Jesus' death. Myrrh has its roots in the Hebrew word Mara, which means bitter. There is bitterness associated with the Cross of Christ, but life comes out from the bitterness of His Cross, whereas a defiling root of bitterness can come forth in us when we are put in extremity and persecution. Myrrh was a vital part of death and burial thousands of years ago. Everybody, from the Jews to the Egyptians, used myrrh in preparing the body for burial. We need to be anointed with the Spirit of Christ's death so we can become vessels that bear His dying for as long as it takes without becoming bitter and resentful in our flesh. Myrrh also symbolizes suffering, trials, tribulations, and afflictions. The church of Smyrna is known as the “Suffering Church”. This makes sense when one realizes that the name “Smyrna” comes from myrrh. Esther's final 6 months were spent soaking in oils of sweet perfume. I believe this could represent a believer being saturated in the sweet savor of Christ's attitudes. These perfumes were composed from crushed flowers that died to release their essence. Rather than harboring bitter unforgiveness for being crushed, these flowers become even sweeter through their tribulation. Only Jesus is this way. This Jesus is in us and His life will become sweeter and more fragrant as we continue to keep our heart and focus on Him through our little altar situations. Esther shows us that it is never a waste to take the time needed to soak in Christ so that we become “oil rich” in His essence! In Matthew 25:4 we find five wise virgins who chose to keep their lamps full of oil so that they would be properly prepared for the bridegroom. We must be wise in this way, and keep our hearts saturated and filled with the Spirit of JESUS, the only acceptable Sacrifice.

We are the Lamb's wife FIRST... not “altar builders”. We must work on that relationship before we start building altars with everyone else. May our sensitivity turn from the frustrating issue to the Lamb we love.