

29. As Incense Together

On the way into the knowledge of God, the Altar of Incense served us as that which made our lives uncomfortable in the midst of seeking God. **God's purpose was that we would let go of** our self-identities in attachment to the things of this world and run into knowing Christ Jesus as our only identity.

Even though togetherness was an important part of this season, still, these coals of fire were primarily a personal work in each of our lives.

Having turned around, now, inside God-for-us, **nothing is “for us”** anymore. All of God as part of us is all we need.

The Altar of Incense. The Altar of Incense, then, as we enter together back into our local Church, becomes a travail as believers together, with our Father, for the sake of others.

Here is the Altar of Incense.

God always leads us in the triumphal procession inside of Christ, with the aroma of His knowledge being made visible through us in every place. For of Christ we are a fragrance to God inside those being saved, and inside those still perishing; to one, indeed, an aroma out from death into death [always the one death of Christ, yet bringing an end to false self-identity], to the other an aroma out from life into life (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Our Pattern. Then here is our pattern. – Out from Whom the whole body, being joined together and being held together through every joint of its supply or provision, according to the *energeia* inside the sharing from every part, causes growth of the body into the construction of itself inside of love (Ephesians 4:16).

“The whole body” means Father made visible, for Father must have the gathering together of Christians in committed life together in order to enter into His creation.

Here you have a group of Christians together in a room. What makes them the Body of God, Father seen and known through them?

Each Individual Believer. The terms “joint” and “part,” though different words, are Paul’s metaphor for each individual believer in the room. Each believer, then, is defined as “supply or provision.”

As a baby grows in the womb, something is causing all its parts to increase and to combine together.

Paul is saying that the something doing this wondrous building of life is coming out from each individual person. Here is Paul’s definition of that “something.” – According to the *energeia* inside the sharing from every part. The details of *Energeia* (God-Life) inside of fellowship as coming out from each distinct person.

God-Fire Coming Through. And so we see the direct connection, that our function together as the Aroma of Christ comes directly out from the *Energeia* of God, the Pillar of Fire that is the Holiest. And this God-Fire comes into the meaning of the Altar of Incense as it passes freely through each individual believer.

There are two more things we must add to this picture before we can talk about being incense together, the meaning of this Community of Christ and their fellowship together.

The key ingredient that makes this gathering different from church as we have known it is their commitment together, to walk together as essential parts of one another’s lives.

Christ Community. Christ Community, however, can take on many different forms, so let's set out a simple and limited level of Church.

Let's say there is no common property, but each family lives in their own separate homes and gather together, either in one home that has space or in a rented hall. Each one also works in their own various jobs.

This group can plan two or three meals together in a week, on Saturday and Sunday. They **“work” together** on Saturdays and worship together on Sundays. Work can include typical work projects or even recreation like sailing together. Worship together can include most of the Sunday.

The Essential Glue. Even though they do not live on the same property, they intermingle **together freely through the week and turn to one another for joy and for need**, as in “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.”

The essential glue is the commitment each one makes to Christ Jesus in and as each one of this particular gathering.

Seventy-five people is the ideal upper number for each gathering; if the numbers are about to pass one hundred, a new group should form. God seen and known does not come through “mass production” but through **“one with one” and personal meaning**.

Inside of Fellowship Together. The Altar of Incense, believers as incense together, inside the ongoing experience of this local gathering, then, is found primarily inside of three arenas of fellowship.

The most obvious is fellowship in battle together, and second is fellowship in worship. We can also see a measure of **“as incense together” inside the fellowship of work**.

For the purposes of this lesson, let's focus mostly on the fellowship of worship. At the same time, we are not considering any ministry out, but rather, as Paul said, that which causes growth of the body into the construction of itself inside of love.

God NEEDS a Body! You see, "ministry out" is not us, but Father through us. There is no ministry of running around telling people about God. That's all a sideshow for people who have no care for Father's Desire.

We have no ministry out, no presentation of ourselves. My God, has there not been enough Christian ineffectiveness over 2000 years to be quit of that charade?

What this world NEEDS is God seen and known. And what God NEEDS for that to be is a BODY! And God's Body happens only out from one thing – the sharing of every part. It is that sharing that joins and binds together.

Giving Your Little Bit. When you come together, each one has a psalm, or a teaching, or a revelation, or a prayer in tongues, or an interpretation. Let all be done for the building up of the house of God (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Paul's list here is not exclusive, that is, limited to these five things. Rather, the things mentioned are simply representative of whatever gifts each believer is comfortable in as their portion of "sharing" inside of worship.

When I shared at the Blueberry Community, the light of joy on many faces to hear Christ through me and the expressions of "Thank you Lord," were an immense contribution to my strength in giving my little bit.

Discovering Yourself. A genuine smile of kindheartedness and joyous receiving is a mighty SHARING of God-Fire through you.

But if smiling in a service is not your gift, that is also Christ as you. Yet, I am convinced that you will be astonished to discover parts of yourself you never knew existed inside this expression of committed Church out from the Holiest.

You were designed and formed specifically for this gathering of a local Church, and you cannot know who or what you are apart from your commitment to it. God always has differing seasons of life for each one; nonetheless, this commitment to Jesus as life together is the same from one season or gathering to the next.

The FIRE Passing Through. A spark plug is a perfect example. What a useless thing it is sitting by itself on a shelf. Studying it cannot tell you anything about what it is or what its parts are for. No part of it makes any sense. But you put that spark plug into its place in the engine and wham, it comes alive, and every part of it has incredible meaning and purpose.

Only inside of committed Christ Community do you know what you are and what your parts are for.

And what makes the spark plug so important? It is the FIRE passing through it that is vital to the entire car.

The Aroma of Christ. Down to the finest details of the God-Energeia coming through the sharing of each precious person inside of committed fellowship together.

And what comes through this sharing, then, is the Aroma of Christ in every place, Jesus Himself walking this earth.

The critical thing for God, then, is our “being joined together and being held together,” for when that bond is happening, God can step through us into His creation. I cannot express to you the immense wealth of God waiting for you inside this gathering together as Church out from the Holiest. You have never known it; it is life forevermore.

Immense Wealth. Down to the finest details of God-Energeia coming through as each part shares inside the fellowship of worship.

I just wrote these words in *The Jesus Secret II*, Ephesians.

“God's Energeia inside of me is fully sufficient and more than plentiful. God's life force operating through me is in copious, exuberant, and overflowing supply. God works in and for me in all rich, teeming, profuse and bountiful goodness in all I need, beyond what I could ask or even imagine. God is all exuberance and overflow through me for others. God is all riches, affluence, and wealth, beyond all, for me, for my sake. I cannot contain His overflowing abundance for all” (describing Ephesians 3:20).

Comprehend Together. Paul is very clear, however, where this immense flow of God through us happens, and that is inside the gathering together. That you might comprehend together with other believers in Jesus, what is the great extent of God through you together (Ephesians 3:18 – paraphrased).

I testify to you; I contend with you. We do NOT know!

Yet here is the Altar of Incense at its deepest level, at the level of firstfruits. Let's look at the Altar of Incense at the level of firstfruits, for this IS the most essential thing for any Christ Community.

One Thing Is Required. As soon as God provides both place and provision, it is my great hope that I will be able to invite you to “come visit” for short or for long, to share with Maureen and I in this commitment together.

As I have written about Blueberry, however, I have seen exactly why God could not have brought me into the community of my heart before now. Church, as God means Church, must be successful when it happens for us. I will not have any other outcome.

But for such a gathering to be successful in all that God means, one thing is required of me, and that one thing is all that I am poured out for you.

In Joy and Service. I must qualify “all that I am,” however, and that is all that I am for real. It does not include pretending to be something I am not. BUT – what I am not, others are. And that’s the point of the coals of incense.

I am a word man, and that is what I can give in the worship time, freely and with all exuberance. I can also give full support in the Spirit to the flow of the anointing. But I do not have the gift of leading others to share freely in fellowship. Others do.

The aroma of Christ through me is to give those who have that gift my full support in joy and service.

My Prayer Walk. You see, I am not able to give freely at the level of Father beneath, carrying all, until all my life-story is brought into the light and filled with Christ Jesus and with thanksgiving. Yet that is happening for me at the levels of Ephesians 3:20.

When I shared about my prayer walk at Blueberry, finding the map of it and placing myself there in my mind’s eye, God restored something to me. In fact, more than restored, God brought that something back into me brand new.

And that is my prayer walk, not in form, necessarily, but for you and for our gathering together.

For You, For Your Sake. I walk with Father now for one purpose, and that is for the LIFE of each precious person in that gathering together that is God's local Church for Maureen and me. That one purpose also reaches out to include each individual person who opens my letters to read them, that numbers just over fifty people each time.

Yet it is those in the Zoom meetings, whose faces I now know in the joy of worship together, for whom I will walk with Father the most. That is as God intends, for He is most serious about Church.

Father and I together will set forth our souls for you, for your sake, as the Altar of Incense fulfilled.