

## DEVO 1

### LAYING DOWN OUR AGENDAS AT THE ALTAR

We all have plans for our lives. Maybe it's the career you want someday, the person you hope to date or marry, or the picture-perfect future you imagine. Deep down, we want clarity—we want to know what's next and feel in control.

But following Jesus means something different. It means being willing to lay down our agendas **at the altar** and trust that God's plan is better, even when we don't fully understand it. One of the clearest examples of laying down our agendas at the altar is found in the book of Jonah.

#### 1. Jonah had his own agenda.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah didn't want to. He didn't like the mission, he didn't like the people, and he didn't like the idea that God might show them mercy. So, he ran.

Sometimes we do the same; we run from hard things because they don't fit our plan.

#### 2. God lovingly interrupted Jonah's plan.

The storm, the fish, the confusion—it wasn't punishment. It was mercy. God wasn't trying to ruin Jonah's life; He was trying to realign Jonah's heart. God's purpose hadn't changed, but Jonah's attitude needed to. Sometimes God will interrupt our plans to draw us back to His.

#### 3. The altar is where agendas get surrendered.

Jonah eventually obeyed. He laid down what he wanted and stepped into what God wanted. And God used him in a powerful way. Proverbs 19:21 says, *"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."* Laying down our agendas means saying: "God, I trust You more than I trust my plan."

You might have dreams, timelines, or expectations that feel incredibly important. But God sees the full story. He knows where He's leading you, even when it doesn't make sense yet.

Laying down your agenda means:

- Being open to God changing your plans
- Trusting that He will direct your steps
- Believing His purpose is better than your timeline
- Saying "yes" even when it stretches you

## DEVO 2

### LAYING DOWN OUR DESIRES AT THE ALTAR

Have you ever wanted something so badly it almost hurt? A spot on the team, a certain grade, a relationship to work out, a problem to go away? Hannah, in 1 Samuel 1, understands that feeling.

Hannah had a deep desire; she wanted a child. She prayed for one year after year, and it felt like God was silent. Everyone around her had opinions. Some people made her feel worse. Even the priest didn't understand her at first. But Hannah did something powerful. She took her desire to the altar.

#### **1. Hannah brought her real feelings to God.**

She didn't pretend everything was fine. She cried. She prayed honestly. She told God exactly what she longed for. God wants your real heart.

#### **2. Hannah surrendered the outcome.**

This is the hardest part. Hannah didn't just ask—she released her desire to God. She said, "If You give me a son, I will give him back to You." She put her dream on the altar and trusted God with it.

Sometimes laying down our desires means saying: "God, I want this... but I want You more."

#### **3. God didn't forget her.**

God saw Hannah. God heard Hannah. And in His timing, not hers, He answered. Hannah gave birth to Samuel, who grew up to become a leader and a prophet; someone God used in huge ways.

God may not answer our desires in the exact way or timing we imagine, but He always does what is good, what is right, and what will grow us and bring more people to Him.

There are desires you might be holding tightly—some God has planted in your heart, and some He wants you to trust Him with. Laying your desires at the altar means:

- Bringing the real you to God
- Trusting Him even when it's slow or confusing
- Believing that His plan is better than anything you could create on your own

## DEVO 3

### LAYING DOWN OURSELVES AT THE ALTAR

There are things in our lives that feel so important, so central to who we are, that we can't imagine life without them: our identity, our talents, our reputation, our comfort, or even the things we love most. But following Jesus means being willing to lay ourselves on the altar, and trust God completely.

One of the clearest pictures of this is the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22.

#### **1. Abraham faced the hardest ask of all.**

Isaac wasn't just Abraham's son; he was the miracle child, the promise, the future. And then God asked Abraham to sacrifice him. It didn't make sense. It didn't fit Abraham's expectations. But Abraham trusted God's character more than he trusted his own understanding.

#### **2. Abraham laid his whole self on the altar.**

When Abraham placed Isaac on the altar, it wasn't just about Isaac, it was about Abraham surrendering his heart, his future, his identity as a father, and his deepest love. The altar wasn't about losing something; it was about proving who Abraham belonged to. Laying down ourselves means saying, "God, everything I am is Yours."

#### **3. God provided what Abraham could not see.**

Right when Abraham raised the knife, God stopped him and provided a ram. God didn't want Isaac's life—He wanted Abraham's heart. And Abraham discovered something powerful:

When we lay ourselves on the altar, God meets us with His provision, His purpose, and His presence.

There are parts of who you are—your dreams, your identity, your need for approval, your comfort zones—that God may be asking you to surrender.

Laying yourself at the altar means:

- Trusting God more than you trust your own understanding
- Giving Him access to every part of your life
- Believing He is good even when obedience feels costly

God never wastes a surrendered life. He uses it, blesses it, transforms it.

## CHURCH TIME QUESTIONS

### SESSION 1: AT THE ALTAR WE SACRIFICE

1. What is one take away from the first session?
2. What do you need to sacrifice right now in your life to be “all in” with God?
3. What will this sacrifice cost you?
4. How could this sacrifice bring you closer to Him?

### SESSION 2: AT THE ALTAR WE SUBMIT

1. What does submission mean?
2. Why is it hard to trust God’s authority when we want to do things our own way?
3. What are practical ways that you can submit your life to God?
4. How could this submission to God bring you closer to Him?

### SESSION 3: AT THE ALTAR WE SURRENDER

1. What does surrender look like in your life practically?
2. In what ways do you need to let go of control in your life?
3. How would you describe the difference between surrendering some of your life and surrendering all of it?
4. How could surrendering your life to God bring you closer to Him?
5. Did anyone surrender their life to God tonight and would you like share that with the group?

### SESSION 4: AT THE ALTAR WE SEEK

1. What are some things people your age tends to seek before seeking God?
2. How do you know when you’re truly seeking God — not just checking a box or doing the “Christian thing”?
3. If you could ask God for one thing in this season, what would it be — and how can you seek Him for it?
4. What helps you feel closest to God when you’re trying to seek Him?
5. What are some intentional ways you can seek God as you prepare to leave STS Conference?