

# CORE

## CORE Values - The Cost of Worship

### OPENING PRAYER

Lord, meet us here in the same way that You met David on that threshing floor. Open our hands and our hearts, and show us what it means to worship You with more than what's left over. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### OPENING QUESTION<sup>(OPTIONAL)</sup>

What's something in your life you've had to actually pay for — with time, money, or effort — that ended up meaning far more to you than something you got for free?



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## WORD

### 2 Samuel 24:18-25 (ESV)

And Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, raise an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” 19 So David went up at Gad's word, as the Lord commanded. 20 And when Araunah looked down, he saw the king and his servants coming on toward him. And Araunah went out and paid homage to the king with his face to the ground. 21 And Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be averted from the people.” 22 Then Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. 23 All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the Lord your God accept you.” 24 But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25 And David built there an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.

## MAIN REFLECTION POINTS (REFINED)

David arrives at this altar broken, not triumphant. The census that opens this chapter wasn't a neutral administrative act — commentators note that it reflected a king that was numbering his strength in soldiers rather than resting and relying on the strength of the Lord, and the cost was seventy thousand lives. Scholars who trace the flow of Samuel–Kings often point out that this scene isn't tacked on as an afterthought; it's placed here precisely because Israel's worship life has to be built on honest reckoning with sin, not around it. Worship, in this story, is what a repentant king does with his guilt — not a performance of having it all together.

The exchange with Araunah is the theological centre of the passage. Araunah offers David everything for free — the land, the oxen, the wood — and offers it generously, even nobly. David's answer is the line the whole passage turns on: he will not offer to the Lord what costs him nothing. Older devotional commentary has long read this as a picture of the difference between religious sentiment and true sacrifice — one costs nothing and proves nothing, the other costs something and proves everything.

## MAIN REFLECTION POINTS (cont...)

There's also a longer echo here that reward-minded readers have noticed for centuries: this threshing floor becomes, a generation later, the site of Solomon's Temple. David is building on ground he will never personally get to stand in as a finished house of worship — a pattern of costly, forward-looking sacrifice that later finds its fullest expression in Jesus, who offered not silver but Himself, and did so before we asked.

### Key Reflections:

- Worship that costs nothing reveals nothing. It's easy to worship with leftovers — leftover time, leftover energy, leftover Sunday morning. Cost is what proves the heart is actually in it.
- Someone else's generosity isn't your sacrifice. Araunah's gift was real, but it wasn't David's to give. It's tempting to borrow someone else's costly worship and call it our own.
- The altar is never just for you. What David built became the ground later generations worshipped on. Our worship now builds an environment for people not yet in the room.
- Building costs ongoing investment, not a single moment. An altar is stone on stone, not a feeling. Worship is rhythms and disciplines, not just a moment on a Sunday.
- Worship didn't happen because the plague stopped. The plague stopped because worship happened.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 2 Samuel 24:18–25 together. What stands out to you most on a first read?
2. Araunah offers David everything for free, and David refuses. Why do you think David insists on paying?
3. Where in your own life is it easiest to offer God "leftovers" — time, energy, money, attention — instead of something that actually costs you?
4. Have you ever mistaken someone else's costly faith (a parent's, a friend's, a pastor's) for your own? What would it look like to build your own altar instead of standing on someone else's?
5. "The altar is never just for you." Who is your worship — your obedience, your consistency, your character — quietly building an environment for, even if you'll never see the full result?
6. What's the "fifty shekels" you sense God asking you to actually pay this season — something you've been offering Him for free that He's inviting you to bring at real cost?
7. As a group, how can we build an "altar" together — not just individually — in this season? What would that look like practically for our Lifegroup?

### **Gospel Invitation:**

If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus, today can be your threshing floor moment. Bring to Him your honest self and not a cleaned-up version, and ask Him to be Lord.

If you're carrying guilt or consequences from a past failure, hear this: the altar built in repentance is still the place where mercy lands. Bring that to God today.

### **Missional Challenge:**

1. This week, identify one thing you've been giving God as a "leftover" and move it to first place. Whether that is the first part of your morning, first part of your pay, first part of your attention.
2. Build one small "altar" this week — a consistent, unglamorous act of obedience (prayer, honesty, service) that costs you something and isn't for show.
3. Invite someone, a friend, neighbour, to your Life Group or a Sunday service, remembering that your worship is building an environment for people not yet in the room.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank You that our failures don't disqualify us from Your altar. Teach us to bring You what costs us something, and not what's left over. Build in us a life of worship that becomes the ground where Your mercy and presence move — for us, and for those who come after us. In Jesus' name, Amen.