

## TRAINING

# The Tabernacle: A Pattern for Worship

*Worship. For the modern Christian, that word is often associated with weekend services where the congregation sings a few songs and contributes to the offering. However, true biblical worship is so much more than that; worship involves our entire relationship with God: our words, our attitudes, and our actions.*

In Romans 12:1 we are urged “to offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is [our] true and proper worship. Worship is a lifestyle that God wants us to live each and every day – a recognition of who God is and His place in our life.

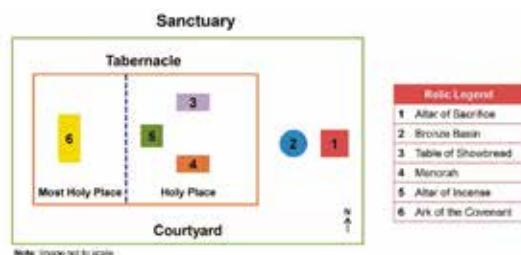
So how do we live out a life of worship that is holy and pleasing to God? One way is to look at God’s instructions for worship, given to the Israelites after the Exodus. In Exodus 25:8-9, God instructed Moses to “...have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishing exactly like the pattern I will show you.”

The Israelites were to build a Tabernacle, a dwelling place where God would meet with humanity. The Tabernacle was “...a copy and shadow of what is in Heaven...” (Hebrews 8:5) so that humanity would have a glimpse of what is to come. Pitched in the center of the 12 tribes of Israel, the location of the Tabernacle symbolized God at the center of all things; worshiping God was meant to be central to every aspect of life.

The construct and the manner of worship of the Tabernacle is a pattern for worship, both on earth and in heaven, and holds spiritual significance for us as believers. While the Tabernacle is no longer with us physically, there are many parallels for us as New Testament believers to draw from.

Let’s start by reviewing the floor plan of the Tabernacle, its furniture, and the surrounding area.

### The Floor Plan



The **Tabernacle** (מִשְׁכָּן, *mish-kan*), a tent that could only be accessed by the priests, was divided into two parts:

- The **Holy Place** (הַקֹּדֶשׁ, *ha-go-desh*) (literal translation, “the holy”), and
- The **Most Holy Place** (הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, *go-desh ha-qa-*

*da-shin*) (literal translation, “holy of the holies”)

The **Holy Place** housed three pieces of furniture:

- The **Table of Showbread** (הַשֻּׁלְחָן לֶחֶם פָּנִים, *ha-shul-chan le-chem pa-nim*),
- The **Altar of Incense** (הַקְטֹרֶת, *miz-bach ha-qa-to-reth*), and
- The **Menorah** (מְנוֹרָה, *me-no-rah*).

The **Most Holy Place** housed only the **Ark of the Covenant** (אֲרוֹן הַבְּרִית, *aron ha-e-duth*).

The **Courtyard** (חֲצֵר, *cha-zer*) is the area that surrounded the Tabernacle. And it has two pieces of furniture:

- **The Bronze Basin** (הַכִּיּוֹן נְחוֹשֶׁת, *ha-kiyon ne-cho-sheth*)
- **The Altar of Sacrifice** (מִזְבֵּחַ הַעֹלָה, *miz-bach ha-o-lah*).

The entire area (the Tabernacle plus the Courtyard), was known as the **Sanctuary** (שְׁמִיךְ, *ha-miq-dash*).

### The Courtyard

In the time of Moses, Israelites who wanted to meet with God were required to come to the Sanctuary. There was only one entrance into the Courtyard, located on the eastern “wall.” The Gate was always open and never barred and all who entered did so with the understanding that they were coming to worship God.

What is the significance of having one entrance? It represented that there was only way to God. For worshippers today, our only way to God is through Jesus Christ.

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6)

*“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.”* (John 10:9)

**True worship is understanding who we worship.** Is Jesus absolute Lord of our life? Are there things, or situations, that hold us back from worshipping God in spirit and in truth? Do we simply go through the motions in church on the weekends?

Let’s take time to realign our hearts and put Jesus as the only one worthy of our worship. Honor Him in how we prepare ourselves for worship. Come with hearts of expectation to meet Him in worship.

After the Israelites enter through the single gate, the first piece of furniture they would have seen is the **Altar of Sacrifice**. Just as we would never enter into someone’s home empty-handed, the Israelites came prepared with an offering. The Israelites would always come with a sacrifice in hand and a priest would assist them in doing the necessary preparations



before offering their sacrifice to God.

If the offering was an animal, both the priest and the person who brought the sacrifice would ensure that the animal was without blemish, a “perfect sacrifice.” When deemed suitable, the animal would be slaughtered, its blood poured in the four corners of the altar, and the carcass placed into the fire. In ancient times, the shedding of blood was required for atonement. Without the sacrifice of an animal, there would be no forgiveness of sin for the individual/family/community.

With the arrival, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus has come to be our perfect sacrifice, taking away our sins once and for all (Hebrews 10:11-12). We are no longer required to adhere to the ancient forms of sacrifice to atone for our sins.

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* (Ephesians 2:13)

*“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”* (Hebrews 9:14)

*“...since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.”* (Hebrews 10:19,22)

**True worship stands upon the finished work of Christ.** Entering into the presence of God is only possible because of Jesus’ work on the Cross. We cannot try to flaunt our righteousness neither should we frown upon the lack of it for the Bible tells us our righteousness are like filthy rags (Isaiah 46:6). Yet on the other hand, there are times when we feel unworthy to serve God or be in His presence because we feel a sense of guilt. That mindset is a lie from the enemy. The blood of Christ has atoned for every sin – past, present and future, enabling us to enter freely into the presence of God.

After having atoned for the sin of individuals/community, the next furniture the priest would approach is the **Bronze Basin** to wash his hands and feet with water, a symbol of being cleansed. Made from mirrors, the priests could then see the dirt on themselves and wash thoroughly before they proceeded into the Tabernacle.

In Ephesians 5:26, we are told that Christ has made us holy, cleansing us by the washing of water through the Word.



## TRAINING

The Word is a mirror (James 1:23) and “*judges the thoughts and attitudes of [our] heart[s].*” (Hebrews 4:12).

**True worship is living our lives in pursuit of holiness.** Holiness stands at the center of God’s call on our lives as Christians; we are called to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

However, the pursuit of holiness is far from easy. We pick up “dirt” as we go about our daily lives: filling our minds with entertainment, facing temptations, and inevitably falling into sin. That’s why we must continually come back to a place of repentance. 1 John 1:9 tells us that, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

Just as the Old Testament priests are careful to clean themselves before entering the Tabernacle, we, as God’s royal priesthood, are called to “*make every effort...to be holy*” (Hebrews 12:14) and “*...continue to work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling*” (Philippians 2:12).

While we have been saved (justified) through the Cross, we must allow God to continually work in our lives so that we are transformed to become more like Christ (sanctified). God has given us victory over sin and death through Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57). Sin has no hold on our lives, allowing us to die to our old self and “*offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is [our] true and proper worship.*” (Romans 12:1)

If there are areas of your life where God has been speaking to you to change, tap into the power of the Cross, partner with the Holy Spirit, and be an overcomer today.

### The Tabernacle

As the priests enter into the Holy Place, they will see the Menorah. The lampstand provided the only source of light within the entire Tabernacle, just as Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12). The Menorah also represents the illumination of the Holy Spirit living in us: bringing understanding of the Word and enabling us to live as the light.

No matter what period we live in – whether it’s Moses’ day or today – our world will be filled by the darkness of humanity (sin). Sin’s sole purpose is to destroy individuals, families, communities, and nations and the only way to overcome this darkness is to shine God’s light and point people to God.

The Bible reminds us that, “*[We] are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

**True worship means being the light.** It requires us to live as sons and daughters of the Most High and wield

our authority to push back the darkness of our world.



as well as the provision of sustenance for the priests.

In John 6:35, Jesus tells us that, “*He is the bread of life...*” Only Jesus can satisfy our spirits. However, many of us try to be filled with the things of the world: possessions, achievements, or relationships.

**True worship is seeking God as the sustenance of our lives,** allowing our spirit-man to be satisfied by the Lord and turning away from the temporal things of the world. For too long, too many of us have lived a spiritually-malnourished life. Instead of hungering for God, we feast on instant meals and junk food.

It’s time to get hungry for God. Choose to set aside time for God to dwell in His presence, engage in prayer and meditate on the Word. Feed on the bread of life and allow the Holy Spirit to fill each day of your life.

The next furniture in the room is the **Altar of Incense.** As the priest interceded (in prayer) on behalf of the community, he would offer incense – a sweet and pleasing aroma to God. In Romans 8:34, we are told that Jesus “*...is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us...*” Isn’t it wonderful to know that the Great Intercessor is constantly working on our behalf?



The enemy will do whatever it takes to stop humanity from living the abundant life. That is why intercessory prayer is so crucial.

**True worship is interceding and standing in the gap.** It is carrying God’s heartbeat for the lost, lifting up our prayers and releasing great power from heaven (Revelations 8:3-5). Let’s continue winning the world for Jesus, one prayer at a time.



Finally we come to the last piece of furniture in the Tabernacle.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the **Most Holy Place**, a room separated by thick veils (representing the separation between God and humanity). The act of entering this room could only be done after a period of atonement (at the *Altar of Sacrifice*), cleansing (at the *Bronze Basin*), and intercessory prayer (at the *Altar of Incense*).

In the Most Holy Place, we find the **Ark of the Covenant.** The Ark was considered as the visible

representation of the presence of God. It reflected God’s nature and His attributes of faithfulness, holiness, and protection of those who are His own. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River with the Ark, the waters miraculously stopped (Joshua 3:17) and they were able to cross over on dry ground (Joshua 4:22). The Ark was assurance that God was dwelling among His people.

God always intended to be visible and dwelt among His people. Even with the Fall, God made a way for His people to meet with Him through the Tabernacle. To secure an eternal redemption for all humanity, God sent His only Son, Jesus, to take on our sins. The moment Jesus died on the Cross, God immediately ripped open the temple curtains and Man was able to stand before a Holy God. It was a picture of heaven rushing to embrace humanity.

**True worship is responding passionately to a passionate God.** God has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him. He’s made the first move and invites us to respond passionately.

“*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*” (Jeremiah 29:13)

“*Come near to God and He will come near to you.*” (James 4:8)

### Our Choice Today

God has given us a pattern to engage in true worship. Now, it’s up to us to decide what we will do: continue living in the status quo or choose to pursue a life of holiness – a living sacrifice, pleasing to God.

This year, let’s choose to move forward in our worship to God. Let nothing hold you back from pursuing Him passionately.



**Rev Dominic Yeo** is the General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God (AG), Singapore and the Senior Pastor of Trinity Christian Centre. He is widely recognized as a prophet with a strong apostolic anointing, carrying the heart of God. A mentor and coach to pastors

and leaders in Trinity, his visionary and strategic leadership have been pivotal in bringing Trinity to new levels of growth. Being passionate about building pastors, leaders and churches, he trains and provides consultation to churches around the world, helping them experience transformation and breakthroughs.