

57 INCENSE, THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

Time: 30 Minutes

Golden bowls full of incense... the prayers of the saints – *REVELATION 5:8*

RESOURCES

- ▀ Stick of incense per participant (or, if you prefer, per small group)
- ▀ Optional: a golden "bowl" per participant (example: small aluminum foil pans spray painted gold)
- ▀ Matches

BACKSTORY

The theme of incense threads through the Bible. In Exodus, God tells Moses to place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the testimony in the tabernacle. David, in Psalm 141, prays, "May my prayer be set before you like incense." The kings from the East bring the infant Jesus a gift of incense. And John, in his preview of heaven, sees there the golden bowls full of incense, which Revelation 5:8 says are the prayers of the saints.

PROCEDURES

1. Read the backstory.
2. Distribute golden bowls with sticks of incense and matches.
3. Exercise 1:

Say: *The sons of the first high priest, Aaron, use the wrong incense in the tabernacle to burn false fire before the Lord. Through God's punishment, he establishes his holiness. God says: "I will show myself holy in the sight of all the people. I will be honored." (Leviticus 10:3)*

Say: To begin our prayers, let's recognize the holiness of God with three minutes of silence before him. Choose a way to recognize God's holiness with your body during these three minutes. You may choose to kneel or to stand or to remove your shoes as Moses did so long ago. Choose a meaningful way to spend these three minutes recognizing the holiness of God, the Father.

4. Exercise 2:

Say: The kings from the East bring incense as a gift to Jesus. As a symbol of bringing your prayers to Jesus, light your incense. Then, in small groups, spend the next few minutes praying to Jesus, the Son. Thank him for his incarnation, recognize him as your Lord, and praise him as the Lion and the Lamb in heaven.

5. Exercise 3:

When the time is right, say: In heaven, right now, the Holy Spirit, who hears your prayers, is praying before the throne for you. (Romans 8:26) We will pray next about your needs and the needs of people you love. As you pray, think about the heavenly layer of your prayer being prayed again by the Holy Spirit and in a deeper way.

6. End by reading Revelation 5:6-10.