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Keepers of the Flame
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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Jewish people, who throughout history, against all odds, and often at the greatest personal cost, have carried the testimony of the One True God in the earth. They have been *keepers of the flame*.

And, to Rabbi Dr. Gerald Meister and David Nekrutman, who embody those values; for their courage and commitment to the God of Israel.



AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE

Is God hearing us?

I realize the question is a bit silly. Of course He is hearing us. He is God.

I don't mean, 'Can God hear us?'—God is omniscient and knows our words before they are formed on our lips. I am not questioning God's willingness or ability to hear us. My question has more to do with the sound we're making than the One to whom we're making the sound.

Are we saying or doing anything to evoke a divine response?

Is our worship touching the One we're worshipping?

Are we praying prayers and living lives that *reach His heart and move His hand?*



ARE WE AS A PEOPLE
— THE BODY OF
CHRIST AS A
WHOLE IN THIS
GENERATION—
SEEKING GOD
BUT NOT REALLY
FINDING HIM?

Are there qualifications for God to respond?

Are we as a people—the Body of Christ as a whole in this generation—seeking God but not really finding Him? Is our intercession connecting with the God of the universe or merely broadcasting religious words into an empty void of our own imaginations and dreams?

I know *He* is present . . . *but are we?*

We have been consistently taught of the benevolence and nearness of God. We have been repeatedly made aware of His lovingkindness and readiness to forgive, pardon, heal and help.

You may have sung the familiar song, “We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise.” If you were raised in Christian settings similar to my upbringing, then you have sung this song hundreds, if not thousands of times. It is a wonderful song that encourages us to come before the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.

But as I read the Scripture, I have been impacted by the numerous times that God admonishes us not just to bring a sacrifice, but to bring *an acceptable sacrifice*.

Are we? Are we bringing an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord in this generation?

Instead of bringing whatever we feel like bringing to the Lord, whenever and however we choose, what if there were principles and guidelines set in place that caused our intercession to be more than just words?

In fact, there are many instances in Scripture in which qualifications are given in order for God to respond; principles and guidelines specify the ways in which God desires to be worshipped. But all too often, what God calls acceptable worship, we deem too demanding, too offensive, too undignified and even too impious to tolerate with our rational sensibilities.

Is the sacrifice of praise and worship, prayer and offerings we’re bringing to the Lord really acceptable to God, or simply pleasing and comfortable for us?

I ask this because I am confused. I am very confused about something that seems out of order—something that seems not to make sense.

God has said that if we would call, He would answer. And everywhere, all around the world, there is a tremendous call going up to the Lord. Prayer meetings are happening like never before. Houses of Prayer are springing up in cities across the world. Contemporary worship has become mainstream in most Christian circles. Worship conferences, rallies, prayer gatherings, spiritual mapping, spiritual warfare conferences and reconciliation journeys multiply exponentially around us.

Nonetheless, what these have produced is not a great outpouring from Heaven, but rather an ever-increasing hunger for more of the same. *Why? In the midst of all of this wonderful activity, what is the condition of the people of God?*

George Barna has made some interesting observations regarding the current state of the Church and our ability to really connect with God through acceptable sacrifice:

Barna notes these paradoxes:

- Less than 10% of church members give a tithe (10% of their income).
- A large majority of Christians contend that there is no absolute, moral truth.
- More than half of those attending church on any given weekend do not trust Christ for their eternal salvation.
- Seven out of ten Christians (70%) say they have never experienced God’s presence at a church service.

The comfort of our buildings and material possessions have misled us into believing we’re further down the road in changing our world for Christ than we really are.

Why is this? Why do we hear every day about another “church split,” another moral failure, another divorce, another pastor leaving the

ministry or another Christian brother or sister falling into sin? Why, behind the scenes of the successful American Church, does it seem that



WHY, BEHIND THE
SCENES OF THE
SUCCESSFUL
AMERICAN CHURCH,
DOES IT SEEM THAT
WE ARE POOR,
NAKED AND VERY,
VERY SICK?

lukewarm substitute, God spits out of His mouth.

Let us discover that:

- An acceptable sacrifice to God does exist and we can offer it.
- Prayer can and will be answered by the God who changes us and history.
- Worship will usher in God's presence in such a way that what the early Church experienced of God we will experience—in greater measure!

If you desire to become who God created you to be by living a life of acceptable worship, join me on this journey. Become a *keeper of the flame* and burn with the Presence of the Living God.

we are poor, naked and very, very sick?

I do not pretend to have all the answers. This book does not offer all the answers. But what I am hoping to do is ask some penetrating questions, which will move us off the merry-go-round of fruitless religious activity and point us in the direction of biblical discipleship. In other words, it's time to return to doing the *main thing*—**worshipping Jesus**. Any other



I walked with the rest of the tourists into the huge, cavernous building, our footsteps and muted voices echoing off the enormous stone walls, stone floor and impressive pillars. Light poured in through the stained glass windows, warming the glow of the wooden pews. The building looked very much like one of the impressive cathedrals of Europe; except that this was Australia, and we weren't in a church. We were in the Great Synagogue of Sydney, Australia.

As the guide began to share with our group the history of the Jewish community in Australia, my eyes were drawn to a light, shining in a lamp, hanging in the very center of the altar area. I had seen these before in Synagogues in Israel, and thought it interesting that I would see one here also, in a place so far away from Israel, both geographically and culturally.

During the question and answer time, I asked the guide about the lamp.

"This is the *nair tamid*," he said. "This is the everlasting light that you will find in every synagogue, hanging over the altar area. It is wired directly into the electricity, so that the light never goes out. The light represents the mandate that was given to our people through Moses," he continued, "that the holy fire that has been entrusted to the children of Israel must never go out. It represents the burnt offerings that used to be offered up at the Temple."

As the tour concluded and we meandered around the building, getting a last look at things, I marveled at the *nair tamid*, and deeply considered what it represented. What other people group or culture has customs and traditions that they have kept for 5000 years? What was it about this commissioning regarding the flame that so embed-