

Smudging and Prayer

What is “smudging?”

For many native/indigenous cultures, smudging is a universal way of entering into prayer. Smudging is a ritual way to cleanse a person, place or object of negative energies, spirits or influences. The smudging ceremony involves burning of special, sacred plants and herbal resins, then, either passing an object through the resulting smoke or fanning the smoke around a person or a place. Whatever is being “smudged” is purified.

Should native Christians smudge?

First, this is a matter for each individual person to prayerfully decide for themselves. We must each “work out our own salvation” and there is no condemnation if one decides to smudge and another decided not to.

Here are some thoughts to help you in your decision making process:

As Christians, we do not believe anything except the Blood of Jesus will cleanse a person, place or thing. But there may be a place for the practice of smudging if we look at it from a different perspective.

In Malachi 1:11, it reads, “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name as a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.”

See also Luke 1:10, Hebrews 9:4, Revelation 5:8, Revelation 8:3-4 and Revelation 18:13. Evidently the Lord found the aroma of burning incense pleasing.

When we, as native Christians, burn incense (sage, cedar, sweetgrass, tobacco) we pray and the incense is an offering to the Creator. Our prayers rise to Him as does the smoke. When we smudge ourselves, we are also praying and we are covering ourselves with this aroma that the Lord finds so pleasant. We are offering ourselves to Him; we become the offering. Burning sage and smudging are, to us, physical acts of worship.

Once again, as believers, we know only the blood of Jesus can cleanse us.