

Chapter 9 - Sacrifice Yourself

1. Take a few minutes to reflect on the story.
 - A) This story includes several examples of sacrifice, like Paul's sacrifice of his comfort and well-being to spread the gospel and the Christian's sacrificial gift to take care of his needs while he was in prison. Consider other instances of sacrifice in the story.
 - B) How do the sacrifices mentioned in the story compare with sacrifices in your own life. These may be sacrifices you've made for others or ones they have made for you. How did these sacrifices make you feel?
 - C) In his letter to the Philippians Paul mingles the ideas of sacrifice and joy. (Philippians 2:17 "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.") Think about how these things fit together in your life.

2. There is a big difference between making a sacrifice voluntarily and being trapped into making one. Jot down the differences in your emotional response to the two kinds of sacrifice you've made.

3. Write down a few details of one of the biggest sacrifices you've ever made in your life and how that sacrifice affected your life and the person for whom you made it.

4. Reread the story of the widow's offering. Write down your response to it.

5. Faith plays a big role in our sacrifices. Do you think it's fair to say that the more faith we have, the more we'll be willing to sacrifice? Give an example of a significant sacrifice you make which hinged on what you believe.

6. If you were participating in a poll regarding what you would be willing to die for, what would be the top few items. Be sure to avoid giving "the right answer" and think about what you learn about yourself from this exercise.

7. Consider the idea that sacrifice involves more than giving up tangible things. Including things like time, opportunities to benefit yourself, comfort, sleep, reputation and other things of this immaterial kind, what are the things that would represent the biggest sacrifice for you to make?

8. Consider some of the motivations for sacrifice. Make a note of several and suggest which are legitimate and which are suspect.

9. One of the biggest challenges we face is our tendency to apply a “test of worthiness” when we are faced with an opportunity to sacrifice something for someone. Think about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for you. Read 1 John 3:16. How does Jesus’ sacrifice affect the way we respond to the needs of our Christian brothers and sisters, in particular, and everyone else, in general?
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For Group Leaders:

Encourage your group members to “get practical” in regard to personal sacrifice. It’s easy to talk about this subject without getting involved. Help them to set practical reachable goals. Here are a few simple ideas:

Sacrifice your social comfort by talking to someone at church who is different from you in at least two ways.

Sacrifice your time by spending some of it (the amount will vary with the situation) with a shut-in, a prisoner, someone in hospital, a homeless person, etc.

Sacrifice your personal agenda by foregoing a purchase so you can give the money to someone who needs it (a student, a refugee, a homeless person, a missionary, etc.)

Sacrifice your comfortable routine by inviting someone to share a meal in your home.

Be creative and think of more ideas like these with the group and then each commit to following through on one of them within a reasonable amount of time. Hold each other accountable.

Invite your group members to commit some serious prayer time to discovering what God considers to be the things that He would like them to lay down as a sacrifice for Him. Remember that simply doing a personal inventory and deciding what we can do without may contribute to living simply but it does not qualify as a sacrifice.

Celebrate the sacrifices that others have made for the people in your group by having a time of worship in which you “offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15)