



Week 3: Imagine “Changing Lives Through Sacrifice”

USING THIS SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

- This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups, there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group, you may choose one of the following options:
 - ◆ one section of questions
 - ◆ one or two questions from each section
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- Personal application is key to everyone’s growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, “I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer.” It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to



commit to change with accountability to the group.
Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and
achieve the blessings of success.

INTRODUCTION

All of us are here today because people sacrificed to make a place for us. Whether or not you were looking for it, people were laying a foundation, and laying down their very lives, so that God could do something far greater in our day than we have ever seen before. The local church is God's primary vehicle for restoration, redemption, and meeting the needs of a lost and hurting world. Our obedience to God, and the sacrifice that naturally follows, makes us available to be used by God at any moment.

"Each morning, I meditate upon Jesus, and then I go out looking for Him in disguise." - Mother Teresa

God simply wants your full heart and affection; if He has your heart, your "stuff" won't even be an issue.

A sacrifice on earth is a deposit in eternity.

True sacrifice will require utter dependence on God, trusting that He will provide for whatever it is we need.



[1 John 4:10-11]

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

What motivates us to give?

[Romans 12:1-2]

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true, proper and reasonable act of worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Sacrifice = to give up or surrender something of value for the sake or cause of something greater!

KEY SCRIPTURE

[2 Corinthians 8]

Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. ² They are being



tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

KEY POINTS:

7 PRINCIPLES FOR THE GRACE OF GIVING

1. Joy and extreme generosity are not determined by negative circumstances or a bad economy!

[2 Corinthians 8: 3-5]

³ For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. ⁴ They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. ⁵ They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

2. Sacrificial giving starts with complete surrender to Jesus “God is looking for your heart, not your money!”

When He has your heart, your money won't be an issue!

[2 Corinthians 8:6-7]

⁶ So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. ⁷ Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted



speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and in your love for us —I want you to also excel in this grace of giving

3. Generosity was directly motivated by God-appointed leadership

[2 Corinthians 8:8]

⁸ I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

4. Giving is a test of our love, not a commandment to produce fear and intimidation!

[2 Corinthians 8:9-12]

⁹ You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich. ¹⁰ Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. ¹¹ Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. ¹² Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have.

5. Proportionate Giving is the Biblical Model



[Deuteronomy 16:17]

No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

[1 Corinthians 16:2]

On the first day of every week, each one of you should put aside money as you have been blessed (in proportion)

[2 Corinthians 9:6-7]

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

6. Make a decision and a giving plan that is motivated by faith and joy!

[2 Corinthians 9: 8 & 11]

⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work...¹¹ You will be enriched (blessed, supplied for) in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

7. The Generous giver will not be able to escape the blessings and provision of God!



SERMON
SMALL GROUPS



The joy of what we are giving toward will remain, long after the pain of temporary sacrifice is forgotten

Small Group Questions

1. Who are some people who have made significant sacrifices to make a place for you to be where you are today? (historically, physically, personally, spiritually)
2. How do we live out Romans 12.1-2? In other words, how can we be "living sacrifices?" (Follow up: How do we continually keep ourselves on the altar?)
3. What are some of your motivations for giving? What has giving produced in your life and character? How can we excel in the grace of giving? [2 Corinthians 8.7]
4. The Bible says that God "desires obedience more than sacrifice." How does surrender naturally lead to sacrifice?
5. What does "giving in proportion" look like? What are some personal ways that you have recently been able to measure sacrificial giving in your own life and for your family? [1 Corinthians 16.2]



6. Since giving can also be a God-given test (and opportunity), what are signs that we are responding biblically? (Hint: cheerful giving, abundant joy, a lifestyle of generosity, "an open hand with our stuff")

7. Where will temporary sacrifice take us as a church in the years to come? What will the eternal investment be measured in? (Hint: restored marriages and families, physical healing, freedom from addictions and bondages, household salvation)