

Gathering Question: Share with your group the name of a person you know personally who you believe to be a model of self-sacrifice. Why does this person's name come to mind? How are they sacrificial?

Self-Sacrifice

True love is sacrificial. It is not the glamour and the glitz. It's not always receiving wonderful responses in return. True love at its core is a decision. It is a decision to sacrifice oneself on the behalf of another.

We see it all the time don't we, but we never get over being impressed by it. We see it when a loving spouse pours out his or her life to help their mate through some difficult illness or struggle. We see it when loving people make the decision to open up their homes to an orphan to love and to care as their own child forever. We see it when people secretly do good things on behalf of others.

When we set about the task of true love we must prepare ourselves for the cost. Love will inevitably cost you something precious. It will cost your time, your energy, and it may even cost your money. You may have to give up your plans, your independence, or even your privacy. Just think of the extent of God's love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only son." To love as God loves, you may have to part with whatever is most precious to you for the sake of other people.

It begins with becoming more concerned with the needs of others than we are concerned with being noticed or having all our needs met. First place in God's way of thinking goes to those who make themselves last—who decide to be servants of all, instead of just servants to themselves.

Just ask a real lover if he or she feels neglected. Self-sacrifice is the path to real life. Pour your life out for others. You will never be sorry.

Read: Mark 10:35-45; John 3:16

Reflect:

1. What do you think were the motives of James and John?
2. What flaw do you see in the way they view themselves?
3. How did Jesus contrast their view or greatness with the world's view?
4. How does Jesus want his disciples—which includes us—to see themselves?
5. Where do you need to be sacrificial right now? Where is the Lord leading you?