

Gathering Question: What is the most memorable and special gift you have ever received? Did the giver sacrifice to give it to you? When is the last time you really sacrificed to give someone a gift?

Giving Over

The discipline of sacrifice stands at the heart of Christlikeness. God calls each believer to a life of sacrifice both to God and to each other. Intimacy with God and with one another deepens as we learn how to sacrifice more fully.

We can clearly see sacrifice in action in the life of Jesus. First, he was willing to come to the earth and live among us full of grace and truth. He did not count equality with God something to be exploited but he emptied himself and served us by living and by dying. If we are to truly be like Jesus, it will mean that we must desire to give ourselves in sacrifice also. Paul describes this attitude in Philippians 3:10, when he expressed his deep desire to know Christ and “the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to the likeness of his death.”

Although God sometimes will ask believers to suffer martyrdom for the sake of Christ, more often the sacrifice he desires from his people is a living sacrifice. He wants us to give ourselves continually, at home, at work, at church, in the marketplace, and wherever we find ourselves each day. Sacrifice is a deliberate act of dying to self and becoming alive to all that he loves.

The way of sacrifice begins with choice. Who or what will we trust to meet our needs and desires in life? We will naturally serve who we trust. Personal sacrifice overcomes a love for self that might be nurtured by a number of things having to do with materialism.

Sacrifice continues each day, one decision and action at a time. As our love for God grows so grows our willingness to give over our lives completely to him. Sacrifice ultimately demands surrender. If we are unwilling to give over control of our lives to God he is unable to do his great work through us, but with yielded lives, God can do enormous things.

It begins with a choice and it continues every day with every decision we make. To whom do we belong? Who will we follow? Are we willing to give it all over to him?

Read: Philippians 2:1-11; Romans 12:1, 2; II Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; John 15:13-17; John 3:16

Reflect:

1. What did Jesus empty himself of when he came to the earth? Read Phil. 2:1-11.
2. In what ways can a living sacrifice be more powerful than a dying sacrifice? Romans 12:1, 2
3. In John 15, how is love demonstrated? Friendship?