

Sacrifice: The Gateway to Greatness

Introduction:

1. If I were to say to you, “The grass is blue and the sky is green,” you would laugh and say, “Wait a minute, I think you got that backwards.” Jesus had a way of teaching principles that seemed backwards. For example, let’s read Matthew 20:26-27.
 - Jesus taught, “If you want to be great, here is how to achieve it: sacrifice and give of yourself to others.” cf. Matthew 23:11
2. Christ is teaching that sacrifice is the gateway to greatness. This revolutionary concept is quite foreign to the 21st century American mindset, but this doesn’t change the fact that it is true.
3. Not only did Jesus teach this, He lived it! He laid down His very life on the cross for us (Matthew 20:28). Jesus is the pacesetter. He demonstrates to us that sacrifice is the gateway to greatness. We have been called to follow in His steps. 1 Peter 2:21
4. Every believer must follow Christ’s teaching and example, and believe that sacrifice is the gateway to greatness. Let me show you from the Bible what you can expect when you believe and practice this truth.

Your sacrifice brings reward.

1. **Illustrations:** Olympic athlete, a musician, a mother
2. This is a principle that is found to be true in every area of life.
3. Let’s think about this principle in terms of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Look at all that He sacrificed (the brutality and violence He endured, the insults, the blasphemous remarks, the humiliation, the ultimate death on the cross).
4. But wait a minute; that is not where the story ends. Three days later, He gloriously rose from the dead, and forty days later, He ascended to the very right hand of the Father in heaven. Compare Philippians 2:8 with 2:9-11. cf. Ephesians 1:20-21
5. Christ made an incredible sacrifice on the cross, but because of that sacrifice, He now is able to “*save to the uttermost*” all those that come to God through Him. Hebrews 7:25
6. Did you know that this same principle of sacrifice bringing reward holds true for you too? Your sacrifice will bring reward from the hands of God Almighty. Matthew 5:11-12, 6:4; Ephesians 6:7-8; Colossians 3:23-24
7. When you sacrifice for the Lord or for others with a sincere heart, God will not forget this. It truly touches the heart of God. Hebrews 6:10
8. There is an old song called, “It Will Be Worth It All.” The cross teaches us this very principle – sacrifice brings reward. It truly is the gateway to greatness.

Your sacrifice leads to joy.

1. **Illustration:** graduation night for our seniors

2. Have you ever worked really hard on a project at home, and you sweated and toiled? When it was all done, what did you do? You smiled real big and had an inward joy.
3. All throughout life, we see the principle that sacrifice leads to joy. A sacrifice up front leads to joy later.
4. Again, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross teaches us this principle. Hebrews 12:2
5. Jesus saw clearly the joy that was set before Him. He knew that His sacrifice would lead to joy, so He endured it and He made the sacrifice.
 - Think about the joy Christ has every time a believer dies on earth and enters heaven, knowing that His sacrifice made it possible.
6. This is the principle of deferred gratification. You make a sacrifice up front because of the joy it will bring you later.
7. Notice the words of Christ to His disciples in John 15:10-11.
 - When you obey God's commands, there is a sacrifice involved. But Jesus taught that, ultimately, they bring joy.
 - **Illustration:** serving at youth camp, giving to a missionary
8. The opposite of deferred gratification is instant gratification. We want to feel good **now** (I don't care what God's commands are. I want to do what pleases me). But we fail to realize that it brings guilt, condemnation, and destruction later.
 - Satan minimizes the sin before you do it, and maximizes it after you commit it.
9. The cross teaches us that sacrifice leads to joy. It is the gateway to greatness.

Your sacrifice equals impact.

1. Think back through history. Those who have made the biggest impact are those who paid the biggest price. They were willing to sacrifice.
2. One principle that the cross teaches us clearly is that sacrifice equals impact. Let's turn to Hebrews 2 and examine some verses about Christ:
 - Verse 9 – He was made lower than the angels by taking on a body of flesh and blood, like our bodies. He tasted death for every man. But notice the impact!
 - Verse 14 – He destroyed him that had the power of death.
 - Verse 15 – He now delivers people from the bondage of the fear of death.
 - Verse 18 – He is able to comfort others who are suffering.
 - Verse 10 – Multitudes can now go to heaven. We can be part of the family of Jesus Christ! 1 Peter 3:18
3. Had Christ not been willing to sacrifice Himself on the cross, none of the wonderful truths that we just read would be possible. We would all be in bondage to Satan, and to the fear of death, and would have no way for our sins to be forgiven, and for us to go to heaven. Sacrifice equals impact.
4. Remember, the sacrifices you make for God are making an impact on people and on eternity.
5. Just as Christ gave His life as a sacrifice and died on the cross for us, God is calling you to offer yourself a sacrifice, not by dying, but by living for God and accomplishing His purposes for your life. Romans 12:1

6. Can you point to any area of your Christian life that is an area of sacrifice for your Lord and Savior? Remember, sacrifice is the gateway to greatness.
7. God wants so much for you to touch other people's lives. But, I must be honest with you! It will require that you give something of yourself.

In Conclusion:

1. Selfish people don't impact anybody. They live for themselves, die to themselves, and maybe a few people show up at their funeral because they feel like they have to.
2. But, when you give of yourself and you live a sacrificial life for others, it brings reward, true joy, and eternal impact. People in eternity will be grateful for your sacrifice.
3. The next time you feel discouraged because of your sacrifices, remember the cross!