



LOVE PEOPLE

SACRIFICE

Spiritual Outcome Defined:

Maintain an attitude of cheerful willingness and eager readiness to sacrifice one's time, resources, convenience, and opportunities – one's entire life – for the good of others out of a love for God and people.

Spiritual Outcome Described:

It's one thing to serve others, it's something else to make sacrifices for them. We can serve and feel good about serving but have as an unspoken filter for our service the point at which sacrifice is involved. Serving can be fun and feel good, but there inevitably comes a time when it is most definitely not fun, and rather than feeling good, we feel pain of one kind or another. Christ's service to others ultimately cost him his life. This was not a sacrifice he "felt" like making, as is evidenced by his prayer in the garden (see Matthew 26:36-46).

*"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."
-- Jim Elliot*

Likewise, Paul described the intense sacrifices he made when writing to the Corinthians: *"I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food."* (2 Corinthians 11:27). The authentic follower of Christ will *"lay down one's life for one's friends"* (John 15:13). We are told later that such sacrifice is evidence of authentic love: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."* (1 John 3:16).

This may or may not be the actual laying down of our lives physically, and in most cases, it's not. It is for this reason that Scripture tells us to take up our cross *"daily"* (Luke 9:23). The one who authentically loves God and people will not only serve when it's convenient and when it fits with their personal agenda for their lives. They will sacrifice their personal agenda and make their agenda God's agenda.

This will be simultaneously rewarding and challenging, but in it is the very life Christ came to give. Jesus made this clear when he said that *"whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it."* (Luke 17:33). We must not just look for opportunities to serve others in ways that have natural appeal or are self-fulfilling. We must be willing to put our desires and preferences on the cross daily, and in so doing, come increasingly into the authentic life Christ came to give.

Evidence of this Spiritual Outcome in a Person's Life:

- Can name a personal desire sacrificed for another over the past week.
- Has wrestled with God over meeting a specific need and moved forward with doing so despite personal preferences.
- Can identify a service opportunity engaged in the past three months not for recognition, relationship, or reward, but were compelled by God to engage it.
- Can identify a time in the past 3 years when a financial sacrifice—giving beyond comfort—was made for another.

Guidance

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

Matthew 25:31-46

Observations:

Discernment Question: How are you currently sacrificing time, money, or energy for the wellbeing of another?



Luke 9:23-25

Observations:

Discernment Question: In what ways does the world have a grip on you? What does taking up the cross look like in your daily life?

John 12:23-26

Observations:

Discernment Question: How are you investing your life in a way that it will reap a harvest?



John 13:34

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you love others? Why yes? Why no?

John 15:12-13

Observations:

Discernment Question: In the past week, how have you let go of your agenda to serve another person?



Romans 12:1

Observations:

Discernment Question: Does this passage, and the others you have read here so far, inspire you or discourage you? Why?

Romans 14:7-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: In your heart of hearts, who owns you?



2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Observations:

Discernment Question: Do you give (time, money, energy) out of leftovers or as sacrifice?

1 John 3:16-20

Observations:

Discernment Question: What could you do in the coming month to serve another person materially?



Next Steps

What are practical next steps you will do from what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture on sacrifice? Include insights offered from others in your group that could be applied in your own life as well.



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