

WORTHY OF SACRIFICE—Discussion Guide

1. **REMEMBERING:** Who has made significant sacrifices for you *recently* from which you have benefitted?
2. **REFLECTING:** Share a situation in which someone made sacrifices for you, but it took you an extended period to realize, appreciate, or acknowledge them.
3. **DISCOVERING:** Read the following passages and quotes describing Christ's sacrifice for us. Which speak to you most clearly and powerfully at this time and why?

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." ²⁰Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²²Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. (1Cor 1:18-25)

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2:13-15)

Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy; but the Father, for love! (Octavius Winslow, 19th century theologian)

The high priest Caiaphas was essentially a mathematician. When the Jews started worrying that they might all get into hot water with the Romans because of the way Jesus was carrying on, Caiaphas said that in that case they should dump him like a hot potato. His argument ran that it is better for one man to get it in the neck for the sake of many than for many to get it in the neck for the sake of one man. His grim arithmetic proved unassailable.

The arithmetic of Jesus, on the other hand, was atrocious. He said that Heaven gets a bigger kick out of one sinner who repents than out of ninety-nine saints who don't need to. He said that God pays as much for one hour's work as for one day's. He said that the more you give away, the more you have.

It is curious that in the matter of deciding his own fate, he reached the same conclusion as Caiaphas and took it in the neck for the sake of many, Caiaphas included. It was not, however, the laws of mathematics that he was following. (Frederick Buechner, *Peculiar Treasures*)

4. **CONNECTING:** Now consider the following passage and quote that comment on the connection between *his* sacrifice and the sacrificial life he calls *us* to. What principles speak to you?

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²²“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1Pet 2:21-24; cf. Is 53:4-6)

The life you clutch, hoard, guard, and play safe with is in the end of the life worth little to anybody, including yourself, and only a life given away for love’s sake is a life worth living. To bring his point home, God shows us a man who gave his life away to the extent of dying a national disgrace without a penny in the bank or a friend to his name. In terms of human wisdom, he was Perfect Fool. And if you think you can follow him without making something like the same kind of a fool of yourself, you are laboring under not a cross but a delusion. (Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking*)

5. **RESPONDING:** Take some time this week to reflect again on the lessons/principles you discovered in these passages and quotes. Ask God to use them to lead you into a spirit of worship, thankfulness, and obedience.

Sacrifice gives us life. It frees us from idols. But we must accept that such sacrifice can be hard and lonely. Sacrifice for others gives life and makes community possible. Sacrifice for our idols leaves us with hollow, empty lives. No institution or cause will remember or reward us for the sacrifices we make.

(Chris Hedges, *Losing Moses on the Freeway*)