

Sacrifice

Chapter 26

The Meaning of Sacrifice

Sacrifice means giving to the Lord whatever He requires of our time, our earthly possessions, and our energies to further His work. The Lord commanded, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Our willingness to sacrifice is an indication of our devotion to God. People have always been tried and tested to see if they will put the things of God first in their lives.

- Why is it important to sacrifice as the Lord asks without expecting anything in return?

The Law of Sacrifice Was Practiced Anciently

- What was the significance of the sacrifices performed by the Lord’s covenant people anciently?

From the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Jesus Christ, the Lord’s people practiced the law of sacrifice. They were commanded to offer as sacrifices the firstlings of their flocks. These animals had to be perfect, without blemish. The ordinance was given to remind the people that Jesus Christ, the Firstborn of the Father, would come into the world. He would be perfect in every way, and He would offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. (See Moses 5:5–8.)

Jesus did come and offer Himself as a sacrifice, just as the people had been taught He would. Because of His sacrifice, everyone will be saved from physical death by the Resurrection and all can be saved from their sins through faith in Jesus Christ (see chapter 12 in this book).

For teachers: You do not need to teach everything in each chapter. As you prayerfully prepare to teach, seek the Spirit’s guidance to know which portions of the chapter you should cover and which questions you should ask.



Christ's atoning sacrifice marked the end of sacrifices by the shedding of blood. Such outward sacrifice was replaced by the ordinance of the sacrament. The ordinance of the sacrament was given to remind us of the Savior's great sacrifice. We should partake of the sacrament often. The emblems of bread and water remind us of the Savior's body and of His blood, which He shed for us (see chapter 23 in this book).

- Why is the Atonement considered the great and last sacrifice?

We Still Must Sacrifice

- How do we observe the law of sacrifice today?

Even though sacrifice by the shedding of blood was ended, the Lord still asks us to sacrifice. But now He requires a different kind of offering. He said: "Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood, . . . and your burnt offerings shall be done away. . . . And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:19–20). A "broken heart and a contrite spirit" means that we offer deep sorrow for our sins as we humble ourselves and repent of them.

We Must Be Willing to Sacrifice Everything We Have to the Lord

- Why are people willing to make sacrifices?

The Apostle Paul wrote that we should become living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God (see Romans 12:1).

If we are to be a living sacrifice, we must be willing to give everything we have for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—to build the kingdom of God on the earth and labor to bring forth Zion (see 1 Nephi 13:37).

A rich young ruler asked the Savior, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother." And the rich man said, "All these have I kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, He said, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the

poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he was sorrowful. He was very rich and had his heart set on his riches. (See Luke 18:18–23; see also the picture in this chapter.)

The young ruler was a good man. But when he was put to the test, he was not willing to sacrifice his worldly possessions. On the other hand, the Lord’s disciples Peter and Andrew were willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the kingdom of God. When Jesus said unto them, “Follow me, . . . they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:19–20).

Like the disciples, we can offer our daily activities as a sacrifice to the Lord. We can say, “Thy will be done.” Abraham did this. He lived on the earth before Christ, in the days when sacrifices and burnt offerings were required. As a test of Abraham’s faith, the Lord commanded him to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah. The command to offer him as a sacrifice was extremely painful for Abraham.

Nevertheless, he and Isaac made the long journey to Mount Moriah, where the sacrifice was to be made. They traveled for three days. Imagine Abraham’s thoughts and his heartache. His son was to be sacrificed to the Lord. When they reached Mount Moriah, Isaac carried the wood and Abraham carried the fire and the knife to the place where they were to build the altar. Isaac said, “My father . . . behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb.” Then Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. He bound Isaac and laid him upon the wood. He then took the knife to kill Isaac. At that moment an angel of the Lord stopped him, saying, “Abraham . . . lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” (See Genesis 22:1–14.)

Abraham must have been overcome with joy when he was no longer required to sacrifice his son. But he loved the Lord so much that he was willing to do anything the Lord asked.

- What examples of sacrifice have you observed in the lives of people you know? What examples of sacrifice have you seen in the lives of your ancestors? in the lives of early members of the Church? in the lives of people in the scriptures? What have you learned from these examples?

Sacrifice Helps Us Prepare to Live in the Presence of God

Only through sacrifice can we become worthy to live in the presence of God. Only through sacrifice can we enjoy eternal life. Many who have lived before us have sacrificed all they had. We must be willing to do the same if we would earn the rich reward they enjoy.

We may not be asked to sacrifice all things. But like Abraham, we should be willing to sacrifice everything to become worthy to live in the presence of the Lord.

The Lord's people have always sacrificed greatly and in many different ways. Some have suffered hardship and ridicule for the gospel. Some new converts to the Church have been cut off from their families. Lifetime friends have turned away. Some members have lost their jobs; some have lost their lives. But the Lord notices our sacrifices; He promises, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

As our testimonies of the gospel grow, we become able to make greater sacrifices to the Lord. Note the sacrifices made in these true examples:

A member of the Church in Germany saved his tithing for years until someone with priesthood authority could come and accept it.

A Relief Society visiting teacher served for 30 years without missing an assignment.

A group of Saints in South Africa rode for three days, standing up, to be able to hear and see the prophet of the Lord.

At an area conference in Mexico, members of the Church slept on the ground and fasted during the days of the conference. They had

used all their money just to get to the conference and had nothing left for food and shelter.

One family sold their car to get the money they wanted to contribute to a temple building fund.

Another family sold their home to get money to go to the temple.

Many faithful Latter-day Saints have very little to live on, yet they pay their tithes and offerings.

One brother sacrificed his job because he refused to work on Sunday.

In one branch, the youth gave freely and willingly of their time to care for the young children while their parents helped build the meetinghouse.

Young men and women give up or postpone good job opportunities, education, or sports to serve as missionaries.

Many more examples could be given of those who sacrifice for the Lord. Yet a place in our Heavenly Father's kingdom is worth any sacrifice we have to make of our time, talents, energy, money, and lives. Through sacrifice we can obtain a knowledge from the Lord that we are acceptable to Him (see D&C 97:8).

- Why do you think our willingness to sacrifice is related to our readiness to live in the presence of God?

Additional Scriptures

- Luke 12:16–34 (where the treasure is, there is the heart)
- Luke 9:57–62 (sacrifice to be fit for the kingdom)
- D&C 64:23; 97:12 (today is a day of sacrifice)
- D&C 98:13–15 (those who lose life for the Lord will find it)
- Alma 24 (the people of Ammon sacrifice their lives rather than break their oath to the Lord)