

The Love Culture - Sacrificial Love
Digging Deeper
John Lohmar
Director of Life Groups



Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:2 NIV

He slowly picked his way up the charred hillside. Embers still glowed among the burned out tree trunks that pointed like blackened fingers up into the sky. Wisps of smoke drifted on the wind and filled his nostrils with an acrid smell. And there was no hint of the sounds of life

that had filled the forrest the day before.

All that had made this a place of beauty and peace was gone, lost in a matter of minutes to a fire that had roared down the valley, consuming everything in it's path.

As he looked out across the barren landscape, his gaze fell on a sight that stopped him in his tracks. There in front of him, just inches from his feet, were the petrified remains of a bird resting silently on the ground. Startled by what he saw, he quickly grabbed a stick and pushed the dead bird out of sight.

And then, something amazing happened.

Four tiny chicks covered with soft downy feathers came rushing out of the nest where their mother had gathered them beneath her wings, sacrificing her life so her babies would be spared from the deadly fire.

Sacrificial love is extravagant. It knows no limits, asks no questions and doesn't hesitate or think twice when it sees a need (Ephesians 5:2). It understands what is required, it is aware of the cost, and steps forward to do whatever it takes to care for the object of it's affection (Luke 9:24).

Sacrificial love takes many different forms. It can be a father giving up a round of golf to attend a little league

game. A mother forgoing a day of rest to bake cookies for a birthday party. A friend taking the time to listen quietly to someone pouring out their hurt and frustration before offering words of comfort and support. Or a teacher digging into what little is left of her paycheck to buy supplies for her students.

Sacrificial love ignores imperfections and is blind to differences in color, ethnicity, gender, and religion. It creates life long bonds founded on acceptance of one another and nourished by the desire to serve one another and bear one another's burdens for the benefit of all (Romans 12:7, 1 Peter 4:10, Galatians 6:2). It is the glue that holds the kingdom of God together.

Small sacrifices made out of love for one another can impact lives in a very big way. A text with words of encouragement, an act of service, a smile, a conversation over coffee, a word of praise, a celebration of a job well done, and well timed words of affirmation can come to rest deep in someone's soul and be a constant companion for years to come. These simple gestures can change lives and sometimes even save them.

It is our calling to love one another, to build each other up, and to care for one another, not out of a sense of obligation but out of a heartfelt desire to sacrifice ourselves for others (John 13:34, 1 John

4:21, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Thessalonians 5:12). In a world flooded with misguided religion that demands obedience to God in order to be loved by Him and criticizes people for failing to be perfect, we need to be different. We need to sacrifice our inclination to judge others, commit to loving them just as they are and not as they should be, and leave the rest to God.

It will change their lives.

And it will change us even more.

Reflect

Sacrificial love is the glue that holds the kingdom of God together.

Pray

Heavenly Father, open my eyes to the struggles of people around me and help me pour sacrificial love out of my heart and into their lives. Help me know what to say, see what to do, and be willing to sacrifice what needs to be surrendered to bring a little bit of light into whatever darkness they're walking through. Make sacrificial love a habit that fills me with joy and motivates me to live my life for others as long as I walk this earth. Amen

Discuss

Who has poured their sacrificial love into you? What did they give up and how did their sacrifice change your life?

Tell us about a time when you sacrificed something for someone in need. How did that change your life and your relationship with them?

What gesture of sacrificial love can you turn into a habit that will make our church an oasis of love?

Final Thoughts

Keep your eyes peeled on Sunday morning for visitors to our church who need to be seen, heard and cared for. Sacrifice a little bit of the time you spend with people you know so you can reach out to those who are new and welcome them to our church family. Be the miracle they're looking for by introducing them to others who can surround them with love and make them feel at home. It may not be a big deal to you, but it means everything to them.