

Courageous Sacrifice

Welcome to the fourth week in our 6-week series on 'Courageous Living'. What have you felt God encouraging you with as we've studied and discussed courageous love, faith, and hope together?

Self-sacrifice is the path

Sacrifice. It's not really a word or concept our society embraces. We love the idealised sacrifice of heroes in movies or the sacrifices they make to pursue romantic love, but on the whole we're not so fond of the concept being played out daily in our own lives.

What are some of those great sacrifices in our history (or even in pop-culture) that you look up to and are inspired by? Why is that?

What is it that stops us being self-sacrificial? Is it simply that we are too self-centred, too self-indulgent or have we grown up being told that we are to protect and assert our rights?

However comfortable or uncomfortable we are with self-sacrifice, as believers we need to remember that sacrifice forms the basis of our new life in Christ and is to characterise our life following Christ. Together read Matthew 16:24-26. Why does discipleship necessitate denying ourselves? What parts of our lives need to be sacrificed or surrendered in order to follow Jesus fully?

Philippians 2 – this is what it looks like

Ephesians 5:1-2 is quite clear how we are to live: *'follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and 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'*

Read the description of Christ's self-sacrificial love in Philippians 2:5-8 and consider:

- What were the things that Jesus had to surrender and sacrifice?
- Why would Jesus lay down these things?

If Jesus is to be our model, the example which we pattern ourselves of, then:

- How should Jesus' example impact the way we view, treat and respond to others?
- How should Jesus' example impact the way we view ourselves, our lives, our possessions, our time etc?

Would you say that you have a life marked by self-sacrifice, of dying to self and surrendering all to Jesus? Why/why not?

A worthwhile sacrifice

When we talk of sacrifice, often the focus is on what we are giving up. But it would be equally true to talk of sacrifice in terms of what we are gaining. For instance, we sacrifice/trade money to enjoy good food, or we sacrifice/trade time alone to spend with friends.

Consider Jesus' parables in Matthew 13:44-45. Do you think the man or the merchant felt the sting of sacrifice or was it something else they were experiencing? What great truth is Jesus trying to teach us here?

What is it that motivates you to surrender yourselves, your plans, your stuff, and your rights for the Gospel?

The Apostle Paul was a man familiar with self-sacrifice (eg: Galatians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 9:19, Philippians 2:17), because he was a man who had discovered the "treasure hidden in a field" and realised it was worth sacrificing everything for. What do we learn of his great motivations for his life of sacrifice in Philippians 3:8-9 and 2 Timothy 4:6-8?

How can we keep this proper perspective in the forefront of our minds?

It is easy to feel that the call on our lives, this cost of discipleship, is a high price to pay. Read Jesus' promise to his disciples when they started to feel this way in Matthew 19:27-30. What encouragement can we draw from these verses to spur us on to continue in a life characterised by self-sacrifice?

As we have been discussing the broad call to surrender and self-sacrifice, is there anything specific that God has laid on your heart that you know you are clinging onto which he has called you to surrender?

How can this group encourage you and hold you accountable to those convictions?