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Does Christian Sacrifice Mean EVERYTHING?

Matthew 5:11: (NASB) *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*



Christians always talk about following after Jesus, following in his footsteps. What does that mean? Are we supposed to abandon every earthly possession and every earthly ambition to follow him? After all, isn't that what he did? Are we supposed to sacrifice all of our human will all of the time? Is the idea of Christian sacrifice a requirement for all Christians to follow through on in order to fulfill our calling? Stay with us as we look into this not too often discussed part of the Christian life to try and understand just how it is supposed to work.

What is a Christian?

First, a look at the first use of "Christian" (a follower of Christ) in the scriptures: Acts 11:19-25,26 **Now, a look at Jesus defining Christianity:** John 6:44: God has to draw us in first.

Luke 14:25-26: (NRSV) ²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶Whoever comes to me and does not **hate <3404>** father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my **disciple <3101>**.

Hate: Strong's #3404 *miseo* (mis-eh'-o); by extension, to love less

Disciple: Strong's #3101 *mathetes* (math-ay-tes'); a learner, i.e. pupil

Learning from Jesus is most important. Our priorities must be in order.

))) **Stephen's face: Suffering and the followers of Christ, Pastor John Piper, desiringGod.org, youtube.com**

- *He shown like an angel. They could not resist his wisdom and they killed him.*

Stephen was persecuted and on trial for his life, but he still had the peace of God.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26: This uses the concept of the human body as a picture of the body of Christ. In the early church, all Christians were from Jewish descent. After a period of years, the Gentiles came in. The Apostle teaches that it doesn't matter where we came from; we are all part of the same thing. All members are important and play an important role, working together in harmony under the headship of Christ. All have something to contribute.

What is sacrifice?

Philippians 1:20-25: *Dying is gain?* What does that mean? The Apostle was struggling with staying and being fruitful, but he didn't mind dying because he would be with Christ.

))) **Intro - Why do intelligent people still believe in religion, anubis2814, youtube.com**

- *Why is it so easy to idealize war, revolution and self-sacrifice to religion? Self-sacrifice seems like a self-defeating evolutionary mechanism.*
- *Creationists assume self-sacrifice must be from Jesus and that non-Christians don't have it.*
- *It really has a very useful evolutionary advantage. In pack animals, the majority of members of your tribe have some relation to you, which means they share in some of the genes. Some of the genes getting passed on is better than none at all. So if one in the tribe can sacrifice themselves for the rest of the tribe, all will benefit genetically.*

He generalizes a lot about Christianity. This gives us a different perspective on what we are saying, but the concept of self-sacrifice was in place long before Jesus. With Christianity, self-sacrifice plays a very specific role. What you sacrifice yourself for is the important thing.

Some of the aspects of Christian sacrifice:

- Persecution: to pursue
- Suffering
- Reproach: to defame, i.e. rail at, chide, taunt
- Tribulation: pressure
- Temptation: (First Greek word) endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline
- Temptation: (Second Greek word) a putting to proof - by implication, adversity



To live a life of sacrifice, one must have a picture of the "why" behind it:

2 Timothy 3:12-17: Living a Godly life means you may be persecuted in one way or another because you stand for something different. There is work that has to be done. We are told to go to the Scriptures for the reasons "why" what will be required of us. **To love and serve is one thing, to sacrifice is another:** Mark 10:17-23: This rich man was living a righteous life, but he was not willing to give things up, to sacrifice and follow him. Living a Christian life is more than living a life of integrity. It costs something. Are we willing to pay the price? Does Christian sacrifice come naturally?

Jesus taught many parables that told us what the kingdom of God is like. Really, it is the development of true Christians. In that sense, it is right now in the developmental part. How hard it was for the rich man to let go of the many things he had and live a life of sacrifice. Stewardship is part of this equation. What we have is to be used in God's service; it is dedicated.

What was Jesus' example of sacrifice?

Matthew 16:24-26: Jesus is being very specific. First, he says to "deny yourself." What does that mean? Forgoing your own thinking and instead desiring to do God's will, not our own. Next, he says to "take up your cross." This involves more than just being a good person. It is denying what you would normally do and apply it to following after Jesus, even unto death. Following him means to reset your priorities from earthly to spiritual. It goes beyond just having integrity. Integrity is just the beginning.

 **Sacrifice can be manipulated - Why do intelligent people still believe in religion, *anubis2814*, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)**

- *We must honor the people who do and have sacrificed themselves for us; however, now that we have advanced and are much safer and peaceful, there is less need for it, but it is still a driving force.*
- *It is an emotion that can be so easily manipulated. It can make you feel like the sacrifice of someone else means you should do the same - even if a) the person possibly didn't even sacrifice, as in the case of Jesus; or b) the sacrifice could have been prevented through planning and reasoning, also kind of in the case of Jesus.*
- *Sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice means that something is manipulating you.*


Christian sacrifice is about understanding the "why." The "why" of Jesus giving his life in sacrifice was the necessity of payment of a ransom. It had to be done. He was the one to do it. So in order for you and I and the rest of the world to have a resurrection, he had to sacrifice. Careful planning meant that he sacrificed. The Christian life is to be one of dedication and sanctification, or setting apart from worldly things.

1 Samuel 15:22: ...Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice. Our sacrifice has to be in conjunction with obedience to the will of God.

Philippians 2:5-11: (NASB) ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This tells us to have the same attitude Jesus did. Jesus "emptied himself" and "humbled himself" in becoming human, then gave that up to the point of suffering and death. That was the required sacrifice to do the will of God and not his own will. Satan regarded himself equal, but there is no comparison - it is sacrifice with humility vs. self-exaltation.

The example of Jesus is clearly a level of sacrifice of which we cannot even scratch the surface.

 **Joab and Abishai: *Suffering and the followers of Christ*, Pastor John Piper, [desiringGod.org](https://www.desiringGod.org), [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)**



From 2 Samuel 10:6-14: When surrounded by the enemy, Joab said to his brother, "Brother, be courageous and let us play the man for our God and for the cities of our God and may the Lord do what seems good to him!"

Joab and Abishai are two of King David's mighty men. They were surrounded and were courageous and willing to give their lives for the cause of God. This is self-sacrifice in action.

Matthew 26:37-46 Luke Adds: Luke 22:43-44: On the night of his crucifixion, Jesus prayed with great dedication. He didn't want to have to suffer certain things, but was willing to do it because he followed the will of God. He wanted to fulfill the ransom price. True sacrifice is wanting to do those things that are difficult for the cause of the will of God. Jesus truly sacrificed in a manner that was not only solitary, it was excruciating and costly. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO IT - HE CHOSE TO DO IT!

What does Jesus expect from us?

Are we supposed to have no possessions and go from city to city preaching the Gospel like he did? **He expects us to love God above ALL!** Mark 12:28-31: Jesus sets the context in which we should live. First love the Lord, then love your neighbor as yourself. This is the way to set your life in order. We are to aspire to agape love, the selfless love. Love is the way you live, based on choices and actions in life.

Our generation, however, has been focused on "me."



The ME Generation, Glenn Beck

- A generation that only cares about "me, me, me, it's MINE!" A generation we never taught the meaning of merit, a generation that doesn't understand what it means to actually earn something, because we have handed everything to them because of our love and our compassion.*

We are living in a time where the individual becomes the centerpiece of everything, which makes the concept of Christian sacrifice contradictory. The point of Christianity is to live your life for something else, something outside and greater than yourself.

Do what Jesus tells us to do! John 14:15-17: Sacrifice is more than having integrity and being courteous. But it is required if we are going to be true Christians. We have to give up our own will and live for a higher cause. **Live for a higher cause!** Matthew 5:10-16: Jesus wants us to see beyond pain, inconvenience and embarrassment. Let's compare the message of John the Baptist and Jesus. John told the people to live with integrity according to the Jewish Law. Jesus built upon that base and gave the mission of following him with a sacrificial life. **Bask in the privilege of trials and tests!** James 1:2-8: Christian sacrifice puts us in the perspective of realizing that trials and temptations are to teach us how to do the will of God and not our own.

Is sacrifice the same for everyone?

Romans 12:1-2

1 Peter 3:8-18: (NRSV) ⁸Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, *sympathy*, *love for one another*, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For those who desire life and desire to see good days, let them keep their tongues from evil and their lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹let them *turn away from evil and do good*; let them *seek peace and pursue it*. ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. ¹³Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. *Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you;* ¹⁶*yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear*, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

How do we not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse? It is in our attitude. Remember, when we forgive somebody, we are releasing ourselves from the control of that experience. We can't release someone from their ultimate consequences that God will take care of. Forgiveness means



that I am released from the burden of having to carry the experience. We often get caught up in bitterness and revenge, but a forgiving attitude is a sacrifice! We should live with sympathy and seek peace. Righteousness is important to focus on before we can really sacrifice to the will of God. Suffering for the sake of righteousness is a blessing! We have to know why it is the way we are living. What am I doing today to sacrifice my own will and instead do the will of God? What will I do tomorrow? It isn't just a Sunday thing. Notice the sacrifice being described here is all about living! So, Christian sacrifice is the privilege of living in a way that our own personal will is dying, so it can be replaced by the living will of God through Jesus! God requires us to "die daily," to follow the will of God.

Esther: *Suffering and the followers of Christ*, Pastor John Piper, desiringGod.org, youtube.com

- *Esther 4:16: (NASB) Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.*

This is a dramatic example of sacrifice in the Old Testament - Esther willing to put her life on the line for her people. She was in the position to make a difference, and it was a sacrifice.


Is a Christian's life ONLY about sacrifice?

The uniqueness of true Christianity: 1 Peter 2:9-12: You are different from everybody else as "aliens and exiles." Dying daily means living in Christ, living a higher purpose. This is faith in action. If we don't know why we are sacrificing, we won't do it with our whole heart. Does sacrifice always hurt? No, think of the sacrifice of praise. Sacrifice may cost us something, but it doesn't have to be painful.

 **Riches: *Suffering and the followers of Christ*, Pastor John Piper, desiringGod.org, youtube.com**

- *The world is not going to glorify Christ because they see that Christians are wealthy, healthy and prosperous - a very simple reason why - that's what they live for!*

When there is a focus on material gain and "stuff" within Christianity, we feel it sends the wrong message. We aren't going to bring people to Christ that way, although you may get people into your church that way! That is an earthly attraction, not a spiritual attraction. How am I going to live my life for the will of God today? Romans 8:14-18: We have been adopted by God as children and look at him as our Father. "Abba" in Greek means "daddy." It is an absolute dependency on Him. There is a glory that will be revealed that is greater than anything we can possibly imagine. There is blessing now, however, that comes to us in living for Christ. Walking in a newness of life is a blessed, transformative way to live that gives us internal peace. How valuable is *that* in this world? If we live our lives with God through Christ, we get back that internal peace.

 **Fellowship: *Suffering and the followers of Christ*, Pastor John Piper, desiringGod.org, youtube.com**

- *The sweetest fellowship with your savior...that you will ever know is the fellowship of his sufferings...*

Here is a promise God gives us if we are living our lives in the way of sacrifice: 1 Corinthians 10:13: The tradeoffs are putting your physical, earthly will aside to do the will of God. That's hard! It may involve many "resets" each day, because we battle the world, the flesh and the devil. This scripture is one of the positive gains we get from a life of service, which is part of why it is our "reasonable service." Not only will it be too much for us, but God will provide a way to cope and overcome with the circumstance. We need to turn it over to God. This certainly helps with everyday life. We always grow best through trials and difficulties. The development that comes through trial and difficulty is priceless! Look in the mirror and ask: What am I doing today to become a better follower? Philippians 4:4-8: Think of Christian sacrifice as the joy that is set before us to be able to honor and praise God in a world that doesn't know God.

***So does Christian sacrifice mean everything?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***