

Our Sacrifices and Gains

We must be willing to sacrifice our lives (lifestyle, goals, desires, comforts) to gain God's promise.

(Matthew 19:27-30, Luke 5:10-11, 27-28, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 10:34-36)
Examine your life. Do you have want to know Jesus? What kinds of sacrifices has God motivated you to make to follow Him? Are they easy, mildly difficult, very difficult, painful?

We must be willing to sacrifice any sinful or distracting relationship in favor of Jesus, in order to hold on to God's promise.

(II Timothy 2:4, Hebrews 12:1-2)

What do you think about most of the time? What kinds of things take your attention away from God? Is there a relationship that distracts you from Jesus, or tempts you to sin? How can you lovingly put away such things, while at the same time being open to receiving them again under a new Christian relationship?

We must be willing to sacrifice ourselves, as Jesus did, to experience the fullness of God's promise.

(John 13:34, I John 3:16, 4:10-11)

Our salvation could not have been achieved with Jesus' death on the cross. Sometimes, in order to fulfill God's will in our own lives, we must also be willing to face death in our struggle against sin, and evil. Some take this risk simply to tell others about Jesus' love.

What risks are you prepared to take for Jesus, considering what He did for you? Be specific.

A.C.T.

A – Action Point

What will I do in light of what I have learned?

C – Commune (prayer)

What will I commit to God and ask Him for to help me put what I have learned into action?

T – Tell Others

What kinds of things can I say or do to others to demonstrate the biblical truth I have learned?

Abraham & Jesus

Lives of Sacrifice and Gain

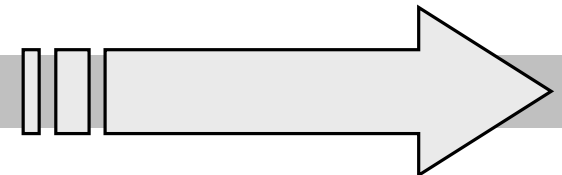
The Bible's story of Abraham is a remarkable one. We are introduced to Abraham in Genesis 12. The first thing we learn about Abraham is that God told him to leave his country, family, and life, to begin a completely new and unknown life with God.

Already at this stage we can see that Abraham must have been a remarkable person. We are not told how long Abraham worshipped God before this. We are not told if God ever spoke to Abraham before this – but it is most likely that He did not. Yet at a simple word from God, Abraham radically altered his life in a way that would make most of us want to run away.

And that was the beginning of Abraham's special relationship with God.

How does God begin His special relationship with you? Does He speak and ask you to leave family, friends, and nation? Does He ask you to abandon everything you've previously known just to know Him?

God calls men and women to be Christians through a much simpler process – declared faith in Jesus Christ. Yet as we grow older in our faith we learn that there are sacrifices to make in order to live in the complete fullness of God's promises.



Abraham's Sacrifices and Gains

Abraham had to sacrifice his lifestyle and future to live in God's promise.
(Genesis 12:1)

God's original call to Abraham was to leave his old life behind and embrace a new life that he would show him. For Abraham that meant leaving everything that was comfortable and familiar to him, and to launch into the unknown.

Does God call us to do something similar? How do you leave your old life behind when you decide to believe in Jesus Christ?

Abraham had to sacrifice his relationship with Ishmael to hold on to God's promise.

(Genesis 21:9-14)

Abraham's situation was unique. Ishmael was a potential threat to Abraham's son, Isaac, and the fulfillment of God's plan. If Abraham was to hold on to God's promise for Isaac, he had to let Ishmael go.

Does your relationship with Jesus Christ take priority over all other relationships?

Abraham had to sacrifice his son to fulfill God's promise.

(Genesis 22:1-18)

It is probably true that Abraham loved his son Isaac more than any other person. Yet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son revealed the true intentions of his heart.

God does not require such sacrifices in order to follow Him. Regardless, what do you have in your life that is so dear to you that keeps you from expressing your love for Him?

Discuss or Write your personal reflections:

- 1.) Throughout the movie "Abraham," Abraham constantly tells his family that only a sacrifice of that which is loved the most is acceptable to God. This is because nothing is to take the place of God in our hearts. What does your heart tell you in response to this?

Jesus' Sacrifices and Gains

Jesus had to sacrifice his life in Heaven to achieve God's promise.
(Philippians 2:5-7)

God did not call men to such great sacrifices without His own willingness to do the same – and more. When Jesus became a man, He did so by leaving behind His Heavenly home, and all of the power and glory that goes with it. He became just like us – only without sin.

Since Jesus went to such great lengths to fulfill God's promises to us, to what lengths would you go to receive these promises?

Jesus had to sacrifice his early human relationships to achieve God's promise.
(Mark 6:3-4, Luke 8:19-21)

This does not mean that Jesus abandoned his family, or later hated the people in His earlier life. Rather, Jesus had to reorder His life from living as the son of Mary and a carpenter, to the Son of God and Savior. Many who knew Him previously were offended, or did not understand, but it did not deter Jesus from His mission.

Sometimes people around us will not understand our commitment to Christ. What will your response be to them? How can you give Jesus first place in your heart, yet still reach out to them in love and truth (as Jesus did in His home town)?

Jesus had to sacrifice Himself to fulfill God's promise.

(Isaiah 53:10-12, Titus 2:14, I Peter 2:24)

Had Jesus not gone to the cross to die for our sins, He could not have been raised from the dead according to God's promise, and God's promise would have failed. Sometimes great sacrifices are necessary in order to fulfill God's plan – just as Jesus experienced.

Why do you think Jesus was willing to endure such a terrible, painful sacrifice?

Discuss or write your personal reflections:

- 1.) It is safe to say that God loved Jesus supremely as His one and only Son. Yet God willed that His Son be sacrificed for us. This is because nothing takes the place of us, in God's heart. What kind of response should we give God for that express of His love?

