



Season of Sacrifice

As we go into Easter, it is the habit of many Christians across the world to reflect on Jesus' life. This study takes a little deviation from that and looks at one of Jesus' most famous teachings, The Beatitudes, and the sacrifice required of each of us in order to gain the blessings Jesus talks about in these chapters.

At the beginning of each week, you'll find a different translation of the Beatitudes. Meditate on the blessings God has in store for you, as you look at characters from the Bible who received these blessings, but only through sacrificing time and time again the values of this world.

God's promises are good and true, but even for his son, Jesus, the promises and blessings didn't come without the cost of sacrifice. To get the most out of this study, set aside time each day to truly reflect on the blessings God is calling you to if you're willing to step out and sacrifice the best the world has to offer for the best God is offering you. While this study will have an impact at any time, if you start on February 21, you'll finish on Easter.

You'll also see a recommended song for each day. Time and time again in the Bible, we see people expressing themselves to God through song. There is something about music that helps us connect with God through mind and heart. Use this song as an additional meditation throughout your day. All songs can be found on our [Seasons of Sacrifice Spotify Playlist](#). Or you can click any blue link to find the song on spotify.

Week 1

Sacrifice for the Kingdom of Heaven

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

Day 1

Sacrifice for the Kingdom of Heaven

Scripture

“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you.

Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

“You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution.

The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

“Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, / do! And all heaven applauds.

And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

~ The Message ~

Thought

Blessings rarely come without sacrifice. Even the good things we create for ourselves usually require us sacrificing immediate happiness for long term gain. Losing weight, buying a house, having kids. None of these things, which many of us want and have in our lives, come without sacrificing other things, that while good, are not

what we want most. As we look at the story of Job this week, the part of the story we all wrestle with is that Job didn’t have a choice in his sacrifice. It was all removed from him, and from what we can tell, it seems arbitrary. But it left Job with only God. That was it. God didn’t leave or forsake him, but he also didn’t give Job all the answers he was searching for. God simply asked Job to trust him; believe that God is God and knows more than a human can of how all the decisions of the world connect and intertwine. Through this book, we see how Job becomes Poor of Spirit, and through it gains more of God. God in turn blesses Job more abundantly than before, not as a reward, but because Job gave up all of himself to trust God in the face of adversity.

Song

[You Have My Surrender by Lauren Daigle](#)

Meditate On This

What are you willing to give up to have more of God in your life?
What would be difficult for you to sacrifice, even if it means more of God?

Day 2

Sacrifice When Others Say You're Foolish

Scripture

Satan replied to the Lord, "Skin for skin! A man will give up everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health, and he will surely curse you to your face!"

"All right, do with him as you please," the Lord said to Satan. "But spare his life." So Satan left the Lord's presence, and he struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot.

Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die."

But Job replied, "You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" So in all this, Job said nothing wrong.

Job 2:4-10

Thought

Job's wife tells Job to curse God and die. That's really all we hear of her in the story. We don't even know if she's part of the family at the end or if she left because of what happened to Job, their family, and their possessions. Job could easily have said, "Yes, dear." He could have gone with the one family member he had left in the world and given up on a God who seemingly abandoned him for no reason. But he didn't. He sacrificed his closest relationships in life to cling to God. He didn't understand and wrestled through prayer over what was happening, but he sacrificed the relationships of this world for what God had in store for him.

The challenge of relationships hasn't gone away. When we make the choice to follow God, or even in some cases, explore our faith, relationships that were once close can become strained. They don't understand how your time and priorities are shifting. Or they may have hurt from their past that makes your decision seem foolish to them. We all have moments where we have to choose between the relationships of the world or our relationship with Heaven.

Song

[Yes I Will by Vertical Worship](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you chose God over the relationships of the world, even if it was as simple as saying no to something that wasn't good for you? What happened with that relationship?

Day 3

Sacrifice Your Anger

Scripture

"I loathe my very life;
therefore I will give free rein to my complaint
and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.
I say to God: Do not declare me guilty,
but tell me what charges you have against me.
Does it please you to oppress me,
to spurn the work of your hands,
while you smile on the plans of the wicked?
Do you have eyes of flesh?
Do you see as a mortal sees?
Are your days like those of a mortal
or your years like those of a strong man,
that you must search out my faults
and probe after my sin—
though you know that I am not guilty
and that no one can rescue me from your hand?"

Job 10:1-7

Thought

One of the great takeaways from Job for us is that emotions are not bad, being angry and telling God you're angry, wrestling with hurt, disappointment, grief, and frustrations is good. At the end of all the conversations Job had, God said he was right. It wasn't because Job was without doubt and accepted what happened to him without question, but because he took all of the uncertainty and confusion to God, and at the end of it, he acknowledged that God is God and he is not. Rather, he was struggling through what happened to understand God. He wanted to know why God did what he did, he was still trying to keep the relationship.

This shows us our emotions aren't bad, not taking them to God and letting God into all parts of our lives is what's bad. When we shut God off from what is happening in our, it creates a barrier in our

relationship that could grow into a divide. Bring it all to God, and when you've laid it all down, God will be all you have left. That's how you gain the Kingdom of Heaven.

Song

[Missing Peace by JJ Heller](#)

Meditate On This

What are you feeling right now? How are you mad, frustrated, hurt, sad about life right now? Talk to God about it honestly.

Day 4

Sacrifice Wisdom of the World

Scripture

“Keep silent and let me speak;
then, let come to me what may.
Why do I put myself in jeopardy
and take my life in my hands?
Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;
I will surely defend my ways to his face.
Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance,
for no godless person would dare come before him!
Listen carefully to what I say;
let my words ring in your ears.
Now that I have prepared my case,
I know I will be vindicated.
Can anyone bring charges against me?
If so, I will be silent and die.
“Only grant me these two things, God,
and then I will not hide from you:
Withdraw your hand far from me,
and stop frightening me with your terrors.
Then summon me and I will answer,
or let me speak, and you reply to me.
How many wrongs and sins have I committed?
Show me my offense and my sin.

Job 13:13-23

Thought

Job’s friends gave the best advice they knew how to give. The best wisdom of the time, and all three of them, according to those standards, believed Job had sinned. Job sacrificed what made sense by human standards. Even though his friends gave convincing arguments, Job still would not accept it because he knew the issue was not what the world said, so he kept pleading with the only one who knew the truth: God.

Job gave up on what the world said made sense and continually cried out to God asking him time and time again to explain himself. Job didn’t get an answer and again sacrificed according to human standards. The religion of the time said everything could be explained if you dig deep enough. But God doesn’t play by our standards, and like the rest of creation that trusts God, from the lilies in the valley to the birds of the air, God tells us not to worry about earthly standards. More than the rest of creation, he asks us to trust him as a loving and good father who will take care of things, so we don’t have to worry about everything. He asks us to sacrifice our understanding and trust him.

Song

[So Will I \(100 Billion X\) by Hillsong UNITED](#)

Meditate On This

The kingdom of God is upside down. What have you given up in this life, that the world says is good, because of your relationship with God? What do you think you still need to sacrifice because God has something better for you?

Day 5

Sacrifice Self

Scripture

“As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice,
the Almighty, who has made my life bitter,
as long as I have life within me,
the breath of God in my nostrils,
my lips will not say anything wicked,
and my tongue will not utter lies.
I will never admit you are in the right;
till I die, I will not deny my integrity.
I will maintain my innocence and never let go of it;
my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.

Job 27:2-6

Thought

Who wants to sacrifice? I've rarely met anyone who says they love to sacrifice things. I don't like giving up cookies, I don't like giving up my time, I don't like giving up Starbucks coffee. But to lose weight I'll give up cookies, to spend time with family I'll give up personal time, to save money I'll give up Starbucks. Sacrifice, when we know why, is easier than sacrifice for seemingly no reason. And that's what we see Job struggle with throughout the whole of his story. Job didn't want to lose all the things God had given him. And he felt justified asking God why it was happening. Job wasn't willing to sacrifice through most of the story. He did nothing wrong, so why should everything be taken from him? Job justifies himself in front of his friends over and over, but in the end, he realizes he has to sacrifice himself because he is human and can't understand the world God created.

Sometimes the only thing we have left is our self--our pride, our personality, our identity. And at the end of all the hurting and pain of loss, God can ask us to give up our self, too. The sacrifice of self can leave us hurting because we see ourselves in comparison to the rest of the people in the world. We can justify that we are good people who deserve better things, but compared to a perfect God, the only thing

left is to sacrifice ourselves, in the understanding that we are not perfect but God is. It's in that moment, where we are empty of all things, including ourselves, God is free to fill us up. And in that moment, we inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

Song

[It is Well With My Soul by Jeremy Riddle](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time that all you had left was yourself? How did God meet you there and offer you more of him?

Day 6

Sacrifice Knowing Why

Scripture

“I know that you can do anything,
and no one can stop you.

You asked, ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such
ignorance?’

It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me.

Job 42:2-3

Thought

Job never found out why all the bad happened to him. Neither did we. It is still a mystery why Job sat in suffering for seemingly no reason. Something many, if not all of us, can relate to. But through the book, we see Job change his posture. He stopped demanding God play by his rules and realized the world God created and looks after is bigger than he can fathom.

Our world is complicated, and the longer it goes on, the more complicated it gets. Sin and brokenness have made a hazy, gray mess of God’s original design. In a snapshot of time, it seems easy to demand justice by human standards, but the reality might not be that simple. God’s goal is for all of his children to come home, not just you. When you look at other humans as also being children of God, and that God is working for their good as well as yours, the reality of understanding shifts; we realize our job is not to judge and try to balance the scales of justice. Our job is to invite people to come into a heavenly kingdom and leave the uncertainties of life to God. By giving up the burden of justice, we are able to inherit the kingdom of God. We give up a responsibility God never intended for us to have and then we have room to fill up on God and his faithfulness.

Song

[Remind Me You’re Here by Jason Gray](#)

Meditate On This

What is something that has happened to you or a circumstance you’ve been placed in where you still want an answer from God?

Day 7

Sacrifice When You Have Nothing Left

Scripture

You said, "Listen now, and I will speak.
When I question you, you will inform Me."
I had heard rumors about You,
but now my eyes have seen You.
Therefore I take back my words
and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:4-6

Thought

Job was left with nothing. All of his children and wealth disappeared overnight. His health was gone, his wife turned on him, and his friends spent chapters trying to convince him it was his fault. He gave up his self-righteousness and the need to know why. There was nothing left for Job to give. And, God didn't leave him.

God doesn't use us up and spit us out. He doesn't see worthlessness when we are empty of everything. Rather, he seizes the opportunity to fill us back up, reform us, and redeem the brokenness. When we are poor of spirit, far from everything we once had or that made us who we thought we should be, that is where we find our most authentic self. That is where God can breathe life into us and fill us up and bless us with his Kingdom.

Song

[Graves into Gardens by Elevation](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you felt you had nothing left? How did God continue to provide?

Week 2

The Sacrifice to See God

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

Day 1

Sacrifice to See God

Scripture

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely
say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad,
because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they
persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Beatitudes

~ New International Version ~

Thought

A pure heart is not about who is without sin; it is what takes the most important position in your life. A pure heart focuses first on God and builds their world around the certainty that their heavenly father will take care of them, even when they are uncertain how. Think of a 2-year-old child. They don't understand the world around them fully. They ask questions from sun up to sun down, and sometimes the parent explains, and sometimes the parent doesn't. A parent punishes the 2-year-old, so they learn not to treat others badly or so they will understand right and wrong. A 2-year-old also wants nothing more

than to be comforted by their parents when hurt or sad. Sometimes they just want to touch their mom or dad to know they are there. They push themselves onto their parent's lap without reserve, knowing it is a safe place and that they can, because it's their parent. That is a pure heart. Knowing who your father is and knowing what right you have as their child, as well as trusting they know more than you and everything is for your best. It gets harder and more complicated when we become adults. Our goal should always be to come before our heavenly father as a 2-year-old child comes to their mom or dad who loves them.

David understood this. He wasn't perfect, but he knew who his father was and, as we study key moments in his life, we will see how he continually sacrificed this world, so he could see his heavenly father.

Song

[Child Again by NEEDTOBREATHE](#)

Meditate On This

How are you like or unlike a child when it comes to God? When is the last time you demanded to sit on his lap?

Day 2

The Sacrifice of My Timing

Scripture

Now the Lord said to Samuel, “You have mourned long enough for Saul. I have rejected him as king of Israel, so fill your flask with olive oil and go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be my king.”

1 Samuel 16:1

Then Samuel asked, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse replied. “But he’s out in the fields watching the sheep and goats.”

“Send for him at once,” Samuel said. “We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.”

So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes.

And the Lord said, “This is the one; anoint him.”

So, as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

1 Samuel 16:11-13

Thought

God had David anointed king when he was young. Some believe he would have been as young as 15. How remarkable that moment must have felt for David. But God’s plan on when becoming king would happen was unclear. How confused must he have been to be anointed, then Samuel just leaves. Nothing else happens other than knowing “someday.” David never got a timeline, and I’m sure like

many 15-year-olds, he wanted what God promised “now.” As we look at David’s life, we can see he sacrificed his timing over and over to follow the plan God had in place. Because of that, we can see he was “blessed for being pure in heart” as he continually kept his heart and mind focused on God’s plan, not his own.

We have big and small things for which we continually have to wait on God’s timing. Finding our spouse, getting pregnant, dream jobs, perfect homes. The timing might be short or even before you expect it; the dream you are waiting for may not happen in the way you plan. The waiting can sometimes be as important if not more than the end. The concept of it being about the journey, not the destination, can be true of God’s timing. Many times we aren’t the person we need to be for the blessing God has in store for us. So, he spends the waiting time making us into the person we need to be and arranging life into what it needs to be, so we can be who we need to be for the moment he is taking us to.

Song

[The Waiting by Jamie Grace](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you waited on God and he eventually provided? What is something you’ve been hoping for, uncertain when or if it will happen? Talk to God about it and ask him to direct you in this time of waiting.

Day 3

Sacrificing My Priorities

Scripture

And David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a priestly garment. So David and all the people of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouts of joy and the blowing of rams' horns.

2 Samuel 6:14-15

When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said in disgust, "How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!" David retorted to Michal, "I was dancing before the Lord, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the Lord, so I celebrate before the Lord. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am distinguished!"

2 Samuel 6:20-22

Thought

David could have had an orderly procession, waited for the Ark to be placed in the temple and worshiped the way it would have been expected of a king. He could have made his wife happy, and apologized for embarrassing her, but that wasn't his priority. His priority was first and foremost his relationship with God. He made it clear by celebrating in an untraditional way.

How often do you worry about the world around you? The world tells us many things should be important, but if we prioritize based on the world, there is usually less space left for God. The pure of heart center their heart first on God, then build out their life from there. It's about quieting all the voices and expectations the world places in front of us and letting God speak into our lives. God's expectation is simple:

Be his child. When we come to God with the pure heart of a child, our life becomes that of a child trying to make their parents proud and becoming more like their parent. Not to earn their love, but because they know they are loved.

Song

[Quiet \(stripped\) by Elevation Rhythm](#)

Meditate On This

What are the things you think about first when you wake up? What are the things on your calendar right now? Are those the things that are most important to you, or what the world says is most important?

Day 4

Sacrifice My Justice

Scripture

“Now’s your opportunity!”, David’s men whispered to him. “Today the Lord is telling you, ‘I will certainly put your enemy into your power, to do with as you wish.’” So David crept forward and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul’s robe.

But then David’s conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul’s robe. He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do this to my lord the king. I shouldn’t attack the Lord’s anointed one, for the Lord himself has chosen him.” So David restrained his men and did not let them kill Saul.

1 Samuel 24:4-7

Thought

David waited on God’s timing for the kingdom God had promised him. This is one of many times David could have made the plan his own and got justice for Saul terrorizing him. David could have killed Saul in this moment and then the kingdom would have been his. David would not only have received the kingdom, but also justice. Saul, who continually tried to kill David, would have been gone. But David knew that wasn’t the plan God had set in place. So he waited. He continued to sacrifice his timing for God’s.

Waiting for justice can be one of the hardest sacrifices we make. Whether small or big, not knowing if we will see justice for the wrongs committed against us or someone we love can, at times, be unbearable. However, when we are seeking to be pure of heart, we have to trust that the just God we are centering in our heart will take care of us and justice. It may not be till the next life that justice happens; and whatever justice happens will probably not be what we expect or want in order to feel vindicated. But when we are pure of heart we see God, and everything will fade as we trust God will take care of us.

Song

[Surrounded \(fight my battles\) by Bethel Music, Kari Jobe](#)

Meditate On This

When have you been wronged and wanted to take justice into your own hands? How can you show mercy to your “enemies” this week?

Day 5

Sacrifice My Strength

Scripture

But David persisted. “I have been taking care of my father’s sheep and goats,” he said. “When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. I have done this to both lions and bears, and I’ll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!”

1 Samuel 17:34-37

Thought

The whole of the Israel army was facing the Philistines, scared and untrusting in how God would deliver them. Where King Saul could not trust, David stepped up and said, “I will go because God will save us.” When convincing King Saul to let him face the giant, David could have simply said, “I’ve killed bears and lions with my bare hands” and left it at that. But, he acknowledged it was more than his strength alone that saved him in those situations. It was God. God rescued him. Because God was faithful in the past, David knew God would be faithful in his future. David sacrificed the understanding of strength (as men understand it) to focus on God’s strength. A strength that overwhelms and saves. The pure heart of David trusting God would be faithful in all things, saved Israel that day.

It may be you haven’t had to fight someone and trust God with your physical strength, but how many times do we have to trust God with our emotional strength? How often do we have nothing left, and yet somehow, we are able to keep going? Maybe you’ve had illness in your life, chronic pain or sickness, and God meets you in your weakness to give you strength to continue. Sometimes our acts of faith aren’t big flashing stories like David and Goliath. Sometimes they

are simply waking up and walking through another day with pure heart faith in God to see you through.

Song

[Every Giant Will Fall by Rend Collective](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you have tried to tackle life with your own abilities?
How can you seek God’s strength for what you face this month?

Day 6

Sacrifice My Pride

Scripture

Joab reported the number of people to the king. There were 800,000 capable warriors in Israel who could handle a sword, and 500,000 in Judah.

But after he had taken the census, David's conscience began to bother him. And he said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly by taking this census. Please forgive my guilt, Lord, for doing this foolish thing." The next morning the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, who was David's seer. This was the message: "Go and say to David, 'This is what the Lord says: I will give you three choices. Choose one of these punishments, and I will inflict it on you.'"

So Gad came to David and asked him, "Will you choose three years of famine throughout your land, three months of fleeing from your enemies, or three days of severe plague throughout your land? Think this over and decide what answer I should give the Lord who sent me."

"I'm in a desperate situation!", David replied to Gad. "But let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands."

2 Samuel 24:9-14

Thought

David sinned by wanting to know how big his army was. Even when warned by his advisers that God would increase the army to whatever Israel's need was, David still proceeded to count his army. As soon as the count was reported, David realized how his pride had gotten in the way. There were 1.3 million soldiers ready to fight, but what was that number if God was not with them. God told David he could choose his punishment, and David returned to his faith in God, choosing the punishment that put them at the mercy of God. David was human, but he is considered pure of heart because when his humanity got the better of him, he continued to return to God and trust in him.

How often has pride gotten the better of us? We can do it all, we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, we can achieve the American dream, we can do it all if we try hard enough. And yet, who gives us the breath in our nostrils and one more day to try again at this life? We need to step back and start to realize that, without God, we are nothing on our own. Ridding ourselves of pride and being thankful for the big, little, and simple things God gives us lets us see God in every part of our life.

Song

[Water and Dust by Cory Asbury](#)

Meditate On This

What are the things in your life others would think are of your making? The reality is everything we have is because of God. How can you show others God through the blessings you have received?

Day 7

Sacrifice For the Future

Scripture

“I am going where everyone on earth must someday go. Take courage and be a man. Observe the requirements of the Lord your God, and follow all his ways. Keep the decrees, commands, regulations, and laws written in the Law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and wherever you go. If you do this, then the Lord will keep the promise he made to me. He told me, ‘If your descendants live as they should and follow me faithfully with all their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.’”

1 Kings 2:2-4

Thought

As David was on his deathbed looking back on his life, he didn't talk about the sacrifices, rather he encouraged his son Solomon to continue a life faithful to God and his Law. All the hardships, sacrifices, difficulties, and uncertainties David faced in his life didn't overwhelm the blessing of following God with his whole heart. Not only that, but David wanted to see his family line follow in his footsteps. He had a tumultuous reign with wars and fighting both with other countries and his own family, but he hoped for a better future for his family because he trusted God's promises. Had David been able to know how God's promises would come true, he probably wouldn't have guessed it would look like it did in Jesus and the eternal kingdom he set in place. And yet, God was faithful to David and his family.

God will be faithful to you as well. It won't be how we think it should be, which is probably a good thing. How small would our future and blessings be if God only did what we could imagine. But God, in his wisdom and understanding, gives greater blessing than we can imagine if we have the patience and faithfulness to sacrifice for the future he has promised us. By sacrificing what we think life should be for what God's plan is, even in the hard times, we can look back at

God faithfulness and look forward in hope, knowing we will be able to see God's handwriting our story.

Song

[What the Hard Times Taught Me by Jason Gray](#)

Meditate On This

What are you hoping for the future? What future do you feel God is promising you? What are you willing to sacrifice to see God's promises come true?

Week 3

Sacrifice to Inherit the Earth

Blessed Are the Meek

Day 1

Sacrifice to Inherit the Earth

Scripture

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.

God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they will be satisfied.

God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

“God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

The Beatitudes

~ New Living Translation ~

Thought

Rarely do people desire to be looked at with meekness. Many believe being meek means being a doormat for those around us. When you look at meekness through God's spirit, it turns into a humbleness which understands you don't have to be strong when you have God's spirit with you. Meekness does not mean being used and abused, rather it's knowing you don't have to fight and use people or the system to get what you want. God will fight for you. He will guide you,

showing you when to be strong and bold and when to be humble allowing God to lead you through the hard decisions and places in life. Esther knew that.

Esther is the unique book of the Bible that doesn't mention God, and yet we can see how the steps Esther takes through the story can only be because God is blessing her meekness, and by sacrificing what makes sense to humans, she inherited a safe place to live for herself and her people.

Song

[Gracefully Broken by Matt Redman and Tasha Cobbs Leonard](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you faced a circumstance in humility rather than boldness and it turned out better? When is a time meekness would have been a better position to be?

Day 2

Sacrifice My Freedom

Scripture

As a result of the king's decree, Esther, along with many other young women, was brought to the king's harem at the fortress of Susa and placed in Hegai's care. Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.

Esther 2:8-9

Before each young woman was taken to the king's bed, she was given the prescribed twelve months of beauty treatments—six months with oil of myrrh, followed by six months with special perfumes and ointments. When it was time for her to go to the king's palace, she was given her choice of whatever clothing or jewelry she wanted to take from the harem.

Esther 2:12-13

And the king loved Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti.

Esther 2:17

Thought

Esther sacrificed her freedom for where God was leading her. Even though God isn't spoken about, it was no coincidence that Esther became Queen. However, she still had to follow God in meekness. It shows how she impressed people who were in charge and won their favor. Most likely, Esther didn't have a choice in going to the palace, she was chosen because she was beautiful. But, she had the choice of what depiction to allow to shine through. She could have been isolated, a victim, forced into this life. She could have tried to run or hide when the search for beautiful women started. She didn't. She

could have made it known who she was and maybe been less desirable. She could have openly talked about God or participated in Jewish traditions. However, she sacrificed her freedom, a life where she had more choice to be herself and practice her faith, and in meekness walked the path God had placed her on. Through giving up her personal freedom, she found a great freedom for herself and her people in following the plan God had in store for her.

Everyone wants to be free, able to do what they want when they want it, but the freedom the world promises is only surface freedom. It comes with consequences, brokenness, and shallow hope that leaves us wanting more and chasing a shadow of the freedom only God will give. The freedoms of the world eventually turn to chains and the only way for us to find true freedom is giving up our personal freedom for the freedom of Christ.

Song

[Freedom Hymn by Austin French](#)

Meditate On This

What freedoms are you willing to sacrifice in order to save the lost?

Day 3

Sacrifice My Status

Scripture

Even after all the young women had been transferred to the second harem and Mordecai had become a palace official, Esther continued to keep her family background and nationality a secret. She was still following Mordecai's directions, just as she did when she lived in his home.

Esther 2:19-20

Thought

Esther became Queen, and yet, she didn't let it go to her head. She easily could have dismissed Mordecai as unnecessary now that she had anything she could ask for, but she didn't. She continued to listen to the wisdom of others and didn't hold herself in a place of pride but rather kept the meek humility that led her to eventually save the Jews.

Would you have acted the same in that situation? When was the last time you had a position of authority or power? Often we want to push our position around and command the authority given to us. While we think position is a human thing to give, God makes it clear we only have as much status as he allows. What's more, God will use us whether or not we submit to his ultimate authority. Our role to play, when we gain status and position, is to show ourselves in meekness and that it's not by doing we achieved this position, but by God and then allow God to move through us.

Song

[Famous For \(I Believe\) by Tauren Wells](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you had status and power over others? Did you use that power or serve in meek humility? Why or why not?

Day 4

The Sacrifice of Identity

Scripture

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: “Don’t think for a moment that because you’re in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?”

Esther 4:13-14

Thought

Esther was a Jew living outside of Israel. She was brought into a grand beauty pageant, with the reward becoming Queen, which Esther won. Soon after, the Jews were set to be killed because the King’s adviser didn’t like them. At that point, Esther had a choice to make. She could continue living as people believed her to be, or she could make it known she was a Jew in the hopes of saving her people. Esther thankfully chose to be who God made her to be, a Jewish woman in a position of power, with the humility to bend the ear of a king and save God’s people. Through her sacrifice, she shows meekness yet again, and she was given more than she could have received in her own standing and power.

Identity is a big deal right now. Everyone wants to have their own personal selection of identifying terms that everyone should respect. But what if we’re being called to a greater identity? Esther was told who she was by the people and culture she was living in, but stripped it away for God’s purpose. Stripping away our identifying words, the pieces of ourselves we feel give us power or connection with others can be terrifying. If we become simply a child of God, there is nothing left of us. It might leave us feeling vulnerable or out of control, but when we do that in meekness, the world no longer has power over us. Our identity belongs to God at that point, who is always faithful, loves unconditionally, and never changes.

Song

[You Say by Lauren Daigle](#)

Meditate On This

What are words you use to identify yourself? What would it feel like to lose all those identities to keep only “Child of God?”

Day 5

Sacrifice My Fear

Scripture

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the King. If I must die, I must die.”

Esther 4:15-16

Thought

The last thing Esther wanted to do was go before the King. Maybe it was the doubt of a girl: how much did the King actually like her? He'd forgotten about her. It had been a month since the King called, which most likely meant he was hanging out in the harem. All the doubts and discomforts swirled and added to the fear of what Esther was being asked to do. But she gave up all the fear, knowing if this is what she was called to do for her people, then one way or another it would be for a purpose. So, in her meek humility, she called on everyone to pray and fast. She didn't just leave and march to the King demanding changes, she prepared her mind, spirit, and community for what would be attempted, leaving all of us with the famous words “If I perish, then I perish.”

Fear is a strong feeling. But really, it's just worry out of control. When we worry about the things we can't control and let the possibilities of what could happen to take over us, fear starts taking the front seat. It starts hiding the truth of God from us. When we let fear take control, we forget who is really in charge. If we remind ourselves God is in control and we were made for a purpose, the burden of “what if” is removed from us and we can say “God's will be done in me.”

Song

[Fear Not by Kristene Dimarco](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you felt God asking you to do something you were afraid to do? How was God faithful when you sacrificed your fear?

Day 6

Sacrifice with Purpose

Scripture

On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the King's hall. The King was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

Then the King asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

And Esther replied, "If it please the King, let the King and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the King."

The King turned to his attendants and said, "Tell Haman to come quickly to a banquet, as Esther has requested." So the King and Haman went to Esther's banquet.

And while they were drinking wine, the King said to Esther, "Now tell me what you really want. What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!"

Esther replied, "This is my request and deepest wish. If I have found favor with the King, and if it pleases the King to grant my request and do what I ask, please come with Haman tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for you. Then I will explain what this is all about."

Esther 5:1-8

Thought

Esther could have just marched into the King's court and demanded he save the Jews. She could have figured, I'll just get it over with and whatever happens happens, but she didn't take the risk and sacrifice to throw it all away in a torrent of demands and boldness, especially in that society. We can tell through the story, the King is infatuated, if not in love, with Esther. He offers her half his kingdom every time they talk. But Esther has a purpose to the risk and sacrifices she has made and she keeps her focus on the purpose, not the task; that's what makes God-centered sacrifice worth it in the end. Sacrifice for sacrifice's sake becomes frustrating, and we quickly lose our drive.

However, for a purpose that we've sold out for, sacrifice leads to blessings in our lives, either now or in eternity. And it is by giving up what we want and submitting to where God is leading that we find what the true purpose of our sacrifice is really.

Song

[Have Your Way by Britt Nicole](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you've had to sacrifice for something that was greater? What happened?

Day 7

Sacrifice Power

Scripture

Then Esther went again before the King, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop the evil plot devised by Haman, the Agagite against the Jews. Again the King held out the gold scepter to Esther. So she rose and stood before him.

Esther said, "If it please the King, and if I have found favor with him, and if he thinks it is right, and if I am pleasing to him, let there be a decree that reverses the orders of Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, who ordered that Jews throughout all the King's provinces should be destroyed. For how can I endure to see my people and my family slaughtered and destroyed?"

Then King Xerxes said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given Esther the property of Haman, and he has been impaled on a pole because he tried to destroy the Jews. Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews in the King's name, telling them whatever you want, and seal it with the King's signet ring. But remember that whatever has already been written in the King's name and sealed with his signet ring can never be revoked."

Esther 8:3-8

Thought

The King couldn't magically undo the decree he made. So the Jews were still set to die, even though Mordecai was safe from Haman's spear. So, Esther once again asked the King to help her people and he gave her free reign. Her demeanor of meek humility had granted her the full reign of the King's power. She proved trustworthy, writing an edict that the Jews could protect themselves from their enemies.

How often is this not our first thought, given a little bit of power? We're given the opportunity to make rules and decrees, and we jump at the chance to make the world our version of a better place. It is like this in the kingdom of God as well. We are held accountable for the power given to us, and told to use it well; power of influence, spiritual power, and positional power. God does not give those things lightly, and it is

our use of it that can either make us apart of God's plan like Esther, or a casualty in wake of God's plan like Haman.

Song

[Power by Elevation Worship](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you had position or power over others? Did you use it for your benefit or for the benefit of others?

Week 4

The Sacrifice for Mercy and Comfort

Blessed are the Merciful

Blessed are those Who Mourn

Day 1

The Sacrifice for Mercy and Comfort

Scripture

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all
kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be
exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they
persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Beatitudes

~ New King James Version ~

Thought

Ruth sacrificed what she knew for an unknown life. Even after the death of her husband, in the midst of her mourning. She sacrificed staying in her hometown with the friends and family she had known her whole life, with the culture and traditions she knew, to move with her mother-in-law to a foreign place. She would have been much more certain of what would have happened if she had left when Naomi told her to. But instead, she sacrificed that certainty and received the blessing of comfort in her sorrow and mercy for the mercy she showed Naomi.

When life is hard, it's easy for us to start focusing on ourselves and our own hurt and problems. God's goal is not for us to live in our grief or hardships, but to walk through it. Often he sends people to us to help. Ruth shows us that sometimes by reaching outside of our personal struggles, the very people we give mercy and comfort to may be the key to receiving it in our own lives.

Song

[You Already Know by JJ Heller](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you had a burden, difficulty, or loss? How did God send mercy and comfort to you?

Day 2

Sacrifice My Home

Scripture

But Naomi replied, “Why should you go on with me? Can I still give birth to other sons who could grow up to be your husbands? No, my daughters, return to your parents’ homes, for I am too old to marry again. And even if it were possible, and I were to get married tonight and bear sons, then what? Would you wait for them to grow up and refuse to marry someone else? No, of course not, my daughters!

Things are far more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord himself has raised his fist against me.”

And again they wept together, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye. But Ruth clung tightly to Naomi. “Look,” Naomi said to her, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. You should do the same.”

But Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

Ruth 1:11-18

Thought

Ruth sacrificed living in the land and country she always knew, with the people she always knew, to be faithful to Naomi. Even while she was still mourning for her loss of a husband, which also meant safety and security in that time period, she still went. She became an immigrant and left the comfort of home, where you know people, traditions, and you have inside jokes. It might have been exciting at moments, but knowing Ruth was committing herself to a future where she may never see home again was a sacrifice many of us will never understand. She did it to mourn with Naomi and show mercy to her in spite of her own grief.

But God gave Ruth mercy. She wasn’t left without home or family long. She was given a new life, home, and family through her faithfulness to Naomi.

Each of us are extended this mercy. God welcomes each of us into his family and house. Many of us come with burdens: grief, shame, fear, loneliness. God wants to give us only the comfort he can give if we are willing to leave those burdens behind us and enter his home and family for eternity.

Song

[The Father’s House by Cory Asbury](#)

Meditate On This

Think about a time you left home, whether a short time or permanently. What did you miss about home? What was the blessing of leaving?

Day 3

Sacrifice My Culture

Scripture

And the foreman replied, “She is the young woman from Moab who came back with Naomi. She asked me this morning if she could gather grain behind the harvesters. She has been hard at work ever since, except for a few minutes’ rest in the shelter.”

Boaz went over and said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Stay right here with us when you gather grain; don’t go to any other fields. Stay right behind the young women working in my field. See which part of the field they are harvesting, and then follow them. I have warned the young men not to treat you roughly. And when you are thirsty, help yourself to the water they have drawn from the well.”

Ruth fell at his feet and thanked him warmly. “What have I done to deserve such kindness?” she asked. “I am only a foreigner.”

Ruth 2:6-10

Thought

In biblical times, you stuck with your people. It was the safest thing. You stick with the people you know, who understand how you do things, get what life means to you. Culture, tribe, people, whatever you want to call it, humans naturally group up. Ruth knew this, and knew she wouldn’t fit in. She wasn’t Jewish, even though she had married one. At some point, she took on the faith, but culturally, she wasn’t a Jew. She lived her whole life in a different land doing life differently. Throughout the story of Ruth, Naomi explains life to Ruth. Maybe in part the author was making sure the reader understood what was happening. In reality though, it truly was Naomi explaining how things worked in the new land Ruth had come to. Everything was foreign to the foreigner. She had sacrificed her culture to be merciful to Naomi.

This might strike home a little more to a world that has become obsessed with our identity and culture being recognized and accepted by others. But, daily there are those we call missionaries who leave the home they’ve always known and go to a different country. They sacrifice the culture they’ve always known to learn and take on another, for the sake of reaching those who are lost.

You may not be called to go to a different country, but you may be called to go to a different neighborhood, or a different school, or a different check-out line to interact with someone that is different than you, so they, too, can learn who Jesus is. It won’t always be easy, but take heart. God goes before you, just as he went before Ruth. When we are willing to sacrifice for the sake of others, God prepares the way. It’s obedience combined with sacrifice God calls us to.

Song

[Culture of Love by Junior Garr](#)

Meditate On This

How would you identify your culture? What are other cultures or ways of life you feel God may be prompting you to minister to?

Day 4

Sacrifice My Time

Scripture

So Ruth gathered barley there all day, and when she beat out the grain that evening, it filled an entire basket. She carried it back into town and showed it to her mother-in-law. Ruth also gave her the roasted grain that was left over from her meal.

“Where did you gather all this grain today?” Naomi asked. “Where did you work? May the Lord bless the one who helped you!”

So Ruth told her mother-in-law about the man in whose field she had worked. She said, “The man I worked with today is named Boaz.”

“May the Lord bless him!” Naomi told her daughter-in-law. “He is showing his kindness to us as well as to your dead husband. That man is one of our closest relatives, one of our family redeemers.”

Then Ruth said, “What’s more, Boaz even told me to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed.”

“Good!” Naomi exclaimed. “Do as he said, my daughter. Stay with his young women right through the whole harvest. You might be harassed in other fields, but you’ll be safe with him.”

So Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz’s fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she continued working with them through the wheat harvest in early summer. And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law.

Ruth 2:17-23

Thought

Gathering barley behind the harvesters was hard work. Ruth would have been stooped over for hours at a time collecting single stalks of grain that fell. She worked the whole day, and there was no air conditioner to cool her off in the heat of the day. After she spent the day gathering stalks, she still had to process the stalks by beating the grains out, so when she got home they could be milled and used for flour. It was hard work, and took much of her time. She could have told Naomi she needed to come help, or quit because it was too hard. But, she continued to show mercy and do what was necessary to

provide for Naomi. We see how, as she was showing mercy to Naomi, Ruth in turn received mercy from Boaz.

While God can just give us things, like any good father, he knows sometimes we need to put the work in. God meets us in our efforts and can bless them with better results or providential circumstances. Sometimes we don’t see how God is working through our efforts because of the struggle of time. But, he meets us with mercy, helping us become the version of us he created us to be.

Song

[Last by Micah Tyler](#)

Meditate On This

When have you given your time for someone else and felt blessed at the end, even if you weren’t looking forward to it at the beginning?

Day 5

Sacrifice My Grief

Scripture

One day Naomi said to Ruth, “My daughter, it’s time that I found a permanent home for you, so that you will be provided for. Boaz is a close relative of ours, and he’s been very kind by letting you gather grain with his young women. Tonight he will be winnowing barley at the threshing floor. Now do as I tell you—take a bath and put on perfume and dress in your nicest clothes. Then go to the threshing floor, but don’t let Boaz see you until he has finished eating and drinking. Be sure to notice where he lies down; then go and uncover his feet and lie down there. He will tell you what to do.” “I will do everything you say,” Ruth replied.

Ruth 3:1-5

Thought

After everything Naomi had been through, she realizes it’s time for her family to move on. She could have stuck to her grief, never letting go of the past and what she lost, but she realized that wouldn’t be fair for Ruth, and it would end her family line. Who knows if Naomi would have left her grief had Ruth not traveled with her, but because of the sacrifices of Ruth, Naomi realizes it’s time to leave her grief behind. So, she finally starts putting off her grief and moves to provide a future for her family. She instructs Ruth to make it clear she is available to marry. We don’t know for certain, but Ruth may have still been dressing as a widow in grieving, whether she still wanted this or as a respect for Naomi. Ruth followed Naomi’s lead and together the women sacrificed their grief in hope of a blessing to follow. They didn’t know what would happen as a result of this sacrifice, but trusted in God’s promise and hoped for comfort and mercy in their future.

While losing a loved one may be an obvious moment of grief, we grieve many things in life that we lose or even just a dream. For some, losing long-held dreams may be more difficult than having them come true and then losing them. We’ve all had times where we’ve had to

grieve. But living with grief is not what God has called us to. Sometimes, before we are ready or prepared to do it, we are called to sacrifice our grief and move on to what God has prepared for us next.

Song

[Sound of a Living Heart by JJ Heller](#)

Meditate On This

What is a moment of grief in your life? What told you it was time to sacrifice the grief and move onto what God had next?

Day 6

Sacrifice My Choice

Scripture

So she went down to the threshing floor that night and followed the instructions of her mother-in-law.

After Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he lay down at the far end of the pile of grain and went to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly, uncovered his feet, and lay down. Around midnight Boaz suddenly woke up and turned over. He was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet! “Who are you?” he asked.

“I am your servant Ruth,” she replied. “Spread the corner of your covering over me, for you are my family redeemer.”

“The Lord bless you, my daughter!” Boaz exclaimed. “You are showing even more family loyalty now than you did before, for you have not gone after a younger man, whether rich or poor. Now don’t worry about a thing, my daughter. I will do what is necessary, for everyone in town knows you are a virtuous woman. But while it’s true that I am one of your family redeemers, there is another man who is more closely related to you than I am. Stay here tonight, and in the morning I will talk to him. If he is willing to redeem you, very well. Let him marry you. But if he is not willing, then as surely as the Lord lives, I will redeem you myself! Now lie down here until morning.”

Ruth 3:6-13

Thought

It was a different time and place to what we live in. I wonder how willing Ruth’s heart was in the tradition and expectation she had to play in the future of the family she wasn’t biologically related to? Ruth made it known to Boaz that he was their kinsman redeemer. And as soon as that happened, it set off a process where Ruth had no choice in what happened to her. The process assured that Naomi’s family would have a future, not that Ruth would be happy with it. What fear might she have had when she found out there could be a different man that redeems the family, a stranger she had never met and had no idea of his character. Yet she stayed and sacrificed any choice she had in the process. While it’s not specifically mentioned, it’s because

of her faith in God. You don’t sacrifice in these ways for yourself or just because you love your mother-in-law. Through this process, Ruth sacrifices herself for the plan God has for her, a plan that includes family, home, and a future.

Are you willing to sacrifice your choices for the better blessings God has in store for you? We love options and the control it lets us feel we have over our lives. Yet, sometimes God makes it clear, we are to walk a path we don’t want to choose, one that removes choices from our lives; staying at a job we hate, being faithful in a loveless marriage, parenting our grandchildren or children with high need disabilities, fostering, or being a single parent. When first faced with the difficulties, the responsibility may be more than we feel we can bear, but when we sacrifice the choices we want to make, we can experience the blessings God has for us in those situations, many times in ways we don’t expect or would ever imagine.

Song

[Control by Tenth Avenue North](#)

Meditate On This

What is a circumstance or responsibility God is asking you to take on that you are unsure of how it will turn out or if you can even manage it?

Day 7

Sacrifice My Dreams

Scripture

So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the Lord enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women of the town said to Naomi, "Praise the Lord, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!" Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. The neighbor woman said, "Now at last Naomi has a son again!" And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

Ruth 4:13-17

Thought

When Ruth and Naomi left for Moab, they didn't know what would be in front of them. Life for a widow was not easy, especially one without family, and what's more, Ruth was a foreigner. All Ruth could prepare for was a hard life. She was leaving certainty and her dreams behind. She had no husband or children, and the likelihood of someone picking a foreigner for a wife when there were plenty of women there already was highly unlikely. Yet, Ruth sacrificed. And God blessed. Ruth gave mercy to her mother-in-law and stayed with her, helping her "more than seven sons." As a result, God gave Ruth dreams she most likely thought had died as soon as she came to Bethlehem, a husband and a child, and a lineage. One that eventually gives way to the savior of the world.

Dreams are tricky things. Sometimes we are certain that something we want with all our soul is the only possible future for us. Then we get it and are less than thrilled. Sometimes the dream we think we understand turns out completely different. When we sacrifice our

dreams for what God calls us to do, our life may not be what we thought or wanted, but it will be amazing. When we look back, either in this life or the next, we'll be able to see God's hand working his plan through it for our good and the good of others.

Song

[Hope Returns by Matthew West](#)

Meditate On This

What is a dream you had that you had to sacrifice? What has become the new dream God has placed in your life?

Week 5

Sacrifice for Righteousness and Peace

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness and Blessed are the
peacemakers

Day 1

Sacrifice for Righteousness and Peace

Scripture

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Beatitudes

~ English Standard Version ~

Thought

Daniel was an Israelite brought into exile. He was little more than a slave and only had what was given to him because of the knowledge and wisdom God gave him time and time again. Through all of his trials, Daniel was able to trust God was there with him because of God's faithfulness in the past. Daniel could have tried to fight in subversive ways to get the Israelites back to Jerusalem. He could have tried to escape or refused to cooperate, but Daniel fought in a very tumultuous and adverse environment to live a life of righteousness and peace. He implored the people, who were literally his enemies, to come to God and realize their humanity. He fought his whole life for the righteousness of God and to bring peace to the place where he was placed by God. We aren't strangers to this concept. Regardless of what groups you associate with within our world, everyone can agree this world is in discord, disunity, and hostility. Our

first reaction may be to fight for our rights, the things we deserve in life or don't deserve, but the example we have from Daniel is, when we trust God in his faithfulness, God will do the hard work. We only need to follow in faithfulness the path God has for us. So, the question we should be faced with day after day is how will we influence the world, not for what we want, but for God's kingdom? How can we bring Jesus' peace and righteousness to a world that has none of it?

Song

[Make a Way by I am They](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you've been in an adverse or even hostile environment? How did you interact with or affect it?

Day 2

Sacrifice the Easy Way

Scripture

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

Daniel 1:8-10

Thought

Eating food is easy. It would have been easy for Daniel to say they *have* to eat the food that is there. They don't have a choice, they're in captivity. But, Daniel put his safety and security on the line and sacrificed what was easy to do with what was right in a peaceful way. He wasn't belligerent, and he didn't try to force it to happen. He didn't become a victim who just stopped eating and moaned about how there was nothing he could eat because he was Jew. He went to the leader and presented an opportunity which could be accepted, even though he was little more than a slave. God blessed Daniel for his sacrifice, not by making things easy or giving him a way to go home, but by giving him wisdom and knowledge which could be used in their current circumstances.

We are given opportunities day-in and day-out to choose easy things or what God is calling us to. It may be simple things, such as when we're asked how our weekend went, talking about weekend service, or not saying anything about church because you shouldn't talk about religion in the workplace. You could say you have plans for Wednesday night or you could say you're going to your small group. It's not always the difference of truth versus lies, but honesty versus concealment. You can do a lot without lying, but you may not have a hunger and thirst for righteousness which God calls us to. We have to

take small steps in following Jesus and seeing him faithful in those moments to be able to experience and acknowledge his presence and faithfulness in the big things of life.

Song

[You Are Faithful by Carrolton](#)

Meditate On This

What is something you've given up on because that's just how it is, even if it's not God's plan? What can you do to "hunger and thirst for righteousness" in a peaceful way?

Day 3

Sacrifice Logic

Scripture

“If you don’t tell me the dream, you are doomed. So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I’ll know that you can tell me what it means.”
The astrologers replied to the king, “No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! The king’s demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people.”

Daniel 2:9-11

When Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. He asked Arioch, “Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?” So Arioch told him all that had happened. Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant. Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

Daniel 2:14-19

Thought

The king asked Daniel to tell him his dream and what it meant; an impossible task, and yet Daniel asked for more time. He didn’t commiserate with the other wise men on how this couldn’t be done. Daniel’s hunger for God every day of his life told him he could sacrifice human logic and have trust that God would see him through this. We see him worshipping as he and his friends ask God to reveal the truth to him. God does just this, and the lives of all the wise men are saved. Not just Daniel and his friends, but also the wise men who are actively against Daniel, and make plots against Daniel and his

friends. Daniel’s hunger and thirst for righteousness and desire for peace kept him from separating from the blessing of safety God gave him. Even though he had the opportunity to tell the king it was only Daniel and his friends that should be saved, Daniel wasn’t interested in anything other than giving glory to God.

When we read this story in the Bible, we are struck with the simplicity with which Daniel approaches the problem. There seems to be no question to Daniel that he can do this with God’s help and all he needs is time. Sacrificing logic may be more difficult. It may be difficult to believe God will come through when human logic tells us there is no food in the house, or money in the bank account, or jobs to be found. When we feel no help is there for us, we struggle to push past the human logic and see God’s righteousness. Daniel had the truth that God had been faithful in the past in his heart and mind. He was able to continually sacrifice logic because God continued to bless him and see him through time after time, in increasingly larger ways. Usually, our first sacrifice of logic to trust God won’t be big and dramatic like what we see in Daniel’s story. Many times, it will be the simple step of acknowledging God helped us make it through this day, and he will help us through tomorrow. I’m sure that’s where Daniel started as he was marched from his home city, as it burned to the ground, into a far off land where anything could happen to him (if he even survived the journey).

Song

[Even the Impossible by Mack Brock](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time logic said something wasn’t possible, but God made it happen?

Day 4

Sacrifice Safety and Security

Scripture

But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Long live the king! You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments. That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace.

But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”

Daniel 3:8-18

Thought

Much of our lives are spent trying to decipher the morality of different decisions and opportunities we face. Then there are some things that are clearly right and some things that are clearly wrong. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew bowing to worship anyone or anything other than God was wrong. There was no doubt in their mind or trying to soften the issue into something more palatable. This was wrong.

They knew it because they hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness. They were willing to sacrifice safety and security no matter the cost because the righteousness of God was greater than anything this world had to offer. They didn’t hedge their bets in how they told the king about this understanding. They didn’t say God will save us and let that be that. They clearly stated, even if God didn’t save them, death with God is better than life without him.

Even if. Have you been faced with that uncertainty? You think you know where God is leading, maybe. Sometimes you have no idea, you just feel like you’re in a foggy mess of a middle with no clarity; and you want the safety and security of knowing what’s going to happen. But sometimes, God asks us to trust him, even if we don’t get what we hope for. Even if the rug gets pulled out from under us. Even if. The sacrifice that comes with those two words may feel greater than you can handle, but we are promised to be filled up if we hunger after God’s righteousness. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendego, we will be able to face the fires of the world knowing we will have God in this life, and we will have God in the next life.

Song

[Even If by Mercy Me](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you were faced with the uncertainty of what God’s plan for you was? Did you have an “Even If” moment?

Day 5

Sacrifice Wealth

Scripture

My wise men and enchanters have tried to read the words on the wall and tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck.

You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom.” Daniel answered the king, “Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

Daniel 5:15-21

Thought

The new king was willing to give Daniel wealth and status, if he would tell him what the terrifying unreadable message meant. Daniel immediately dismissed the offer. His treasure was not in the world. Daniel had seen the rise and fall of kings and was getting ready to tell another king his reign was soon to be over. What did Daniel care about things that were fleeting and only as good as the person that gave them to him? Rather, Daniel continued to hunger and thirst for

righteousness, following God’s direction through the wisdom and knowledge God gave him.

Would you have been so quick to dismiss the wealth? Many of us would have easily been able to justify accepting it. The king was offering it, he might as well get something for his efforts, what harm does it do? All these seem fair, but when you remember to ‘right side’ your focus and think about hunger and thirst for righteousness, offers of wealth soon become not enough incentive to do something. It’s a deep heartache we have to develop for the righteousness of God, so everything else offered to us seems trivial, let alone an actual incentive.

Song

[Treasures by Crossway Worship](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you knew in your spirit something was the wrong choice, even though the money made it seem like a good idea?

Day 6

Sacrifice Popularity

Scripture

Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.

Daniel 6:3-4

Thought

Daniel's peers didn't like him. They didn't like that an outsider, who didn't follow their customs or religion, was put in a higher position than them. Daniel could have cared. He could have started changing who he was so his peers liked him. Or he could have started giving them some of the credit for what God was doing in him. He could have done a lot of things, but Daniel was fully fixed on the righteousness and peace of God. He sacrificed popularity and what others thought about him for God. Daniel kept his priorities in the right place, and because of his hunger and thirst for righteousness, we see him continue to influence the kings of that time and work for peace and righteousness.

I don't know how easy it was for Daniel, but not caring what others think and only caring about what God thinks, and searching for his peace and righteousness, is not an easy task for most of us. It's even more difficult when we are in an environment that is hostile toward Christians. Maybe it was easy for Daniel, maybe not, but we can see the fruit of Daniel's sacrifice through the story of his life. Popularity is a fleeting, immediate benefit which rarely has longevity. There is always someone better, faster, stronger, prettier, and so on and so on. When

we remind ourselves how temporary the popularity of this world is compared to God's righteousness and peace, our sacrifice becomes purposeful. Daniel wasn't belligerent or divisive in his lack of interest in popularity. He still wanted God's peace to be known in the kingdom and displayed that in his consistency of character. He didn't fight for peace when the king was around and create discord in other areas. His character was the same no matter who was around, and it made it impossible for anyone to say anything against him.

Song

[Who Am I by NEEDTOBREATHE](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you sacrificed popularity for what God was calling you to? How did it turn out?

Day 7

Sacrifice the Fight

Scripture

So they concluded, “Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion.” So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, “Long live King Darius! We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked.” So King Darius signed the law. But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.

Daniel 6:3-10

Thought

Daniel didn't need to fight for himself. God had faithfully maneuvered Daniel through all the difficulties Babylon had placed before him. God's faithfulness could not be questioned in Daniel's life, so Daniel continued to be faithful to God, doing what he was called to. Daniel didn't know if God would continue to call him to walk through this life or if Daniel was thinking it was finally his time to be called to heaven, but he continued in faithfulness to walk the uncertainty God called him to.

Sometimes all God calls you to is faithfully trusting him to fight for you. Peaceful fighting through prayer seems ridiculous in the way the world works, but as we look through history, prayer is a mighty weapon for someone who trusts God. The struggle of fighting through peaceful prayer is giving up the expectation of outcome. When we ask God to fight for us, we want to win by terms of this world, we want a good life, a healthy family, a nice home, and all our needs and wants met, but

when we hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God, we are reminded the kingdom of God doesn't care about the worldly expectations, but it is about bringing more people to God.

Song

[Battle Belongs by Phil Wickham](#)

Meditate On This

What are human rules you are following over God's rules? They don't have to be laws, but could be cultural rules you've accepted such as not talking about faith or offering to pray for people. When is a time God won the battle in a different way than you expected?

Week 6

The Ultimate Sacrifice

You are blessed when they insult you and
persecute you

Day 1

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Scripture

“The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted.
The gentle are blessed, for they will inherit the earth.
Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed,
for they will be filled.
The merciful are blessed, for they will be shown mercy.
The pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God.
The peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God.
Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed,
for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say
every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice,
because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they
persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

~ Holman Christian Standard Bible ~

Thought

As we enter into the Easter celebration, it is good to look at a few of the events of Jesus' last week, commonly called the Passion Week. It is also important as we are studying through the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, to look at an additional "Blessed" statement. This statement was not made by Jesus, but about Jesus. "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Jesus is the Messiah, and the people of Israel knew that. They may not have fully understood the Messiah that Jesus was, but they knew he was the promised one. We who are non-Jews do not fully comprehend how well the Jewish people knew the scriptures about the Messiah. When the Magi came to King Herod after the birth of Jesus, Herod asked the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah was to be born (Matthew 2:1-6). They did not say to him, give us a few years or even a few months, they told him "In Bethlehem of Judea." They knew about the

Messiah. In the Parable of the Tenants (Matthew 21:33-46), Jesus talks of a vineyard owner (God) and some tenants of the vineyard (the chief priests and Pharisees). Verse 45 says, "the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them." Jesus clearly says in this parable that God sent his son, and the religious leaders understood it. They knew Jesus was the Messiah. Then John sends his disciples to Jesus to ask, "are you the Messiah or should we look for another?" (Matthew 11:2-6). Jesus could have simply said "I am the Messiah", but instead he gives an answer that may seem a little incomplete to us. However, to a Jew, it spoke volumes, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them." A Jew would know these were the signs of the Messiah (Isaiah 29:18-19).

It is through Jesus that we receive the final and fullest of blessings. And yet, it doesn't come without sacrifice. The Beatitudes end with a seemingly less than blissful description of persecution and insult, but because we can trust Jesus is the Messiah, the solution God had promised since the first sin, we can trust the sacrifice we are called to has the blessings he promised.

Song

[How Deep the Father's Love by Selah](#)

Meditate On This

What blessings of Jesus' kingdom are desirable for you? Which are less desirable?

Day 2

Sacrifice Religion

Scripture

And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’ But you have made it a den of robbers.” And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.

Mark 11:15-18

Thought

This is the second time Jesus has cleared the temple of those who were buying and selling. The first time is recorded in John 2:13-17.

The two phrases Jesus says when he clears the temple are from the Old Testament and this is why Jesus says “Is it not written?” “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7) and “But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Jeremiah 7:11)

The first quote is important because it speaks to a God that loves all nations, not just the Jews. Before the crucifixion of Jesus, the presence of God dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the temple. All people were welcome to come and pray before God.

The second quote is the one that really speaks to God wanting us to worship him in Spirit and in truth. Jeremiah 7:8-11 says: “Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go

after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the LORD.”

Do we willingly lie, steal, cheat on our spouses, and seek after things that continually draw us away from God? When we do these things, and then gather together before God thinking no one knows who we really are or how we act, then we, too, make the house of God a den of robbers! While the people were doing what they were “supposed” to do, they weren’t seeking the heart of God. It was religion, not a relationship.

Even though the world will mock you for giving up the good things of this world for the riches of God, Jesus invites you into a kingdom of upside down blessing which calls us to sacrifice check lists and religion of the world for a relationship with our heavenly father.

Song

[Who You Say I Am by Hillsong Worship](#)

Meditate On This

What is something you have in your life or heart that needs cleared out by Jesus to make more room for God? When is a time you’ve sacrificed the ways of the world for the ways of God?

Day 3

Sacrifice Your Position

Scripture

Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

John 13:3-5

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

John 13:12-17

Thought

Jesus made it clear to the disciples there was nothing above or beneath them because Jesus did the servant's job. Jesus often spoke in parables. The disciples seemed to struggle to fully understand what he was saying, but this is something Jesus made crystal clear. You are to serve others, no matter how simple or demeaning the job. If you were to lead in his kingdom, you were to serve others.

It's a concept that continues the seemingly backwards kingdom Jesus laid out with the Beatitudes. The ways of the world will only get you as far as the world can take you, but for an eternal kingdom, you have to

see past this world and into eternity. It no longer is about what this world can promise you through climbing status and corporate ladders, but what you can take with you into the next world, which is yourself and others.

So, the question is how much do your hands and feet follow Jesus. Are you willing to give up your position to step down into the trenches and serve others. It's not just about giving up yourself, you have to sacrifice more than that to follow Jesus. It's not just giving up, but giving yourself to others.

Song

[Less Like Me by Zach Williams](#)

Meditate On This

When was the last time you gave up your position to serve someone?
Were you worried about what others thought?

Day 4

Remember Sacrifice

Scripture

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing, it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mat 26:26-29

Thought

The Last Supper, the Lord's Supper, Communion, the Eucharist, all names that have been given to what Jesus did here. But the real name for what is taking place is the Passover meal. You must understand Passover to fully understand what we call the Last Supper, and why Jesus said "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Luke:22-15

The Israelites were in captivity and bondage in Egypt. God had demonstrated His mighty power over and over in order to free them, but Pharaoh would not release them. There was only one thing left to do, kill the firstborn of every household, the firstborn of all the livestock, everything. Except the Israelites were commanded to take a lamb, kill it, take some of the blood, and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel, as a sign for God to pass over that house; death would not enter it. They were to roast the lamb and eat it standing up, with their sandals on their feet and their belt around their waist. They were not even to take time to let the bread rise, but to make it unleavened. They were to eat in haste, because in the morning, so great would be the sorrow in Egypt that the Israelites would, not only be released

from captivity, but the Egyptians would beg them to go and give them all of their gold and silver to leave.

And this revealed God's plan. Similar to the Israelites, we are in captivity and bondage to sin. No matter how great God's power is, we cannot break free of the hold of sin. So, there is only one thing for God to do, demand the sacrifice of the firstborn, and not just any firstborn, but God's firstborn, Jesus. The sign God gives that death will pass over us is the same as it was for the Israelites. Think about what it looked like as they spread the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel:



Just like the Israelites, we, too, are saved by the blood of the lamb! And with great haste, we are to accept and partake in this salvation. There is no time to wait, freedom is coming in the morning to all who are covered by the blood of the Lamb!

Is it any wonder Jesus told his disciples he earnestly desired to eat this Passover with them? He *IS* the lamb, it is His Passover, it is his blood applied to us. Remembering the sacrifice Jesus made helps us when it's time to make our own sacrifice. While other "religions" have people sacrifice out of fear or for control, Jesus calls us to a life of sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. And weekly, we remind ourselves that whatever we are called to sacrifice, it is still less than the sacrifice Jesus has already done for us.

Song

[Communion by Third Day](#)

Meditate On This

What are your thoughts and feelings as you reflect on the sacrifice of Jesus and that God has planned this from the beginning?

Day 5

Sacrifice for Relationship

Scripture

“Then Jesus went with them to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, “Sit here while I go over there to pray.” He took Peter and Zebedee’s two sons, James and John, and he became anguished and distressed. He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, “My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”

Matthew 26:36-39

Thought

The time of Jesus' death was close, and he withdrew to the garden to pray. When he prayed, he asked God to remove the cup from him. There are many thoughts about what this meant, but a good guess would look at what Jesus said earlier in scripture: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)

Jesus was about to take on the sin of all mankind. Jesus also knew that sinful man cannot exist in the presence of God. So, for the first time in all eternity, Jesus was about to be separated from the Father. This was something he had never known, and did not want to know or experience. It is something no one in this life has ever experienced except Jesus. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he taught: “God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” Even when man does not acknowledge God, he still experiences the blessings of God.

And now, Jesus was going to be without God. As he took on the sins of the world, God would turn his back on his son. Jesus knew this, and did not want to experience it. Isaiah 66 gives us a glimpse of hell: “For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched.” But the worst part of hell is total separation from God. That will be a great anguish for many people. If people only realized how greatly this distressed Jesus, it alone would move them to repentance.

And yet, Jesus sacrificed for us. He knew in order to have a relationship with us, his sacrifice would be the only way. And that’s how much he loves us. We can never repay this sacrifice, not even a little. So, the best we can do is try to live the life he called us to. Follow him in living a life backward according to the world’s standards and keep our eye on the eternal prize he has for us, and everyone we bring with us.

Song

[The God who Stays by Matthew West](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you felt separated from God? What goodness or blessing still existed in your life at that time? Who would you be willing to sacrifice for if you knew they would come to heaven for it? What would you be willing to sacrifice?

Day 6

Sacrifice a Defense

Scripture

Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about him and had been hoping for a long time to see him perform a miracle. He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer. Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. Then Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Finally, they put a royal robe on him and sent him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:8-11

Thought

When we know we're right and done nothing wrong, we want to defend ourselves. We want everyone to know, at the least, we aren't wrong and, at best, we are right. And while both of these things are true of Jesus, he didn't defend himself. He stood in silence.

He sacrificed his own defense, name, and justice for our sake. He easily could have proven everything he said and claimed was true, and yet he allowed all the hurts and lies to pile up one on top of another as people that praised him days earlier, now cursed him and called for his death.

We are not to escape this sacrifice. We are blessed when we are persecuted. It isn't our job to prove we are right or without fault. It's our job to live a life that exemplifies the good news of Jesus. And, often it is through not speaking that our message is heard the loudest. It is in our silence God can speak for us, through the actions of us simply following in Jesus' footsteps. Who doesn't defend themselves? Why would people hate someone who is good, and kind, and giving, and caring? Those are the questions that cause curiosity for the

Kingdom of God. Living a life contrary to what people expect is what causes people to think, maybe, just maybe, there is a better way to live.

Song

[The God Who Fights for Me by ZOE Worship](#)

Meditate On This

When is a time you let your actions speak for you rather than your voice? Have you ever fought to be right more than fighting to serve others?

Day 7

The Final Sacrifice

Scripture

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock. Then at three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. "Wait!" he said. "Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down!"

Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "This man truly was the Son of God!"

Mark 15:33-39

Thought

There are many things to learn from the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. But there is one of great importance I think often goes overlooked: "And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." The gospel of John tells us that Jesus' loud cry was "It is finished." What is significant about this? Jesus crying out "it is finished", dying, and the curtain of the temple torn in two?

First, remember how God created mankind for fellowship with Himself. When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, that relationship was damaged. And from that moment until this moment on the cross, everything is all about God's plan to restore man back into relationship with Himself.

And since sinful man cannot exist in the presence of God, the temple was built. God instructed there to be a thick curtain that separated man from the Holy of Holies where the presence of God dwelt. A lot of times this is looked at as man being kept out of the presence of God. But more likely, God was constraining Himself, so as not to become a consuming fire for sinful man.

God wasn't satisfied with this situation. God created man for a relationship with Him. Everything He was doing through all of time was to restore us to Him. So, at the moment Jesus said "it is finished," the plan was complete. Mankind was now free to be restored back into relationship with God. God no longer had to constrain Himself from man. He burst out of the Holy of Holies with such force and zeal to be with his creation, that He tore the curtain in two. God and man could once again be together in a relationship! The plan was complete. IT IS FINISHED!

God has always wanted to be in a relationship with you. Understand what Christ accomplished on the cross. Those three words cover all the span of time, IT IS FINISHED!

Song

[Grave by Cochren & CO.](#)

Meditate On This

How do you feel knowing God wants to be in relationship with you?
What sins do you want to confess to God?

Easter

The End of Sacrifice

Scripture

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you." The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

Matthew 28:1-10

Thought

The disciples were hiding in fear at this point. Jesus had raised many people to life, but now he was dead. Who would raise him back to life? The funny thing is, Jesus told the disciples the plan. In John 10 Jesus says: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have

authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus not only had the authority to lay his life down, but he had the authority to take it up again! Picture this, Jesus was dead. His spirit was not in his body, death had hold of his body. *Death had hold of his body!* Let that sink in. Everyone who had ever been raised back to life by Jesus, died a physical death again. And now Jesus was dead and his body was lifeless. BUT... Jesus had the authority to take his life up again! He ripped himself free from death's grip and brought his spirit back into his body. In doing this one act, Christ defeated death for all time. The miracle of the resurrection was not just that Jesus had come back to life, but that in coming back to life, Jesus not only defeated death, he conquered death. Death is now in the control of Christ, so those who are in Christ will no longer have to feel the sting of death.

Because of this, we no longer have to be afraid of death. We have life eternal. When we look at life through this lens, this ends sacrifice. Giving up temporary things in the view of eternity is no sacrifice. Giving up a body that experiences death and illness can be celebrated when we know we receive our eternal bodies which have no sickness, no sadness, and no death. The challenge is for us to remember this life is temporary and hold onto the eternal for the blessings Jesus has promised us.

Song

[Resurrection Power by Chris Tomlin](#)

Meditate On This

In light of the sacrifice we have been looking at, what is God calling you to sacrifice? What blessing is he promising you? What can you know is true in your future because God has done it in the past, if not your life through the lives of others?