

Sacrifices for the Gospel

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Have you earnestly and continually prayed what sacrifices the Lord has called you to in order to preach the gospel? “My sheep hear my voice, and they follow Me...” “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16)

When Jesus called Peter, James, Andrew and John to follow Him, there were tremendous costs and risks involved- from earthly security and comfort, to faith and the unseen. What has the Lord called you to?

“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They *immediately left their nets and followed Him.*” (Matt 4:18-20) James and John, “*immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.*” (Matt 4:22) What a cost, what a commitment, what a radical step. I’ll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel?

Later Peter said, “‘See, we have left *all* and followed You.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left *house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s* who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions- and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:28-31)

Do you believe what Jesus said to Peter? Does it apply to you? If you believe it does, how has your life been radically impacted by that? What things have you left behind to pursue Jesus and His cross, His persecutions and share His gospel? I fear it is too easy to do double-talk. I know at times I’ve been guilty. We glory the cross, we speak of the cross, but will we live the cross? Paul warned of a certain type of widow in the church, “but she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” (1 Tim 5:6) I’m asking the Lord to search my heart- after all, it is so easily deceived. Are there areas in my life where I’m dead even while I live? I’m to examine myself to see that I’m in the faith- that I’m pursuing Jesus Christ as Lord of my life, and not my own pleasures, security, comfort and tranquil relationships.

Things got rough following Jesus. Jesus, “took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.’” (Mark 10:32-34) At times the disciples must have agonized over whether they had made the right decision to sacrifice career, reputation, family and safety and follow Him.

The Lord has spurred me on with several close friends that have been examples to me of these principles- and have made me go back and examine again and again where my trust lies. George is one of the men that goes street evangelizing with me. Last year he came out for the first time with us, and the Lord helped him overcome the fear of man. God made a call on his life, and I warned him to be patient, prayerful and to seek godly counsel. He had been. As he and his wife Jody prayed, they were like-minded in the vision the Lord gave them- a radical step. They sold their house and moved into an apartment temporarily. George quit his job working selling cars- the two of them would make it off of the money Jody made from teaching, and a few scraps here and there to make ends meet. They purchased a motor home and moved into the motor home, and their church has a secluded part on their property where they live with their motor home when they're not on the road, at no cost to them. George is full time as a missionary- not in some glorious outreach to a 3rd world country- George is a missionary here. He's training others and sharing the gospel all throughout the week. At first I was concerned he'd gone off his rocker, but his life has been a solid testimony of a man who has been called by Jesus Christ to make a career move and step out in faith. What a blessing George has been to co-labor with! What a joy it has been to see his zeal, steadfastness and joy in doing just what the Lord has called him to do. Friday night I asked Jody how it was going in this new life of motor home living. Without complaining, she smiled and spoke of the cold shower that morning and what a shock it was, and of the other problems with the motor home. I commended her for her sacrifices- how many American women would go through all that for the sake of the gospel? With that motor home they take trips to different states at times and set up training and help churches and individuals to get established in evangelism. I'll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel?

My friend Randy has been single all his life- he's 46, and no, he's not gay. He saw us preaching downtown about 5 years ago and joined us. We've talked about marriage- Randy simply says, "Don't have time for that" as he shares vision with me to minister the gospel to international students. He's in the process of getting his house in order financially and has begun seriously looking at an offer a friend has made to manage his friend's house for over a year that's right off the University of Illinois campus- Randy could be land lord, rent out 3 of the rooms, work a part time job, raise a little support and have 40+ hours a week of evangelism ministry to international students. As he talks about it, his eyes light up with longing. I'll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel?

My friend Tom has been such a blessing to me. He heard about our street evangelism ministry through a friend at church and contacted me last year. He came out one Friday night and has been earnestly evangelizing and encouraging others to do the same ever since. He shares in the workplace, on the streets late Saturday night in Broad Ripple after he tucks his kids in for bed, and everywhere he goes. He's a walking gospel of Jesus Christ. He has made a goal of passing out ten tracts a day, mostly personalized tracts he had made that have his story of salvation and a picture of himself and his son. He takes time out of his busy schedule to encourage others each day by an email of someone at

church who has shared their faith. He's another Barnabus, a Son of Encouragement, spurring others on to good deeds in evangelism. By Tom's example, I've once again become bolder in the workplace to share Jesus Christ with others and pass out tracts at the opportune time (though I had received persecution in the past in the workplace). I'll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel?

My friend Mario has been a huge blessing to me- he's always there to hear my fears and struggles, and comforts, encourages and prays for me. He's like Barnabus, a Son of Encouragement. We all need friends like Mario. About four years ago Mario was leading a Campus Crusade for Christ group of guys and gals, all around 19 years old, through the streets of downtown Indy. They sought out homeless people, gave them a sandwich and shared the Word of God with them. Mario heard a portion of a Bible verse ricocheting off the buildings, "New heavens and earth..." and told the others, "Let's go there". He saw me preaching on the street corner with an amplifier. We've been friends and co laborers in Christ ever since. Mario graduated from Marion College last year and got a job at Charles Schwab. He and his wife Tracy have been aggressively paying down school debts. Mario said he wished he could have more free time so he could do more evangelism on the streets and in support ministry (Mario has been such a blessing in handling the business side of putting together evangelism conferences and outreaches for us!) A week later he saw a bulletin at his company where people can work part time taking the summer off and working full time the rest of the year. Mario and Tracy are seriously praying over it- is the timing right? Should they wait until all debt is paid off? I'll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel?

About seven years ago, I decided to go back to Bible college. I had taken a few night courses at my church which has a small Bible college, Calvary Chapel Bible College, an extension from the main campus in California. I couldn't see how I possibly could make it work with my engineering job. I was scared to even approach my boss about it. I started first by purchasing vacation, having a sum taken out of every paycheck. Doing the math, I saw that I could take a vacation day once a week and take a few courses and see how it went. The job I was in wasn't a high stress job, and the day off each week didn't affect my performance during the 30 weeks I had been doing it. I nervously approached my boss about a program I knew other women who had babies at work were on- a Flexible Work Arrangement for part time pay. My boss was very supportive, and from that time on, I've been either working less hours each week and getting less pay. I just finished up Bible college.

My wife and I of 19 years have never lived in a house, the great American dream. I don't spend hours mowing grass and doing repairs on the house and stressing over the things homeowners stress over. Life is pretty simple. We don't have kids (that's a heartbreak, but another story) and my wife has that longing at times for a big house- it has at times been a point of friction, but the Lord has a call on my life as head of this household- I have a deep burden and longing- a groaning, to see the church in Indianapolis and around this state and country share the gospel out on the streets and in the workplaces and in the

neighborhoods- wherever people are gathered. I cry out to the Lord of the Harvest to do whatever in my life to fulfill His call to “go and preach the gospel to every creature” (*Mark 16:15*), while at the same time making sure that I’m taking care of the Lord’s call on my life as a husband to love my wife as Christ loves the church.

My wife isn’t a church-goer. Over the last eight years since recommitting my life to Christ, there have been numerous times when the Lord was tugging on me to go one direction, and my wife was tugging me to go the way of the world; “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house ...or wife... for My sake and the gospel’s who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions- and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (*Mark 10:28-31*) What did Jesus mean by saying “left...wife or children”. He certainly wasn’t speaking of divorce, as is plain from many other passages from scripture (*Matt 19:1-14, 1 Cor 7:10-16*). There is a tremendous pressure on a believing spouse who is married to one who isn’t committed to the cause of Jesus Christ- the result is persecution and a life of the cross, or the result is compromise, such as what happened to King Solomon. Believing husband or wife: are you compromising your faith in Christ and your passion to share the gospel because of the frown on the face of your spouse? Life is so much easier without persecution, especially in your own bedroom, isn’t it? “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (*Matt 16:24-25*) I’ll ask again: have you been praying earnestly and repeatedly about what sacrifices the Lord has called you to make in order to share the gospel and live all out for Jesus Christ?

In Christ’s Love,

Mike Porter