

Change Your Sacrifice - Inside Out: Part I

Becoming a successful competitor requires intense dedication and sacrifice. We sacrifice our hobbies, our social life, our time, and sometimes even our bodies in order to reach our goals. As legendary NBA Hall of Fame center Kareem Abdul-Jabbar once said, "I think that the good and the great are only separated by the willingness to sacrifice."

¹ Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. –Romans 12:1-2

Ready

1. What is your definition of the word sacrifice?
2. What are some things that your coaches have asked you to sacrifice? How did complying with their wishes impact your performance? Was it worth it?*
3. Go back and read the quote by Abdul-Jabbar. Has that concept proven true in the competitive lives of you and your teammates? Explain. What are some specific differences between those who sacrifice some and those who sacrifice everything?

Set

A Tale of Two Sacrifices

One could say that there are two types of competitors in the world— half-hearted and allout. This is illustrated by the world's first brothers, Cain and Abel. In Genesis 4 we read that when it was time to make an offering to God, Cain, a farmer, gave some of his crop while Abel, a shepherd, gave "some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions." God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. Some Bible scholars believe that Cain's offering was rejected because it wasn't his best and was given with the wrong attitude. God sees the human heart and the motive of the worshiper. Cain revealed his true attitude when he took out his frustration by killing Abel.

- The story of Cain and Abel shows two kinds of sacrifice—half-hearted and all-out. It contrasts the difference between someone who gives God their leftovers versus someone who gives their absolute best. What are some things God is asking you to sacrifice? Write each one on top of an "altar", then list the cost (or what you will lose) for giving your leftovers in the left column and the reward (or what you will gain) for giving your best in the right column.
- Read Romans 12:1. Describe a time when you were urged or compelled to lay it on the line. Why do you think Paul, the writer of Romans, placed such a high sense of urgency on the act of sacrifice? In what ways might that sacrifice translate into "spiritual

worship"?*

The Transformed Mind

During his first 8 years as a pro, PGA icon Tiger Woods won 39 events including 8 Majors. But after a slump in 2004 that resulted in just 1 tour victory, he completely changed his golf swing. Those adjustments led to 25 tour victories—including 6 Majors—over the next 4 years. Just like athletes often sacrifice things or make radical changes in order to achieve excellence, we as followers of Jesus must also put anything aside that might keep us from fulfilling God's purpose for our lives.

- Read Romans 12:2. What are the areas of your life in which you might be tempted to conform to the ways of the world? How does giving in to those temptations slow you down as an athlete? as a believer?
- If transformation occurs through the “renewing of your mind,” what actions can you take to renew your mind?

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world—¹⁶ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world.—1 John 2:15-16

- Talk about some examples of actions or attitudes that would be considered “lust of the flesh,” “lust of the eyes,” or “pride in one's lifestyle.” Consider how you might be guilty of these.
- What are some clues that 1 John 2:15-16 gives us about how the transformed mind thinks? The passage makes a connection between our minds and our hearts. In what ways might a transformed mind change our emotions and our actions?

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²³ Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it. ²⁵ What is a man benefited if he gains the whole world, yet loses or forfeits himself?—Luke 9:23-25

- Read Luke 9:23-25. For you personally, what would you have to change in your life in order to take up your cross daily and follow Jesus?
- What do verses 24-25 say to you about the difference between sacrificing everything for the world versus sacrificing everything for God?
- Look back at the items you placed on the altars. Which results are more attractive—the costs that come with giving God your leftovers or the rewards that come with giving God your best? Write down and discuss some things that Christ's words in Luke will encourage you to sacrifice and some of God's blessings that you expect to see in return.

Take-Away

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice when He died on the cross in order to pay for our sin (John 3:16). Before we can change our sacrifice and give our best to Him, we must first accept the sacrifice He made, turn away from the things that separate us from God, and trust in Him for our future. If you want to get to know Jesus personally, turn to page 1505 and review “More Than Winning.”

If you have already made that commitment, then you will want to evaluate your efforts toward being a “living sacrifice.”

Write a prayer asking God to help you change your sacrifice.

Before the Next Meeting

Review the items that God is asking you to sacrifice. Is holding them back worth it? Commit to placing those things on the altar so you can enjoy a full life that pleases Him and brings with it great benefits and rewards both here on earth and in heaven.

Bible Reference:

1 John 2



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