

## **Sacrifice Small Group Guide**

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe a time when you passed on an opportunity that you think a number of other people might have jumped on.
2. What is one food that you would hate to go without for a month?

**Read the following passages:** Luke 9:18-26.

In the first century, many Jewish men and women viewed life through a story along the following lines.

*There is one God and Israel is his chosen people. Tragically, Israel's unfaithfulness sent her into exile. She is still paying for her sins at the hands of her pagan oppressor, Rome. When this payment is completed, God will come to reestablish his reign, restore the Temple, and crush Israel's enemies. Those in Israel who long for God to act should be prepared to play a role. In particular, they need to be ready to participate in a revolution. The Messiah, God's anointed king, will be instrumental in leading a revolution, restoring the Temple, and crushing Israel's enemies.*

With such hopes and expectations in the air, Jesus' message about his suffering and death would have been all the more surprising. Yet this was the startling means through which God intended to bring about life for the world. The unexpected path to life, freedom, and joy is sacrifice.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Consider again Jesus' statement: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." What are some practical implications of this statement?
2. Although many of us might face the prospect of sacrifice with some level of fear or anxiety, there are many examples in the New Testament of men and women experiencing great joy after making significant sacrifices to follow Jesus. What are the crucial factors that determine whether sacrifice will ultimately lead to joy or sorrow?
3. How do we know what sacrifices are really Jesus' will for us and not just the concerns of an overly sensitive conscience?
4. Jesus' call to deny ourselves and follow him is a call for us to embrace his agenda over our own agenda. What are some elements of Jesus' agenda? What are some ways we can practically put Jesus' agenda into practice in our lives?

5. Read Philippians 2:1-11, with particular attention on verses 3 through 8. Explain the sense in which Jesus “valued others above himself.” What might it look like practically for us to put Paul’s teaching in verses 3 and 4 into practice?
6. Jesus asked the crowds, “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” Sometimes we attempt to “gain the world” through manipulation, greed, sexual impurity, ignoring others, outbursts of anger, worry, or a host of other improper actions and attitudes. Are there any areas of sin you need to “sacrifice” in order to follow Jesus? Explain.
7. What is one practical way you think Jesus is calling you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow him?

## **Pray**