

**FOLLOWING JESUS**  
***A Disciple's Handbook***

**Lesson 11:**  
**“Following Jesus in Sacrificing and Suffering”**

**Sacrificing and Suffering Introduction**

Read Philippians 2:5-11

When Jesus took on human flesh, He made the greatest sacrifice and paid the greatest price that anyone had ever offered. And when Jesus took on human flesh, He suffered the greatest pain and endured the greatest trials anyone had ever experienced. In His sacrifice, He stepped out of eternity and into time, out of heaven and onto earth and out of spirit and into flesh. He humbly and willingly made every sacrifice to provide the greatest offering for the blessing and benefit of all. In His suffering, He endured every possible pain, persecution and redemptive process, including and especially laying down His life in death, as He hung His sinless life on a sinner's cross. Jesus saw all of His sacrificing and suffering as necessary to bring glory to God and good to others.

The Apostle Paul told the Philippians that Jesus' mindset and ministry, attitudes and actions, were to be theirs as well. He told them no price was too great to pay in order to serve God and others, and no amount of suffering was too much to bear if it meant furthering the message and ministry of the gospel of Christ Jesus in the church and the world. ( Read Philippians 1:27-30; 2:1-4, 14-18.) What was true for them is true for us as well. We must, by God's sustaining and strengthening grace, live lives of sacrificing and suffering when necessary to follow the extravagant example of Jesus our Lord.

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**Sacrificing and Suffering Defined**

In the Scriptures, *sacrificing* is paying any price and going to any length for whatever produces God's highest glory and people's highest good. A *sacrifice* was something offered up, and something offered for a sacred and holy purpose. In the Old Testament, it was the lives of bulls and goats and rams and lambs whose blood was shed as a sacred offering to cover sin and honor a holy God. ( Read Hebrews 9:19-22.) In the New Testament, it was the ultimate sacrifice made and the ultimate price paid through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. ( Read

Hebrews 9:23-28.) Then, it was the sacred offering of His disciples and followers as they laid their lives down, going to any length to love Christ and love others completely. (□ Read John 15:12-13; 2 Timothy 4:6-7.)

In the Scriptures, *suffering* is enduring any pain, persecution or demanding process for a greater and godly purpose. (□ Read 1 Peter 3:13-17.) The pain can be physical, mental or emotional. (□ Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.) The persecution is the result of the ungodly and wicked resisting the efforts of the godly and righteous to honor God in word and deed. Most often, demonic entities are at work in fostering and fortifying the persecution. (□ Read Ephesians 6:10-20.) The demanding process can have to do with anything that God takes one through to test, try and teach them, always unto greater faith and fruitfulness. In all suffering, it is God's will by God's work to bring His people through the suffering into fuller levels of growth and grace. (□ Read James 1:2-4, 12-15.)

### **Sacrificing and Suffering in the Life of Jesus**

From beginning to end, Jesus' life was marked by sacrificing and suffering. His entrance into the human race was an unprecedented act of sacrifice. (□ Read John 3:13-17.) From the beginning of His earthly ministry to the moment He said, "it is finished" while on the cross, Jesus sacrificed and suffered to seek and save a people lost and looking for hope. (□ Read John 19:28-30.) He was heaven's Sacred Offering, offered up to a holy God and offered for a helpless people. As God's perfect sacrifice, He suffered unto the shedding of blood and death on the cross to serve the deepest and most fundamental need of people everywhere and for all time. (□ Read John 19:23-28.) And when He was offered ways of escape from sacrificing and suffering, He resisted and refused, unwilling to compromise His calling to rescue, redeem and restore. (□ Read Luke 4:1-13; Luke 23:36-39.) Even when offered something to deaden the agony of His physical pain while on the cross, He steadfastly refused. (□ Read Matthew 27:23-24.) Jesus never sought to escape sacrificing and suffering. Instead, He embraced it, enduring temporary lack, shame and pain for the joy of serving and saving others. (□ Read Hebrews 12:1-2.)

Jesus rose every day to live for others. There was no price He was unwilling to pay to meet the deepest places of human need. To Jesus, sacrificing and suffering were merely the cost of fulfilling His calling to declare and demonstrate the good news of God's love and power. And this is our calling as well—imitate the Master and His mission to lay one's life down that other's might be raised up and released into God's highest and fullest purpose for them.

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### **Sacrificing and Suffering in the Lives of Jesus' Followers**

What Jesus initiated in sacrificing and suffering for the glory of God and the good of others, Jesus' followers imitated. Jesus' disciples left all to follow Him, sacrificing material and physical comfort and security for the sake of following the King and furthering the kingdom. (□ Read Mark 10:28-30; Luke 18:28-30.) In the early church, everyone was willing to make any sacrifice to meet every spiritual and physical need in their midst and in the community around them. (□ Read Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37.) The Apostle Paul both testified of His own willingness to sacrifice all for the cause of following Jesus, as well as commending Philippian believers for sacrificing resources and reputation to identify with him and his kingdom cause. (□ Read Philippians 4:10-20.) In all these examples of sacrificing, there was the divine promise of divine provision for followers of Jesus who were willing to forsake all for the Master's mission.

When Jesus' disciples, Peter and John, were unfairly tried and severely persecuted by the religious leaders of the day, they stood their ground by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit and gave faithful witness to their Lord. After suffering a verbal attack and a vicious beating, they were released. Their response to all of this was stunning. Rather than retreat in fear, they rejoiced in faith for the privilege of suffering pain and shame for the name of Jesus. (□ Read Acts 5:27-32, 40-42.) The Apostle Paul, already suffering in Roman imprisonment for his faith, wrote to the same Philippian believers that he considered their suffering, and his, to be proof of allegiance to Jesus and a process and pathway to know Him more deeply and make Him known. (□ Read Philippians 1:27-30; 3:7-11.) In the Scriptures, and throughout history, Jesus' followers have discovered that all suffering experienced according to the will of God will always be attended by the work of God's grace, enabling all to endure victoriously.

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### **Sacrificing and Suffering in Our Lives**

Now it is our time and our turn to pay any price and endure any pain, persecution or process for a greater and godly purpose. Sacrificing and suffering are to be acts of devoted worship to the Living God. (□ Read Romans 12:1-2.) While it may seem that sacrificing and suffering will make our lives less meaningful and fulfilling, the exact opposite is true. For it is in sacrificing and suffering for the eternal purposes of God the Father through Jesus the Son that we find our true identity and purpose. Sacrificing and suffering are a pathway and a process with profound promise—growth and blessing spiritually, relationally, missionally and materially. (□ Read Matthew 19:27-30.)

The sacrificing is worth whatever price we pay because each sacrifice is made to make precious people true sons and daughters of Father God, and true followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus. Sacrificing is our lives being offered up to our worthy God and being offered for a waiting world. The suffering is worth whatever pain, persecution of demanding processes we go through because it is working a greater and eternal weight of glory in our lives and the lives of all we touch. (☐ Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.) Suffering is our lives being tested and tried to make us stronger in faith and deeper in Christ.

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**MEMORIZE:** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* (Romans 12:1)

Use the following lines to write out the scripture to help you commit it to memory.

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**KEY TRUTH:** What Jesus initiated in sacrificing and suffering for the glory of God and the good of others, Jesus' followers imitated.

### **YOUR RESPONSE:**

This is how you can respond in loving obedience to Jesus as you apply the truths from this lesson to your life.

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas in your life that you need to let go and lay down in complete sacrifice for the purposes and plans of God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help strengthen you to embrace and endure pain, persecution and demanding processes, believing that suffering according to the will of God will produce growth and depth in your life.
- Review situations and seasons in your life where you made significant sacrifices and came through times of suffering that produced greater blessing and boldness.
- Make a fresh and faith-filled confession and commitment to pay any price and endure any pain, by God's grace, to advance God's purposes.

### WRITTEN RESPONSE: Lesson Review

Review each section from the lesson on the previous pages to fill in each blank below. This review will help to reinforce the truths from this lesson in your life.

1. In the Scriptures, \_\_\_\_\_ is paying any \_\_\_\_\_ and going to any \_\_\_\_\_ for whatever \_\_\_\_\_ God's highest \_\_\_\_\_ and people's highest \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the Scriptures, \_\_\_\_\_ is enduring any \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ or demanding \_\_\_\_\_ for a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ purpose.
3. To Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were merely the cost of \_\_\_\_\_ His calling to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the good news of God's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jesus' disciples left \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Him, \_\_\_\_\_ material and physical \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_ the King and \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom.
5. Sacrificing and suffering are a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ – growth and blessing \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

### WRITTEN RESPONSE: Life Reflection

Using the journaling section on the pages at the end of this lesson, write in your own words your responses to the following questions.

1. What have you learned and what has impacted you personally from this lesson?
2. In reading the scripture references in this lesson, what are you sensing and seeing the Holy Spirit highlighting and revealing to you that will enable you to better follow Jesus?
3. As a disciple and follower of Jesus, what steps of loving obedience do you need to take to see what you have learned in this lesson become ongoing practices and patterns in your life?