
Sacrifice: An Eternal Investment

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Carol B. Thomas, "Sacrifice: An Eternal Investment," *Ensign*, May 2001, 63

As a mother, I think one of the most heart-wrenching stories in the Old Testament is that of Abraham, asked by the Lord to offer his young son Isaac as a sacrifice. Sarah must have been at least 100 years old when Isaac was taken to the mountain. Out of kindness to her, I think Abraham might not have told her what he intended to do, and that meant he had to bear this great test of faith alone.

President Lorenzo Snow once said, "No mortal man could have done what Abraham did ... except he were inspired and had a divinity within him to receive that inspiration" (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 116).

Beginning with Adam, all Old Testament prophets have kept the law of sacrifice. Sacrifice is integral to the celestial law, pointing us to the most glorious sacrifice of all: our Savior Jesus Christ.

President Gordon B. Hinckley defined sacrifice so beautifully when he said: "Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God. ... 'The Father gave his Son, and the Son gave his life,' and we do not worship unless we give—give of our substance, ... our time, ... strength, ... talent, ... faith, ... [and] testimonies" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 565).

Brothers and sisters, the law of sacrifice is one of the things that sets us apart from the rest of the world. We are a covenant people, blessed with opportunities to worship and to give; but are we fully converted to the principle of sacrifice? I'm reminded of the wealthy young man, taught by the Savior, who asked, "What do I still lack in my life?" (see Matt. 19:20). Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell [all] that thou hast ... and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21).

Let's discuss three ways that sacrifice can help us follow the Savior: teaching our families, giving to the poor and needy, and sharing ourselves in missionary work.

First, how can we teach our families to sacrifice? My grandfather Isaac Jacob was a great example to me. Grandpa was a sheep rancher who sent four sons on missions. During the Depression, it became my mother's opportunity to serve, and she received her call to Canada.

Grandpa's situation became critical when he was called in by his bank and asked just what was the \$50 a month going out for Mom's mission. He had taken out a loan and was paying a high rate of 12 percent interest. The bankers were not satisfied and told him to bring Mom home from her mission.

The following day Grandpa gave his answer: "If that girl comes home, the sheep are yours—and I'll bring them right up to your door." This caught the bankers by surprise. They were already using Grandpa to care for other sheep outfits which they had acquired, and they would have no one else to take care of all those sheep. Mom completed her mission, and Grandpa's example taught his family the importance of sacrifice.

As we teach our families to sacrifice, we should also teach them to deny themselves. The story is told of the Civil War general Robert E. Lee, who, when asked by a woman for advice in raising her child, said, "Teach [your child] to deny himself" (see Joseph Packard, *Recollections of a Long Life* [1902], 158).

We must avoid saturating our children with material things. We may deprive a child of enjoyment when we give him too much. If we never allow him to want something, he will never enjoy the pleasure of receiving it.

Are we encouraging our children to sacrifice by giving their time and resources, such as helping a lonely neighbor or befriending someone who needs it? As they concentrate on the needs of others, their own needs become less important. True joy comes from sacrificing for others.

Second, we can give more generously to the poor and needy. As I visit with Church members, I am overwhelmed with the goodness of faithful Latter-day Saints. A young man in Colombia, raised by his grandmother, owned several shoe repair shops and served as the custodian in his ward. When he was called on a mission, he had saved not only enough money to pay for his own mission but also contributed extra funds to support another missionary.

What about sharing our food, clothing, and furniture? The Lord commands that we not covet our own property (see D&C 19:26). In many places we are blessed to have Deseret Industries. We can teach our children to go through their closets regularly and share their clothing while it is still in style, allowing others to dress fashionably too.

Many rewards come from sharing our material possessions. King Benjamin reminds us of this when he says, “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God ... impart of your substance to the poor, ... such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief” (Mosiah 4:26). We can all be searching for the many opportunities in our lives to give—to share.

The third area of sacrifice is missionary work. As part of our assignment in visiting wards and branches throughout the Church, we see the tremendous need for senior missionaries. You can't imagine what a great good they do as they love the missionaries and teach the local members the doctrine and culture of the Church.

Recently President Hinckley visited a stake conference in an affluent area where only four older couples were serving missions. Hoping to inspire more members to serve, he promised them that their children and grandchildren would not even miss them while they're gone. With the invention of e-mail, friendly letters can be sent and received by senior missionaries just about any day.

Your years of experience will bless others, and you'll discover how wonderful people really are. The missions of the world need you! Pray for that spirit of adventure and a desire to serve a mission. You'll enjoy more excitement than motor-home travel or rocking chairs.

Young people, we hope you are excited about missionary work. Just last week each young woman in the Church was invited to bring one other young woman into full activity. How great it would be if the young men would join us in this effort!

Many of you are doing remarkable things. Megan, a young woman, prayed many months for two friends who were not members of the Church, arranging for one friend to sign up for seminary and inviting the other to be taught by the missionaries. Recently these two young women were baptized. The Church needs you. President Hinckley cannot walk down the halls of your school and teach your friends, but you can, and the Lord is counting on you. We're so proud of the courage you have as you share your love for the gospel with your friends.

Sacrifice is an amazing principle. As we willingly give our time and talents and all that we possess, it becomes one of our truest forms of worship. It can develop within us a profound love for each other and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Through sacrifice our hearts can be changed; we live closer to the Spirit and have less of an appetite for things of the world.

President Hinckley taught a grand truth when he said: “It is not a sacrifice to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is never a sacrifice when you get back more than you give. It is an investment, ... a greater investment than any. ... Its dividends are eternal and everlasting” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 567–68).

How comforting to know that we are not expected to make this investment alone. Like Abraham of old, we have a divinity within us to receive inspiration through the powers of heaven. Brothers and sisters, I pray that by doing these things we will come to love the principle of sacrifice, that this great principle will bring us closer to our Savior, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Gospel topics: Jesus Christ, children, couple missionaries, family, generosity, joy, love, missionary work, obedience, sacrifice, worship

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