

I have nothing against online dating. I know plenty of people that met there and dated. I know some who got married. In fact my sister met her husband through online dating. They now have two children with another one on the way in the spring. So I fully see where people are coming from who get into online dating and if it works for them, great. But I've also seen the commercial for a Christian online dating site where a woman says she joined because it's really hard to meet someone when you're working all the time. Now I would think that's true. If you're working all the time you're sacrificing the opportunity to ever meet anyone. My first thought is how much work time will she sacrifice if she does meet someone, online or otherwise?

We know what sacrifice is that's for sure. Every one of us is sacrificing somewhere in our lives. It seems everyone around us is too. We think we've got sacrifice all figured out. So did the disciples. They listened to Jesus for years and figured they understood what it all meant, what sacrificing was all about. That was until Jesus shared with them the game plan. That is until Jesus called them into the huddle and set out what the next couple of months were going to look like. It would mean sacrifice and they didn't want it. We wouldn't have either.

Jesus takes us inside the huddle as he shares with his disciples the plan for his life and ultimately what it will mean for theirs and ours in the gospel. In doing so he then will tell us to...

Break the Huddle: with a sacrificial faith

Watch people at the airport next time as they mill around the desk at the gate. They're probably ones who fly regularly, and they know a little secret. The airlines often overbook airplanes. On many flights there's the possibility the airline doesn't really have seats on the plane for all the people who have purchased tickets. So the people milling around the desk are people scheduled to fly but if that agent would ask for someone to sacrifice their ticket and allow someone else to have it, they would gladly be the first in line. Of course in return they would expect to score big with free flights, hotel stays, cab fare back and forth, maybe even more. They roam in front waiting and listening for any news or sign of an overbooked situation. Then almost before the agent can even say anything over the loudspeaker, there they are, first in line, asking what they'll get if they make the sacrifice and give up their ticket.

Jesus' disciples thought of sacrifice quite the same way. What will I get if I sacrifice today, this week, or this year? What will I get for giving up my job, my plush salary, my family and friends? For the disciples the dreams were big, greatest in the kingdom, probably a seat at Jesus' right hand or left hand, power, authority, and honor. It was all right there. Sacrifice a little today and it would mean a big score later. It was a price they were willing to pay. They would sacrifice greatness now for greatness later.

I'd love to be able to say that only the world thinks that same way. That within these walls and out there in your daily life you weren't like those disciples. But I know better. I know because it's in me too. There's that sinful temptation to compare and sacrifice in order to improve worldly ranking in comparison to others. "We live in this apartment now, but we will have our own house soon." "I know it's a junker car, but I am planning on trading up just as soon as I can." It's all sacrifice now in order to gain something later that will improve the ranking, the status before other people. That's my idea of sacrifice and yours too. Sacrifice greatness now for greatness later.

We bargain with ourselves regarding sacrifices too. We figure we can sacrifice certain things now if it will make our life even seem a little bit better. We'd sacrifice almost anything for popularity. Maybe you sacrificed studying in school so you could party. Maybe you sacrificed your virginity to gain acceptance. Maybe you sacrificed your family for your career. Maybe you sacrificed your calm demeanor to get in the last word in an argument. And what did any of that sacrifice get you? Even if there was some short term gain, measured in the long term against God's game plan, you failed. You sinned and you failed.

The disciples by this time must have been scared to have Jesus share more about the future. Last week it was **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."** Following Jesus meant the cross, suffering, and death. Jesus dropped more bad news. **"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."** Betrayal? More talk of death? This was terrible. Jesus was worthy of special treatment. He lived thirty plus years never once falling to the temptation to rank or sacrifice for personal gain. Never once falling victim to a failure in following the game plan. He was perfect. He deserved everyone else sacrifice for him. But he spoke of the cross, suffering, and death. It was that cross, that suffering, that death that were all so necessary to lift your sins and mine from us. They were necessary so all of our sinful desires to outrank others or sacrifice for personal gain would be taken away for good.

Jesus knew it was coming and he told his disciples and us that it was okay, he was ready, he was willing, He would sacrifice himself. That was God's game plan for Jesus. As much as you and I would like to say to others, "See what I'm sacrificing so you have a better life, a nice this and that." As much as we'd like to say to God, "See what I'm giving up for you God." It was really God who sacrificed everything for us. His sacrifice earned greatness for us. He sent Jesus to sacrifice his own greatness now so that we would have greatness later. A greatness not to try and outrank other people, but greatness in God's eyes. Greatness as dearly loved children of God.

It was Jesus' self sacrifice that freed us from our sins and freed us for a life of special treatment from God. That's God's deep love for us. We need to repent of our own weak sacrifices, of telling ourselves we're doing it for someone else but in reality it's for ourselves. We need to repent of the times we've sacrificed things and done it so that it looks good but for the wrong reasons. We repent and then rejoice in the sacrifice of Jesus. **"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."** Jesus' sacrifice turned greatness upside down and showed that in his eyes greatness is sacrifice and serving. So we sacrifice not for ourselves but for others. We look to achieve greatness by starting at the bottom, not injecting ourselves in the middle and expecting people to serve us. Then from the bottom Jesus says work down. Continue to serve. Be a leader by serving and sacrificing.

When Jesus walked the little child in front they may have been shocked. Little children were to be not seen and not heard. But Jesus called that child forward to make a strong imprint on their minds and ours. **"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."** The reality is that children are takers. I've seen children in action. Children are demanding. Feed me, put me in bed, pick me up, change my diaper. All that with little in return to those caring for them. Jesus is saying it takes a lot to welcome a child. It takes a lot to be willing to sacrifice time, money, everything for all those years and expect nothing in return. That's sacrifice. We do it for a child who can't pay us back. That's the sacrifice Jesus did for you. He loved you, gave himself for you, and expects nothing in return. Now Jesus wants you to do that willingly for others in his name. Remembering everything Jesus did in love for you, in love give yourself willingly, cheerfully, sacrificially for children, for friends, for family, for everyone.

You all know people who are perhaps wildly successful. They've got all the latest gadgets. Their kids are always well dressed. They seem so put together. But perhaps you also know their marriage is falling apart or already has. You know they don't sleep very well. You know they can't concentrate because they're always thinking about work. You know their spiritual life and church life have taken a hit or are non-existent. They've sacrificed so much to have greatness now. Jesus wants you to know the game plan. He sacrificed for you. He sacrificed for your faith to grow in the knowledge of his love. He sacrificed for you now so you have greatness later. This allows you to break the huddle with a sacrificial faith in Christ.