

Stage 5: Sacrificial Shepherd Disciples.

As you begin to *care* for needy people of the world or in the household of God, you will encounter resistance and difficulty, soon realizing that to meet the needs of your people, you will be required to give of yourself far more than you had planned. Your flesh will start to cry out selfishly, “This is too much! What about my interests?”

Thus, the critical step into *full adulthood*, to be perfected as a shepherd who is able to do the “great” and wide-ranging tasks, will likely exceed your human limits, and *your flesh* will seek to stop your service to *protect itself*. So, as a *sacrificial shepherd* disciple, you will be required not just to *consider* the interests of others but actually *deny and surrender up* your own Self-interests.

Becoming like Jesus:

Note the importance of this step. As Stage 4, adolescent disciples, you learned to *shepherd* through instruction, as Jesus teaches you what is on his heart as a *shepherd* gathering the “sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Now, as you mature into a *sacrificial shepherd* (Stage 5), Jesus calls you to *identify* and to *share* in the quality which makes him fruitful as the *good shepherd* of the Sheep—the good shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

Until you choose to *lay down your life* and to *take up your cross* to serve in the Kingdom, you will still fall short of the *maturity and fruitfulness* Jesus wants for you.

In fact, in the previous age of the church, there were likely very few who truly matured into *sacrificial shepherds* identifying with the Lord in his sacrifice and carrying their crosses with him. For, if one matures personally, interpersonally,

and socially as a disciple, bearing some measure of *fruit*—of repentance, of giftings, and even of reproduction. But, if that person chooses at some point *not* to “deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Mark 8:34), at that point, his *discipleship* is stalled. Shifting from the *spiritual anointing* of following Jesus as Lord and Mashiach, he chooses to *walk in the flesh*, walking not as a disciple of Jesus but of man, of *self-ambition*, of religion, of human denominations, coalitions, or traditions.

Does this sound too harsh an indictment? Listen to the words of Jesus when Peter balked at *following Jesus in the path of Self-denial and the cross*. Jesus says, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mark 8:33). At the point when one chooses to be *perfected “in the flesh”* rather than by the “Spirit” (Galatians 3:3), Jesus says that the disciple no longer advances the

agenda of God but the self-serving purposes of Satan and this world, for he is “setting his mind on the things of man” (Mark 8:33). Our *flesh* justifies Peter’s actions as “reasonable” and even “noble” in his desire to protect his life and the life of Jesus. But, we see how diametrically opposed the *world’s fleshly logic* voids the Kingdom’s power. For, by “saving” their lives, all would be lost. Jesus would not go to the cross, the generations to be redeemed would remain enslaved to death, and the Kingdom would never grow to displace this world’s darkness.

And, so it is when anyone chooses the *very reasonable way of* self-interest and ambition. At that point, their loyalties revert back to the world and its ways. And, the mighty empires built to advance a particular denomination, creed, theology, or even religion. All these visible and massive works testify to human achievement rather than the Kingdom. And, like Herod’s

impressive Temple, these fleshly works as the “things of man” (8:33) will not last and stray from the path God plans for his Kingdom.

But, once you choose to *become like Jesus* by denying your “Self,” taking up the *cross*, the sacrificial mission the Lord has assigned to you which will cost you everything, and follow “Jesus’ alone and not man. Then, He will open your eyes to see the coming Kingdom and your place of service in it.

Count the costs.

The act of *sacrifice* in the Kingdom

needs a bit of clarification. For, in the purely worldly

equation of “gaining” and “accumulating” worldly wealth and power, the idea of *sacrifice* normally means *irrevocable loss*, often with the connotation of squandering or wastage. The reason is that the

disciples choose



small all

fleshly self is accustomed to its *total* rule over a person's life, and the *loss of control* means that the Self is limited and diminished. If the Self suffers the loss of control, its own *integrity suffers*.

But, the Kingdom of God is ruled not by a crowd of Self-interested strangers, but it is ruled by its rightful Lord, the Son of God, who cares for his family in love. But, this *kingdom sacrifice* is simply *unreasonable* for those outside the kingdom.

When the man with “great possessions” refused to “sell all” he had to *position himself* and his heart to follow Jesus, he viewed what he had on earth as more valuable than anything the *kingdom* might provide. But, the disciples were willing to “leave everything” to follow Jesus—that is, to *leave everything in his hands*. Ultimately, our sacrifices, even the *sacrifice* of our own lives, is not the utter destruction and loss of those things, but sacrifice offer up to God what we have, even our own lives, to God for his care and purposes. Sacrifice is our

rightful response to his Lordship, but doing so, Jesus gives us the Kingdom! Now, the totality of its power and progress, then, its rule over all in heaven and in earth. So, Kingdom needs to be understood as our proper response to his Lordship, and it also needs to be seen as *family sacrifice*—we sacrifice not needlessly nor futilely, but what we lay down is for the *benefit and life* of our dear family members. Thus, the *sacrifices of his saints* Jesus transforms into Kingdom growth and progress. So, to “give up” the eternally “small” things of this earthly life is the *fuel* driving the Kingdom’s growth and work!

To sacrifice, to give up our *fleshly lives and possessions* on earth, is never a loss but:

- **Redemption:** the idea of *redemption* is simply to exchange, to take from one to enrich, ransom, or free another. In this way, Jesus Mashiaach makes the Kingdom’s *great redemption* to lay down his infinite life as the *Son of God* to

ransom his people from their debt of sin and death to translate them into life and the riches of the Kingdom. However, our lives can be *given* to benefit others in the Kingdom, and we are called to *lay our lives down* for our brethren (1 John 3:16). Most obviously, selling your possessions to meet the needs of your *brothers and sisters* is to act redemptively. But, we also give up our time, our comfort, our well-being, and other aspects of ourselves to help others. Such sacrifices made for others we trust can serve *kingdom* and *redemptive* purposes to help others grow.

- **Supervision:** Also, to abandon or leave *the* things of this world for the Kingdom is actually to *leave them* in the hands of Jesus as Lord, so we make them available to Jesus for his use and the advance of his Kingdom. So, when Jesus instructed the man with great “possessions” to sell all and give to the poor, he was asking him to make his possessions available to the Lord and his

Kingdom purposes. Perhaps this disciple could have supported the Twelve for a period of time, or advanced the Kingdom in some way. For, when Jesus says, “give to the poor,” he doesn’t say “give all” to the poor. But, the act of selling gives Jesus his rightful place over this man’s possessions if he is indeed to be this man’s Lord. As it turns out, this man treasured earthly wealth over the Lordship of Jesus.

- **Investments and shares:** While we are called as disciples to give freely and without expectation, Jesus informs his disciples that when they give up all they have for the sake of the Kingdom, there is a Kingdom reward that they should expect, in this life and the life to come. Thus, *sacrifice* for the Lord and his Kingdom should be seen as *kingdom investment or investing in a “stake” of the Kingdom*. Because the disciples “left” possessions for the Kingdom, Jesus said that the Kingdom’s growth in terms of households,

people, and resources would be theirs to partake in. And, there would be an “eternal” reward when the Kingdom appears in glory.

Case Study: Kingdom Return

In my life, I have seen the Lord Jesus take the things of my life sacrificed for him and his Kingdom and to turn them into kingdom opportunities, growth, or fruit.

#1: Giving up job, home, and paradise for the riches of Kingdom calling.

When I was in my mid-twenties, my future was pretty much set. With a graduate degree in hand, my academic career in the university was set and with it a growing income, home, and family. But, called to leave Hawaii, I found the doors of my calling opening to me: *further training, growth in preaching and church-planting, and friends and open doors to the Jewish community*, all which came to fruition in the Kingdom in his service.

#2: Giving up a relationship for a new family, country, and ministry home.

In my 30's, I found myself in a perfectly compatible match. But, our callings were a degree off—I was called to serve in a diverse church, and she was called to stay and serve in Chicago. So, we gave up our relationship to the Lord. Now, I serve in the most diverse area (Scarborough) in the world's most diverse city (Toronto), at a church with more than 70 nations represented. Most recently, we saw more than a dozen Persians, former Muslims, get baptized.

#3: Sacrificing all I had for All in the Kingdom:

When my wife and two young children relocated to Toronto, she was suddenly struck with mental health problems. Over the course of around two years, I faced the loss of all I had. My wife was institutionalized, with her mind and soul slipping away. The state was threatening to take my children. I lost my nearly six-figure job. I had no

friends in this new country. But, I gave everything to the Lord.

And, the Lord has brought every desire he has put on my heart into Kingdom reality.

Breakthroughs into our testimony to the Jews.

Breakthroughs and harvest in discipleship.

Breakthroughs in leaders raised up, the lost freed, opposition put down. All the painful sacrifice which came before was directly tied to the Kingdom harvest I have seen and thanked God for!

Knowing Jesus.

In my life, I've seen that the sweetest fellowship is between partners, between colleagues, between brothers who have shared the Kingdom struggle and enjoy together the Kingdom fruit.

So, imagine the sweet fellowship of not just being shown by Jesus how to *shepherd his sheep*, but actually sharing with Jesus in the sweet

fellowship of suffering together for his flock! As Paul says:

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:16-17.

So, knowing Jesus in the *childhood* of your discipleship (stages 1-3) can be amazing. But, imagine the maturing and deep pleasure of sharing with him in his *suffering* for the Kingdom of God. This *fellowship* is sweet, but it is unknown to those who refuse to suffer loss in this world, valuing its possession higher than the glory of Jesus Mashiach and his Kingdom.

As a mature disciple in the Lord Jesus Mashiach's Kingdom, you distinguish yourself by the sacrifices and humiliations you are willing to endure for *his sake*. For, if you sacrifice, suffer, and endure, you prove yourself trustworthy to handle the most precious matters of the Kingdom, the health of its people and their reproducing of Kingdom disciples! As Paul says, "If we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12a).

Key Verse.

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself** and take up his **cross** and **follow** me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life^[d] will lose it, but whoever **loses his life for my sake** and the gospel's will

save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his **soul**? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his **soul**? Mark 8:34-37

Developmental Disciple Stage:

It is an odd stage of human development that when people reach adulthood, likely attaining the height of their strengths and insights and acquiring a great amount of possessions, they also reach the maturity and the capacity for sacrifice. They may understand that their loved ones are worth sacrificing for. For this reason, we send *adults* into battle. And, veterans who share in such great struggles and total sacrifice enjoy no better company than with those they've suffered with.

In this way, the *fullness of God's work in his disciples* is to see them achieve full maturity as *adult disciples*, who are ready to serve in the

Kingdom as *sacrificial shepherds*. In this way, true *Stage 5* disciples are known because their lives and experiences resemble their Lord's life. As the Lord Jesus approached Jerusalem to be revealed as Israel's rightful Heir and King, he predicted that he would "suffer," "be rejected," and be "killed" only to "rise again" (Mark 8:31). So, if you are true *sacrificial shepherd*, known by God and entrusted with the "great" *work of the Kingdom*, be ready to sacrifice:

- **Position and Self-interest**: yes, you will be Entrusted with the Kingdom's authority to restore, to feed, and to shepherd God's flock. But, expect to labor by "serving" All, giving them what they need to grow, even if this will often come at your own self-interest and recognition. For, in the Kingdom, its *God-anointed shepherds* are really only "servants of all" (Mark 9:35). On earth, Jesus did not acquire position or religious *power* for himself. In fact, the well-recognized religious

leaders were the ones to *reject him*. In this way, “servants of all” will often not spend time garnering popular support, being about the Lord’s work rather than promoting themselves.

- **Power and Self-rule**. In the world, fleshly leaders exercise *power* over others, because their position has given them privileges and power at the expense of others. They rule because many others serve. They are enriched because many others are impoverished.

However, you must sacrifice all this *worldly influence* and power in order to serve well in the Kingdom. In fact, Jesus, the “Lord” and “Heir” of all humanity, was the first to give up his *Self-rule*. For the sake of his people, to advance the Kingdom, he chose to give up his right to *command others to protect himself*. Instead, he allowed himself to “be delivered” to his *fleshly enemies*, the powerful “priests” who sought to destroy him (Mark 9:33).

By giving up his rights, he was able to “save others” because he would not instead “save himself” by coming down off the “cross” (Mark 15:31). In this way, the Kingdom and your “cross” requires that you endure and suffer for doing good for your people, even if your help goes against your own “Self-interest.”

Your service as a *sacrificial-shepherd* requires that you serve by “carrying your own cross.” Your “cross” is your service to the King and his Kingdom that puts you in danger; that sets you back; that requires you *face loss, demeaning, and rejection*. For, you surely minister among fleshly, whose minds are focused on the “things of man” (Mark 8:33).

But, fear not. Your *sacrificial service* to those in the flesh will be costly, but when you pay the price of our own Self-comfort, the Lord brings his spiritual Kingdom power to bear, speaking and working through you. Because when you are

“weak,” then you are strong and his “power” is “perfected in your weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

This working of God’s Kingdom power when you *choose to be weak and powerless* to serve the fleshly is especially true for you who are called to sacrificially serve the Jewish people! You must not come to your own people with *powerful words* or *human defenses*. Rather, take on the heart of a *sacrificial shepherd* speaking to the Lord’s people who have endured alienation from Jesus Mashiach that the Gentiles might come into the kingdom first. Consider the Lord’s compassion and serve them humbly.

- **Life and Self-preservation**: Of course, the greatest sacrifice you make is of your own life, even if *life-sacrifice* is often made in the small details of life. Giving up free time to counsel or comfort a new disciple. Missing a meal to bring food to the hungry. Missing a family outing to

share the Gospel with the lost. Whether in small measures or great, following Jesus in his Kingdom service requires that you abandon your Self-preservation or protection. One thing is for sure. Whether little or great, the Lord God will accept the *offering up of* your life and will use this in the Kingdom's dynamic to *redeem* the lives of those you serve!

So, share Jesus as Mashiach to your synagogue. You will lose your status, but Jesus is honored and the Kingdom achieves a victory.

Milestone/ Abilities:

As a mature, level five disciple, you will be able to *shepherd* the sheep entrusted to you even when it works against your own Self-interest, even when you must abandon Self-protection and Self-Rule in order to best serve your people.

So, serving as *a sacrificial shepherd* starts when you first “deny” yourself, understand from the

Lord your “cross” of service you are meant to bear, and to “follow” Jesus Mashiach alone by faith.

A. Knowing/ Responding to Jesus:

F

B. Living in His Household:

F

C. Establishing His Throne and Kingdom:

F

Assessment Question:

Further Discovery: