



SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

**DOING GOOD WORKS EVEN WHEN IT'S
COSTLY, INCONVENIENT OR CHALLENGING**



D I M E N S I O N S O F D I S C I P L E S H I P G U I D E



DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE
SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

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SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

Sacrificial service is one of eight discipleship guides for the Dimensions of Discipleship series. It doesn't matter which guide you start with—start wherever you'd like and move on to wherever God is leading you next. When we live in the dynamic rhythm and flow of a missional life, we need to take our cues from the Holy Spirit.

These eight guides are organized according to the tree diagram below; examine it to see how all of the pieces fit together. Sacrificial service is the branch of the tree where we live as Jesus lived, doing good works even when it's costly, inconvenient or challenging. This is how we reflect the presence of Jesus into the lives of those around us in practical ways.





There are few better ways to reflect the heart of God for people than through sacrificial service. Followers of Jesus who engage in sacrificial service to others build significantly more credibility with people of all belief systems than those who do not regularly serve others. It's as if all people inherently recognize the goodness of God reflected by serving others with nothing expected in return. Sacrificial service means doing good works even when it's costly, inconvenient or challenging.



"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Ephesians 2:10

"Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do." Galatians 2:10

How are we to serve sacrificially? Through what means? From what motivation? The personal transformation guide is designed to help us engage questions like these. The following five-part journey covers these five essential expressions of personal transformation:

-  Blessing others with your words and deeds
-  Partnering with others to minister in practical ways
-  Ministering personally and appropriately to the poor
-  Speaking up for people experiencing injustice
-  Cultivating a compassionate heart

"Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin."
—Mother Teresa

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."
—Annie Dillard

Meet together in a group of three or four to talk through each of these expressions. Ask each other these questions. Wait for and listen to responses from the heart. Encourage, challenge, and affirm one another. Go at your own pace: you can do one a week or one a month, whatever pace works best for you. Be sure to allow enough time to live into these behaviors.



PART 1: BLESSING OTHERS WITH YOUR WORDS AND DEEDS



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU BLESSING OTHERS WITH YOUR WORDS? HOW ARE YOU BLESSING OTHERS WITH YOUR DEEDS?

A cup of cold water can speak volumes. A generous word can be like water on parched land. We don't know how much we need it until someone takes the time to give it to us. Consider the acts of service we can do for one another: caring for someone else's child, offering your skills when they are needed, giving someone a ride to the airport. These are small things that make a difference because of the messages they send.

We love with not only actions, but with words. Consider the messages we have the power to give one another: You are loved. You have value. Your contribution matters. These are words of life that have the potential to make deep, long-term impact. The things we have learned and received, we have the power to pass on to others. In yet another miracle, even the things we have not received ourselves we have the power to pass on to others. We may not have been loved well as a child, but we have the power to love a child well because of the great love God has poured out on us. Sacrificial serving opens a wellspring of abundance in this way, giving life not only to ourselves, but to others.

"Similarly, the impulse to keep to yourself what you have learned is not only shameful, it is destructive. Anything you do not give freely and abundantly becomes lost to you. You open your safe and find ashes."

—Annie Dillard,
The Writing Life

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Luke 10:25-37:

²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

²⁷ The man answered, "'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"



²⁸ "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

²⁹ The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

³¹ "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. ³² A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

³³ "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. ³⁴ Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

³⁶ "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

³⁷ The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy." Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

"A life not
lived for others
is not a life."
—Mother Teresa



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

How are you blessing others with your words?

How are you blessing others with your deeds?

Who do you know who needs blessing?

What are your impressions of the story of the good Samaritan?



TELLING THE STORY

Tell the story of the good Samaritan from the following perspectives:

The traveling man

The priest

The Samaritan

The innkeeper



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 2: PARTNERING WITH OTHERS TO MINISTER IN PRACTICAL WAYS



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU PARTNERING WITH OTHERS TO MINISTER IN PRACTICAL WAYS?

Good news that is really good news has practical implications. It matters to people. It makes a difference in their everyday lives. If your ministry is not doing that, how are you are reflecting Jesus to people? When Jesus was asked for proof that he was the Messiah, he cited the practical implications of his ministry. Our ministry, though likely less miraculous, should reflect the presence of Jesus in practical ways as well.

We are going to need others alongside us to do this. Very little that makes a big difference can be done by one person alone. Consider who you can partner with to serve others. Each person will have a unique contribution to make to the whole. Look around you to the needs of the community. What would show the presence of God to these particular people? What would be good news to them?

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Matthew 11:2-6:

² John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, ³ "Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?"

⁴ Jesus told them, "Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen— ⁵ the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. ⁶ And tell him, 'God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.'"

Titus 3:14:

¹⁴ Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive.

James 1:27:

²⁷ Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.



NEEDS LIST

Make a list of the needs in your community. Think big, think small. List as many as you can. What would feel like good news to these people? Put each one on a post-it note. Then gather with others and pick one post-it note each that you feel God is calling you to address.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

Who is working alongside you to minister to others?

What are some unique gifts and contributions they offer?

Who do you sense God calling you to minister to?

What needs do you see around you?

Which of the needs in your community are you able to address?

How might you best do that?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 3: MINISTERING PERSONALLY AND APPROPRIATELY TO THE POOR



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU MINISTERING PERSONALLY AND APPROPRIATELY TO THE POOR?

As followers of Jesus, we are called to serve all people. Yet there is something uniquely selfless about serving the poor and the oppressed and the helpless. These are the people who cannot pay us back. They are the same people to whom Jesus opened the doors of the Kingdom wide. God calls the poor, the weary, and the downtrodden to himself to give them rest... and he expects to use us as his hands to do that work. We are the hands and feet of Jesus to a world that cannot help itself. Indeed, acts of service to the poor are one of the only cases in scripture where God promises rewards and blessings.

We are called to serve the poor in a personal way. That means more than just sending a check. As we interact with the poor, God wants to do work in us as well. We can engage with them as unique individuals made in the image of God, equals to ourselves and our friends and our family. We are to treat them with respect and serve them in ways that will benefit their everyday lives and their growth.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Matthew 22:1-10:

Jesus also told them other parables. He said, ² "The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. ³ When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come!

⁴ "So he sent other servants to tell them, 'The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet!' ⁵ But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. ⁶ Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them.

⁷ "The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town.



⁸ And he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren't worthy of the honor. ⁹ Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' ¹⁰ So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.

Galatians 2:10:

¹⁰ Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

Matthew 5:46-47:

⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.

Matthew 25:31-46:

"But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'

³⁷ "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

⁴⁰ "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

⁴¹ "Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn't give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn't invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

⁴⁴ "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'



⁴⁵ “And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

Who are the poor?

What do they need?

How are you ministering personally?

How are you ministering appropriately?

In what ways is your ministry proactive and in what ways is it reactive?

How are you contributing to long-term change?

How are you changing because of your involvement with the poor?

THROW A PARTY

Start planning a party like the one described in Matthew 22... a party with the doors thrown wide open. Who might you invite?

“At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by ‘I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in.’” —Mother Teresa



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 4: SPEAKING UP FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING INJUSTICE



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU SPEAKING UP FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING INJUSTICE?

None of us have to look far to find injustices in the world. Some injustices are more obvious than others. Some injustices we are less sensitive to than others. But wherever we are in this fallen world that is not as it was intended to be, we can see injustice around us. The question is, at followers of Jesus, what will we do about it? Will we be silent, saying that's just the way it is? Or will we risk speaking out? For there is often a cost.

Consider the time of slavery in the United States. Followers of Jesus who spoke out against these practices were maligned and marginalized, even by other groups that called themselves Christians. Yet they spoke out and did what was right, fighting injustice. Two hundred years from now, when people look back on our time, what injustices will they be looking to see if we took on? What broken systems and unjust practices are we taking steps to change? Whether we are successful or not is a secondary issue. The primary issue is whether we are willing to try at all.

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Injustice isn't just about broad social issues. It's personal. It has a face. Consider specific people who are currently experiencing injustice. How can you speak out for them?

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Amos 5:7-24:

You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the oppressed.

You treat the righteous like dirt.

8 It is the LORD who created the stars,
the Pleiades and Orion.

He turns darkness into morning
and day into night.

He draws up water from the oceans
and pours it down as rain on the land.

The LORD is his name!

"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer



⁹ With blinding speed and power he destroys the strong,
crushing all their defenses.

¹⁰ How you hate honest judges!
How you despise people who tell the truth!

¹¹ You trample the poor,
stealing their grain through taxes and unfair rent.
Therefore, though you build beautiful stone houses,
you will never live in them.
Though you plant lush vineyards,
you will never drink wine from them.

¹² For I know the vast number of your sins
and the depth of your rebellions.
You oppress good people by taking bribes
and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

¹³ So those who are smart keep their mouths shut,
for it is an evil time.

¹⁴ Do what is good and run from evil
so that you may live!
Then the LORD God of Heaven's Armies will be your helper,
just as you have claimed.

¹⁵ Hate evil and love what is good;
turn your courts into true halls of justice.
Perhaps even yet the LORD God of Heaven's Armies
will have mercy on the remnant of his people.

¹⁶ Therefore, this is what the Lord, the LORD God of Heaven's Armies, says:
"There will be crying in all the public squares
and mourning in every street.
Call for the farmers to weep with you,
and summon professional mourners to wail.



¹⁷ There will be wailing in every vineyard,
for I will destroy them all,”
says the LORD.

¹⁸ What sorrow awaits you who say,
“If only the day of the LORD were here!”
You have no idea what you are wishing for.
That day will bring darkness, not light.

¹⁹ In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion—
only to meet a bear.
Escaping from the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house—
and he’s bitten by a snake.

²⁰ Yes, the day of the LORD will be dark and hopeless,
without a ray of joy or hope.

²¹ “I hate all your show and pretense—
the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies.

²² I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings.
I won’t even notice all your choice peace offerings.

²³ Away with your noisy hymns of praise!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.

²⁴ Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice,
an endless river of righteous living.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

Who do you know who is currently experiencing injustice?

What are you doing in that situation?

What injustices do you feel most keenly?

What can you do about them?

What risk might that involve for you personally?

What rewards might there be?

What historical figures do you most admire for the ways in which they stood in the way of injustice? How could you emulate them?

CONDUCT A SURVEY:

Everyone cares about something. God places different burdens on different people's hearts... and that extends to people who don't yet know him. Interview some people within your community to find out what injustices they feel most keenly. What just feels wrong to them in their bones?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 5: CULTIVATING A COMPASSIONATE HEART



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU CULTIVATING A COMPASSIONATE HEART WITHIN YOURSELF?

We are to be people who care, and out of that care, pray that God will bring about his needed work. Yet cultivating compassion is harder to do than simply taking certain actions or steps. To cultivate compassion, we need to open ourselves up to the pain and the needs of others. That is inherently frightening, threatening to overwhelm us without divine help. Imagine standing in the midst of a sea of beggars asking for food, and you only have so much to give. Our natural inclination is to run, to find a way to protect ourselves. For caring-- at a deep and authentic level of our spirits—opens us up to pain.

Compassion not only makes us vulnerable to pain, but it puts us face to face with our own sense of inadequacy. We know we are not strong enough, rich enough, smart enough to solve people's problems. We are not God; we can only do so much. That's why we bring these needs before him and prayer. We alone cannot bring healing and reconciliation, but we can experience the power of God working through us as we rely on him and listen to his voice and direction.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."

—C.S. Lewis



Matthew 9:36-38:

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."



Matthew 14:14:

Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

Matthew 15:32:

Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." (NIV)

Matthew 20:34:

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

1 Peter 3:8-9:

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (NIV)

PRAYER

Ask God to show you who he is sending you to. We all live as sent people-- who specifically are you sent to? Who do you feel compassion for? Whose plight or difficulties upset you? Ask God to break your heart over the things that break his heart. Ask him for healing and reconciliation.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

How would you describe the role of compassion in your life?

For whom do you feel compassion? How do you demonstrate that compassion?

What evidence of compassion do you see in the life of Jesus? Through what actions did he demonstrate it?

What practices might help you grow in compassion?

How have you seen God work in your life because of a step or risk you took in serving others?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?

"At a certain point, I just felt, you know, God is not looking for alms, God is looking for action." —Bono



WHAT'S NEXT?

So you've completed this guide. What now? Is there another dimension of discipleship you need to zoom in on? If so, which one?

Because the *Dimensions of Discipleship* guides aren't meant to be used in any particular order, it's up to you to do some listening to the Holy Spirit. Take a look at the big picture and decide where God is leading you next. With a holistic system, it's always a surprise. No matter which guide you choose next, you're engaged in an ongoing action-reflection process as you continue living incarnationally and missionally.

Maybe what's next isn't another *Dimensions of Discipleship* guide. Here are a few other options:

You can move on to a similar series: *The Journey Together Now* guides. You can find out more about these downloadable guides at www.loganleadership.com.

If you have a friend or mentor you've been going through these guides with—or if you'd like to begin discipling someone, you can start an online coaching relationship at www.mycoachlog.com: a tool to help you stay on track, reflect on what God is doing, and celebrate progress.

You may be ready to engage in a more formal coaching relationship with someone who can challenge you to the next level of missional living and leadership. Check out www.loganleadership.com for information on coaching.

No matter what's next for you, continue to grow in the ways you follow Jesus into your continuing journey of discipleship.