

# Did My Sacrifice Even Matter?

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June 24, 2021

Sometimes we make sacrifices that yield tremendous fruit. We go on the mission field and thousands are converted. We adopt an orphan from another country who adapts seamlessly and comes to Christ. We leave a flourishing career for the ministry, and our church multiplies exponentially.

**But other times, our efforts yield no visible fruit, and we are left wondering whether we made a mistake. We question whether we “misheard” God. We wonder whether our sacrifice even mattered.** We may never see a convert on the mission field after years of dedication. Or we may be forced to return from the field for reasons beyond our control. Or we may adopt an orphan with severe attachment disorders who never bonds with our family. Instead, that child may wreak havoc in our home despite our consistent and constant love and prayers. Or we may start a church that never thrives, and we may be preaching to a tiny congregation week after week. Or we may pour our life into a ministry that slowly dwindles to nothing.

It is then that we might ask ourselves – did my sacrifice even matter? We may have given up everything without much to show for it. We have no outcome we can boast about, no lasting fruit we can point to, no story to encourage others with. **We may question our choices, our discernment and even our faith as we look back on what seems like a senseless sacrifice.**

The Gospels tell of a woman who anointed Jesus with a precious alabaster flask full of expensive perfume, pure nard. (Mark 14:3-9) In fact, in today’s dollars it would have been worth about \$50,000. She took the flask, broke it, and poured the perfume on Jesus’s head. The house would have immediately been filled with fragrance, evidence to everyone around of her extravagant worship.

The world saw her sacrifice as a waste.

The disciples were openly indignant, asking why she wasted this ointment on Jesus. They thought it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. (Matthew 26:8) Others were silently indignant, but all considered her act a waste of resources. (Mark 14:4) *Her offering could have been used in a way that maximized its value and everyone scolded her for what they saw as a reckless choice. But Jesus said that she did a beautiful thing for him. And promised that the world would always remember it.*

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Sometimes bringing glory to God is easy – we do what we love, and the results are evident in this life. **But other times, we bring glory to God by our sacrifice and obedience and never see the results. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t results - it just means we may need to wait to see them.**

I was talking to a friend recently who had adopted a young girl from an overseas orphanage years ago. They were so excited to bring this child home to their family, praying that their love and the gospel would transform her life which had begun with heartbreaking trauma. But years later, her daughter still says she hates her, is apathetic toward the rest of the family, is drawn to the ungodly and immersed in the world.

Their family has paid a high price for this adoption which turned their world and family upside down. They also faced judgment from people who told them to just love their daughter and she would be fine. They did love their daughter, and still do, and yet she is still deeply troubled and angry.

**What do we do in situations like that? How do we view our choices? Are we filled with regret, wishing we had never even attempted what we did? Are we tired of hearing the judgment of those who don’t understand? Do we wonder where God was in the midst of all of that pain?**

My friend said that when she was adopting her daughter, she noticed in the marketplace in this foreign city, a cross-stitch which said in English, **“God does not call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful.”** It was a quote from

Mother Teresa who devoted her life to the poor in India. That sign felt like an unmistakable message from the Lord. It reinforced that she should go ahead with the adoption, even though her daughter was already showing signs of a serious attachment disorder.

While this adoption has stretched her, my friend said in an email: "All of it has been a crucible, a refining fire in which my drive for what the world says is success and my personal push for performance has been exposed. God designed me to be an 'achiever,' but this has been my laboratory for learning what faithfulness looks like. This shift has brought freedom in my marriage, my parenting, my ministry and taught me to trust that God is giving me enough light to take the next faithful step knowing that he knows the whole journey."

***My friend said that though the process was hard, and the outcome isn't what they envisioned, that doesn't mean they made the wrong choice. The outcome doesn't dictate whether our choices are pleasing to God. Our obedience to God's call determines that.***

*The woman with the alabaster flask gave an extravagant gift to Jesus. It was one of the greatest sacrifices she could have made, pouring out a year's wages to worship him. No one understood it. Not even Jesus's followers. But Jesus understood it, knew the cost to her, and valued it because he knew the significance.*

**This seemingly reckless act of worship, this enormous sacrifice, was preparing Jesus's body for burial. And Jesus said that what she did would forever be proclaimed with the gospel. Her sacrifice would never be forgotten.**

*This is an incredible statement which can help put our own sacrifices in a greater context. Any benefits from more utilitarian uses of the money would have expired two thousand years ago, but her sacrifice of worship will live on forever. It will be remembered throughout eternity.*

***When all we can see is loss and failure from our sacrifice, does that mean we made a mistake? Not in God's economy. It doesn't need to make sense in this life. The Lord knows its significance. No suffering will be wasted, as the ministry [Nothing is Wasted](#) beautifully underscores and no sacrifice will go unnoticed. No one who has sacrificed for the gospel will ever have regrets because they will receive a hundredfold in return (Mark 10:29-30).***

**So today, if you are wondering if your anyone sees or cares about your sacrifice, and if all you can see are the untold costs and losses to your family, don't let appearances fool you. Don't be focused on the short-term, the visible, the here and now. One day you'll see the eternal value of your choices. You'll see your immeasurable impact on the kingdom. And you'll know that your sacrifice was not in vain, that God used it in magnificent ways, for there is no waste in God's economy.**

John Oxenham, an English poet who lived a century ago, puts it so well:

### **Wasted?**

Think not of any one of them as wasted,  
Or to the void like broken tools outcasted,—  
Unnoticed, unregretted, and unknown.  
Not so is His care shown.

Know this!—  
In God's economy there is no waste,  
As in His Work no slackening, no haste;  
But noiselessly, without a sign,  
The measure of His vast design  
Is all fulfilled, exact as He hath willed.

And His good instruments He tends with care,  
Lest aught their future usefulness impair,—  
As Master-craftsman his choice tools doth tend,  
Respecting each one as a trusty friend,  
Cleans them, and polishes, and puts away,  
For his good usage at some future day;—  
So He unto Himself has taken these,  
Not to their loss but to their vast increase.  
To us,—the loss, the emptiness, the pain;  
But unto them—all high eternal gain.