





# SACRIFICE

*This talk was given at the Women's Conference at Brigham Young University on April 29, 2005.*

BY CONSTANCE K. LUNDBERG ❁ WHEN I HEAR THE WORD *SACRIFICE*, I OFTEN THINK OF THE TERRIBLE trials of the martyrs: from Abel to Isaiah to Peter and Paul; to Joseph and Hyrum to the victims—including my own relatives—of Haun's Mill. Brother Turley will give us dramatic examples of the sacrifices made by the Prophet Joseph and others to bring us the blessings of modern-day scriptures. Their lives are dramatic, their suffering a profound testimony of their faith. I do not doubt they returned to our Father clothed in glory, welcomed into the peace and love of His rest. ❁ On the other hand, in modern language, *sacrifice* often suggests deprivation, giving up a great, or not so great, thing. The word is often used casually: "Oh! The sacrifices I make for you!" ❁ Today I want to talk about our own sacrifices, less dramatic than those of the great martyrs and not as silly as those in common language, but frequent and holy in their own right. I also want to talk about the blessings our Father gives us for those offerings. ❁ Let us start with the meaning of the word *sacrifice*. The Latin and Old French roots of the word *sacrifice* are *sacred* and *work*. *Sacrifice* is similar to *offering*. *Offering* comes from an Old German word meaning "to do zealously, to serve God." So historically, sacrifice is doing a sacred work or zealously serving God. The history of these words brings them nearer to my own feeling about them than the casual modern usage. ❁ One of my favorite poems about sacred offering is a Christmas hymn by Christina Rossetti, "In the Bleak Mid-winter":

*In the bleak mid-winter frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter, long ago.*

*Our God, heav'n cannot hold him nor earth sustain;  
Heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
In the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ.*

*Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day,  
A breastful of milk and a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for him, whom angels fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel which adore.*

*Angels and archangels may have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air:  
But only his mother in her maiden bliss  
Worshipped the Beloved with a kiss.*

*What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give him—*

*give my heart.*

The idea that we offer our love to the Savior and the Father is the beginning of our path to eternal life and salvation, but what does love mean? Is it an unquestioning and unexamined declaration of love? I think not. In his epistle, found in the New Testament, James, the brother of Jesus, reminds us: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). Later in the same epistle he says, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26).

I think the scripture applies equally to love. If we have love, we bring it to life through works. If we have love, it is embodied in what we do. The idea that love is embodied in service is at the core of every mother's heart. It is found in other places too; for instance, in one of my favorite movies, *The Princess Bride*. Remember the opening scene—the grandfather is going to read to his ill grandson, who isn't sure he wants to be read to but grudgingly agrees.

*Grandfather:* Oh. Well, thank you very much. It's very nice of you. Your vote of confidence is overwhelming. All right. [Book open now, he begins to read.] *The Princess Bride*, by S. Morgenstern. Chapter one: “Buttercup was raised on a small farm in the country of Florin. Her favorite pastimes were riding her horse and tormenting the farm boy that worked there. His name was Westley, but she never called him that.”

[*To the kid*] Isn't that a wonderful beginning?

*The kid:* Yeah. It's really good.

*Grandfather:* “Nothing gave Buttercup as much pleasure as ordering Westley around.”

[*Buttercup*]: “Farm boy. Polish my horse's saddle. I want to see my face shining in it by morning.”

[*Westley*]: “As you wish.”

“As you wish” was all he ever said to her.

[*Buttercup*]: “Farm boy. Fill these with water—please.”

[*Westley*]: “As you wish.”

“That day, she was amazed to discover that when he was saying, ‘As you wish,’ what he meant was, ‘I love you.’ And even more amazing was the day she realized she truly loved him back.”

We are something like Westley. As I talk about sacrifice today, I will be talking about our love, sacred gifts, and offerings to God.

President Benson wrote: "This is a day of sacrifice, and the opportunities are ever present" (Ezra Taft Benson, "This Is a Day of Sacrifice," *Ensign*, May 1979, 32). He considered sacrifice an opportunity, not a burden. The four sacrifices he suggested we make were: deny yourself ungodliness, be willing to serve a mission, solemnize your marriage in the house of the Lord, and serve with your time and means to build the kingdom of God on earth. These four sacrifices are a good outline for each of us. Let's consider them and think how these four sacrifices bring us closer to eternal life and salvation.

#### ❶ DENY YOURSELF OF UNGODLINESS

Most of us can avoid the major sins— theft, murder, adultery. Our downfalls are the little things. Do you have a little sin that you treasure, holding it close, perhaps covertly, cherishing it like a guilty secret? Most of us have at least one. In our hearts we know we must give them up sometime. In the meantime, we rationalize them, nurture them, and enjoy them with a sometimes guilty pleasure. Let me tell you a few I have seen. I won't tell you which is mine.

- d Watching violent or overtly sexual films or television shows
- d Lying about our achievements to make ourselves look better to others or to feel better in our own eyes
- d Undermining the reputation of others through malicious gossip
- d Criticizing the bishop, the stake president, the Relief Society president, or an officer or General Authority of the Church
- d Emotionally or physically abusing someone in our family
- d Missing meetings or Church obligations to indulge in a personal amusement, from spending the day in bed reading a book to going camping
- d Stopping in Las Vegas on the way to Disneyland for a little harmless gambling ("I never go over my \$5 [\$10, \$50] limit, so it isn't really gambling.")

These little sins remind me of my teenaged son, who was supposed to be doing homework. He would start out right, but the temptation of the computer game mounted on the hard drive would overcome him. When I walked in, he would hit Alt+Tab and return to his work as fast as possible. If it was not possible, he would say, "I was just taking a little break," and plunge back to work. The scary part is that I do the same thing. I take a

break from work, particularly writing, and the break begins to consume my work time. I have no one to hide from—the dogs don't care. I am hiding from myself.

My too-long breaks, or my son's, are not sins; they're just foolish and time wasting. But I think we do the same thing sometimes with our secret sins. Who do we think we are fooling with those? Like my playing "Noah's Ark," we are only deluding ourselves.

Can we go to Father with a clean conscience if we continue to nourish our secret sins? As part of a regular review of our lives, I suggest we all look for those secret sins and resolve to weed them out.

## 2

SELF-JUSTIFICATION . . .

IS A MODEL OF THE SLIPPERY

SLOPE WE FIND AS WE

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## 4

BELOW: John Dashwood reconsiders his generosity.



### 3 BE WILLING TO SERVE A MISSION

President McKay said every member is a missionary. President Benson repeated the message, although, from the context of his talk, I think he was thinking of full-time missions for youth and senior adults. But we are all representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We do not need to wear a black-and-white name tag, give a talk in sacrament meeting before we leave, or even spend time in the MTC.

How can we serve as missionaries? Let me give you an example. I had a client with a major national corporation. He was located in Provo for several years by his company. During those years, and in that Provo neighborhood, he, his wife, and their children were welcomed by their neighbors. They were befriended. They were not abandoned when they showed no interest in being members of the Church. They continued to be accepted as part of the neighborhood; their children were welcomed in their schools. They never returned to Utah again, but they told everyone they worked with that the Mormons in Utah were great friends, great neighbors, and the finest people in the world.

We know of such cases. We also know of neighbors who are ignored once it is clear that they do not want to take the discussions or join the Church. Our missionary effort includes helping people understand the gospel in word and action. We are all that most people see of the Church. If we exemplify charity, love, and understanding, we deliver the message of Christ. If we are closed and uninterested, ignoring our neighbors, that is the picture of the Church others see.

How is being a good neighbor sacrificing? We sacrifice a self-centered life for one of outreach. We give ourselves the challenge to see the good in others, rather than shun the new, the different, the unfamiliar. We put ours egos at risk by valuing other people, cultures, and attitudes. But if we do so, we exemplify the love of our Savior.

I am blessed to be corresponding with about a dozen full-time missionaries right now, including my son Phil, who wrote to me shortly after he arrived in Germany. He said he had come to realize that being set apart as a missionary is a literal thing. He is set apart from the world. Everything he does, thinks, and takes on is to further the work of the Lord. But as his ward helps—in fact, takes the lead in

the missionary effort—things become so much better. A few weeks ago, I got this letter:

*I'm really, really excited for this coming period of time. All the members are starting to actively participate more and more in the work, and you can tell. When the members are involved, it goes 10 billion times better. The other day I was sitting in the kitchen and I almost blew up, I was so happy with everything that was going on. I had just gotten off the phone with Frau Orth and Schwester David about our next appointment, and I just started thinking about the people we're meeting with and the experiences we've been having lately, and everything just built up all of a sudden and I tensed up for a second, then my legs and arms shot out straight, my body got completely extended, I got a huge smile on my face, and I yelled, "I love being here!!"*

*Elder Darais, who at the time was searching for something in the refrigerator, kinda jumped, and when I finally looked over at him, he was standing/buddling in the corner of the kitchen, kind of in a position to cover himself from my body parts in case I were to explode. What a cool guy!*

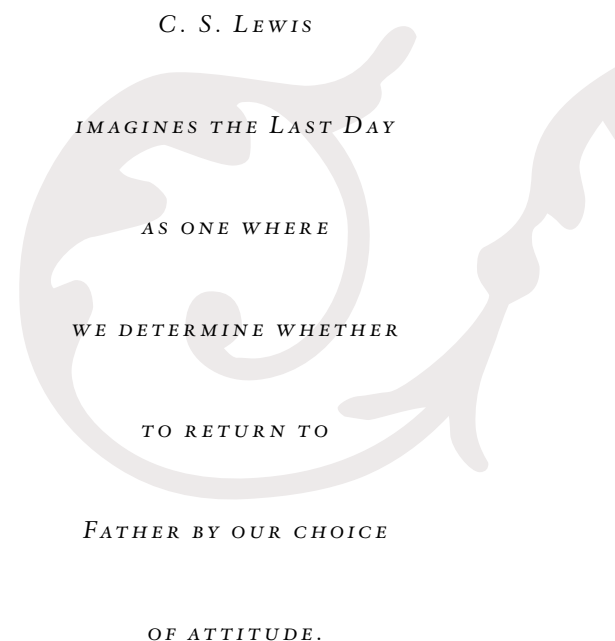
I think we should all feel like my dear Elder Phil. We do not leave our families and go to another country, but aren't we also set apart by our faith and the covenants we have made? Our sacred offering should be made with joy in the Lord.

### 3 SOLEMNIZE YOUR MARRIAGE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

Would you enter a battle with no weapons, no armor, and no training? Would you send your sons and daughters to the same battle equally unprepared? Would you send them out knowing they would never return?

We think of the eternal ordinances of the temple as being our pathway to return to Father, and it is. But it is a source of peace, healing, contemplation, meditation, and answers. In the year after the death of my husband, I got in the habit of keeping my temple clothes in my car. Whenever life became more than I was ready to bear, I would head for my car—and the temple. Once equilibrium was reestablished, I could return to work or home. In the best sense, the time spent at the temple could be called a sacrifice.

My father was not LDS. Although my parents were married for almost 60 years, my mother refused to go the temple without Dad. For a good part of that time, Church



policy would have allowed it. Finally, in the late stages of his leukemia, she went. It was a wonderful day for her and for the family who were present. At the time, I rejoiced for her, as I do to this day. But after years of going to the temple for comfort, solace, inspiration, and all the other blessings of temple attendance, I grieved for her as well. If she could have sacrificed her pride or her need to determine *his* life choices and gone to the temple alone, what blessings might she have received for herself and for the family?

People all around the world have to sacrifice tremendous time and scarce income to attend the temple even once. We need to heed the counsel of the prophet and sacrifice our time and perhaps our pride to receive those great blessings.

Furthermore, we must live faithful to the covenants we make in the temple. President Benson surely understood how many people find the covenants of the temple a constraint on the lifestyle they expect. He knew that, for some, keeping the covenants is a challenge. For instance, we must help our daughters understand that wearing sleeved tops and dresses and skirts below the knee is not a hardship. Our young men should be helped to understand that shorts and tank tops are not central to life. Modesty is a life choice



calculated to bless and protect us. The blessings of the temple are a shield and a protector. To receive these blessings we must eschew those things from which we wish to be protected. Understanding the balance brings us closer to eternal life.

④ SERVE WITH YOUR TIME AND MEANS TO BUILD THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

Now we come to the great border, where sacrifice blends into consecration. We are asked to accept callings and to pay tithes and offerings. It is in our hearts and souls to determine the amount of offerings. It is here where our sacred gifts help us draw most closely to Father.

President Marion G. Romney asked, “What prohibits us from giving as much in fast offerings as we would have given in surpluses under the United Order? Nothing but our own limitations” (In Conference Report, April 1966, 100; or *Improvement Era*, June 1966, 537).

President Romney is telling us that we have no limits on our contribution to building the kingdom except the limits we place upon ourselves.

I constantly admire our law students, with the great burdens school imposes upon their time, serving as teachers, members of Relief Society or priesthood quorums, and members of priesthood, Relief Society, or Primary presi-

dencies or of bishoprics. They have learned what we all must learn. It is not enough to provide a *little* time or means. Surely we must make our families our central care. That is a core part of our stewardship. But beyond that, our job is to build the kingdom of God.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell counsels us that we must serve the Lord with all our hearts, might, minds, and strength and not keep back part. How do we keep back part? Do we miss meetings for television shows? Do we get so involved in social events or community activities that we lose time for family home evening, preparing our lesson for Sunday, or doing our visiting or home teaching?

Do you remember the story of Jane Austen’s novel *Sense and Sensibility*? Henry Dashwood died, leaving a widow, a married son, John; and three unmarried daughters. John sincerely promised his dying father that he would do everything in his power to make his stepmother and his sisters comfortable. He thought he could give each sister a thousand pounds each year. “He thought about it all day long, and for many days successively, and he did not repent.” John’s wife, on the other hand, could not bear the idea of sharing. She argued and reasoned with him until he concluded that they would be better served with no yearly allowance, but only occasional “kind

neighborly gifts.” With that he essentially threw them out of the home, giving them not so much as dishes and silverware to start a new home. That self-justification—taking all of chapter two—is a model of the slippery slope we find as we put ourselves first, our Father and our obligations to others last. When we keep back part, that part grows. Our gift shrinks to a niggardly sum.

The answer is to remember who we are—children of Heavenly Father. We love Him, wish to serve Him, and long to return to Him. Elder Maxwell counseled us:

*The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we “give” . . . are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give! [In Conference Report, October 1995, 30; or *Ensign*, November 1995, 24]*

In the end, we draw near to Father, eternal life, and salvation, if and only if we become the people who would live comfortably in that life and in the presence of Father.

In *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis imagines the Last Day as one where we determine whether to return to Father by our choice of attitude. Are we able to give up hate, contention, recrimination, and greed? If not, we do not return to Father even though the door is open. We turn away and choose to spend eternity in the mire of selfishness and anger.

Like Westley in *The Princess Bride*, we must serve and give, and in doing so we say to Father, “I love you.” And we know, as surely as we breathe, that in accepting our service—our sacred offering, our sacrifice—He loves us too.

I pray we may all understand that sacred works and offerings are a joyful service to our Father that will bring us closer to eternal life and salvation, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

ART CREDITS

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