

**SACRIFICE IN SORROW:  
WHEN SERVING COSTS YOU**  
Sunday, Oct 20, 2024

**1) INTRODUCTION:**

- Welcome to Springcreek Church!
- We're so glad you're joining us today!
- Today, we'll be discussing Sacrifice in Sorrow: When Serving Costs you.
- As we get started, let's pray!

**2) ENGAGE:**

- In 2017, just one year after earning a PhD, I decided that it would be a great idea to educationally torture myself again and begin seminary.
- I enrolled because of my strong desire to be in full-time ministry and this was the next right step.
- My first course made me question my whole walk with Jesus when they started saying words like exegesis, Hermeneutics, Apologetics, Homiletics, Missiology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.
- But I persevered because ultimately it was preparing me for a deeper knowledge of the Word, God, and ministry.
- While in school, I was patiently waiting for an opportunity.

- A year later, at a board meeting, at the church where I was serving as a teaching pastor, the lead pastor told us of his desire to start another campus.
- I thought, this is my opportunity to finally be in full-time ministry.
- I sent him an email expressing my desire to be considered for that role.
- I didn't receive a response for 3 months even though I saw him every Sunday at church.
- One day, he requested a meeting with me and that's where he told me that he had chosen the group's pastor to be the new campus pastor.
- I completely understood his decision because the group's pastor was already an employee, so it just made sense.
- About 6 months after that, the group's pastor was leaving the church, and the opportunity was available again.
- But this time, I felt super hopeful because I was already serving on the launch team for that campus and I was almost done with seminary.

- Just as I was getting my hopes up, as a board member, we received an email from the pastor saying he had chosen the new campus pastor and guess what? it wasn't me!
- I was pretty devastated, I mean I was a volunteer teaching pastor, young adults ministry leader, board member, on the new campus launch team, had consistently done announcements, and was almost done with seminary!
- I felt like they should have just given me the job at this point!
- My pastor requested to speak with me that afternoon, and he explained why he chose someone else, even though he said I was qualified to take that role.
- And honestly it didn't matter what he said, my heart was still broken and it took everything inside of me not to cry in his office.
- He then asked me, if I would consider going to this new campus and helping the new campus pastor!!!
- I was thinking to myself "What the world!!!!!"
- At that moment, what I heard was, even though you're second best, I want you to help the guy that I felt more qualified than you!
- That's not what he said, but that's what I heard.

- Even though I was devastated and angry, I told him that I would go and help this new Pastor, who happened to be my friend, start this new campus.
- I want you to understand what I was really feeling though.
- I was feeling angry. I was feeling less than. I was feeling jealous and embarrassed because people in the congregation kept saying how perfect that role would be for me.
- What I was experiencing was sorrow.
- Which is a deep feeling of sadness, distress, or regret, usually triggered by specific circumstances like loss, disappointment, or hardship.
- My friend, who was now the new campus pastor, knew exactly how upset I really was because my face can't keep a secret.
- And he felt sad for me and he felt sad for himself because he didn't want this to affect our friendship. But it did.
- I did everything in my power to avoid him because it was awkward knowing I got passed up twice for that role and I had to be fake happy about it.
- And y'all know exactly what I mean by that!

- A couple months later, it was time for his ordination service.
- I remember sitting in the back of the church with my family and I remember the pastor praying over him.
- After ordaining him, the pastor announced him as the new campus pastor, and my friend looked over at me, from the stage, with tears in his eyes because he knew my heart was broken.
- So I wouldn't cry in front of everyone, I practically ran to the bathroom and hid in the nursing mother's room so nobody would see me crying.
- Church was over but I didn't come out of the bathroom because my eyes were swollen from crying and I had mascara running down my face.
- So I texted my husband so he could have the car ready and told him to let me know when the lobby was empty so I could run to the car.
- When I received the text, I ran out the bathroom, but before I could leave the lobby, I saw the new pastor's, brother and sister-in-law.
- They gave me a big hug and invited me to have lunch.
- I wish it really was an optional invitation but it was basically a demand.

- I didn't want to go but they said it was important for me to talk with them.
- We sat down to eat and they began to tell me how bad they felt about the situation.
- On one hand, he was happy for his brother.
- On the other hand, they were sad for me because they knew I could have led that campus as well.
- His brother looked me dead in the eyes and said "I believe, this is a test of your character.
- If you run away from this situation, and decide not to help my brother with the new campus, it shows that the minute things don't go your way you quit. But if you stay, God will bless you and bring you to the place He has prepared for you."
- Now what do you say to that? Or better yet, what do you do with that?

### **3) TENSION:**

- How do you continue to serve in the middle of disappointment, sadness, anger, and grieving the loss of an opportunity that I wasn't sure was going to be available again?

- God, how do you want me to go and help the person who was chosen to do the job over me?
- If you wanted me to do it, then you would have put me there.
- **What do you do when God asks for your 'yes,' but you're not sure you have anything left to give or you're unwilling to give whatever you have left?**

#### 4) TRUTH:

- In the Bible, the prophet Elijah was given instructions by God to go to a poor widow in Zarephath (zehr-fath) because the provision that God was giving him had run dry.
- It's this widow, who shows us how to sacrifice in sorrow: when serving has a cost.
- **1 Kings 17:8-16 (NIV) says:**  
**8 Then the word of the LORD came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath (zehr-fath) in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath (zehr-fath). When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a**

little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” 11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

12 “As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

13 Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’”

15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

- During this time, there was a severe drought in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

- This drought was a result of God's judgment on the nation due to its idolatry and disobedience, specifically under the leadership of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, who promoted the worship of Baal, a false god.
- This was the same king and queen who, later on, Elijah invited to a showdown to show them that the God of Israel was the one and only true God.
- Baal was primarily worshiped as a fertility god who controlled the weather, particularly rain, which was vital for agriculture and livestock.
- He was also associated with storms, thunder, and lightning, and was often illustrated holding a thunderbolt.
- Zarephath (zehr-fath) was located in modern-day Lebanon, along the Mediterranean coast.
- It was located in a territory that was outside the borders of Israel, meaning it was a Gentile or non-Jewish city.
- So, Elijah, a prophet of Israel, was sent by God to a foreign land who believed in Baal, the god of storms, in the middle of a drought and famine to go meet a widow who would supply him with food.

- See the irony? There is a drought in the land where they worshiped Baal the god of rain and storms!
- Another ironic detail is that God sends Elijah (a Jewish prophet) to a Gentile widow in a pagan land for provision when widows were typically among the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, especially during a time of famine.
- In ancient Israel, a woman's livelihood was generally tied to her husband.
- Without a husband, a widow often had no means of support, making her highly dependent on others.
- Men were the primary providers.
- A widow without sons or male relatives could easily fall into poverty and social isolation.
- They had no access to inheritance in many cases and most did not have property rights.
- Many widows had to rely on the charity of their extended families or the community to survive.
- They might glean leftover crops in fields (like in the story of Ruth), but this was a difficult way to live especially when there are no crops.

- When Elijah gets to Zarephath (zehr-fath), he meets the widow gathering sticks.
- First He asks her for water and on her way to get the water, he asks her for bread.
- She tells him “ I don’t have any bread” meaning she wasn’t ready with bread, she had none prepared, but was in the process of getting ready to bake.

## II. The Cost of Serving in Grief

- Then Elijah says, in 1 Kings 17:13, "Don't be afraid... but first make a small loaf of bread for me."
- See this is why I wasn't born during biblical times and no one is talking about me in the Bible.
- Because if Elijah came to me, I would've been like “sir, don't you see we're in drought and I was willing to give you whatever little water I have left. But we're in a famine too and Now you're just doing too much by asking for bread?"

- **Sometimes, God asks us to serve when it feels like we have nothing left to give—our resources, our comfort, our timing, our talent, our skills, our energy, or even our last bit of hope.**
- The widow explains that she only has a little flour and oil left—just enough to prepare a final meal for herself and her son before they expect to die of starvation.
- The size of common house jars were from 1L-5L.
- These are 3L jars which is about the average size.
- I can imagine that the widow, was probably showing him her jars of flour and oil and saying “sir, this is all I have left just a little bit of flour and a tiny bit of oil and when it’s gone we're going to die”
- Why is it that our first instinct is to focus on what we don't have?
- The widow could only see the obvious.
- And the obvious was there was not enough for her and for her son to survive.
- The obvious was that she was a woman with no husband and no resources to take care of her and her son.
- She's a widow, a mom, who has lost all hope.

- She's experiencing sorrow, which is a deep feeling of sadness, distress, triggered by the drought and famine and the disappointment and hardship of her life.
- But the thought of losing her son and her own life from starvation sent her into a state of grief, which is a profound emotional response to a significant loss, such as the death of someone you love, a major life change, or a personal crisis.
- Grief includes a wide range of emotions, including sorrow, anger, disbelief, and even numbness.
- It is a process that we go through as we cope with deep, enduring pain.
- And this was a crisis. This was her personal crisis.
- I had a dad ask me, why wouldn't the widow give her portion of the bread to her son to allow him to live longer, and I had to think about that question.
- And then the mom in me kicked in and said "Who would want their child to die alone, hungry, and afraid?"

- If death is inevitable for both of us, we might as well go in each other's arms knowing we were both highly loved, adored, and comforted by each other's presence.
- Then Elijah tells her not to be afraid!
- He says, continue with your plan to make the bread for you and your son, **BUT FIRST** make me a small loaf of bread!
- He promises that the jar of flour will not run out and the jug of oil will not dry up until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.
- In the middle of her grief and sorrow, this is a pivotal moment.
- She needs to decide if she is going to trust what she sees and feels or is she going to trust the God of Israel who she had heard about but not experienced for herself.
- Right now the only thing she can focus on, is everything she doesn't have!
- The focus is on all the empty space that used to be filled with flour and oil, the husband she doesn't have, and the resources that stopped coming from her family and friends.
- I wonder how many of us are in the middle of our sorrow and grief and all we focus on is the time, resources, and talent we don't have.

- All we do is focus on what we feel at that moment and the circumstances that caused the grief.
- She's probably thinking, you want me to serve you when I'm the one that needs to be served? I'm the one in need. My heart is broken. I have nothing for you.
- But despite what she saw and felt, she chose to trust God beyond her pain.

### **III. Trusting God Beyond the Pain**

- Despite her grief and fear, the widow chose to trust Elijah's promise from God and served him first.
- She decided not to trust her human eyes but to use her spiritual eyes and focus on all the God-sized opportunities created by her lack of physical resources.
- You see her lack, made space for God to display His sovereignty or in other words, His supreme authority and power!
- When we look with our spiritual eyes we could see that even the ingredients she was left with had spiritual significance.

- She gave Elijah some water which represents the Holy Spirit, who brings renewal and regeneration to our spiritual lives.
- In the NT, Jesus speaks of "living water" as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, given to believers to nourish their spiritual lives.
- It says in **John 7:38-39a** "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit..."
- **Water** plays a key role in stories of deliverance.
- In the OT, God's parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River allowed the Israelites to escape their enemies and enter the Promised Land, representing both physical and spiritual deliverance.
- **Flour** serves as both a literal substance for daily bread and a symbolic representation of God's care and ongoing provision for His people.
- It represents God's ability to multiply and provide beyond human expectation.
- The **oil** represents God's presence, empowerment, and anointing.
- Like in **1 Samuel 16:13** where it says, "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day

*on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David."*

- It also symbolizes God's power to heal and restore both physically and spiritually according to **James 5:14** where it says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."
- **Bread** in the Bible serves as a powerful symbol of both physical sustenance and spiritual nourishment, pointing to Jesus, in the NT, as the ultimate source of life and the fulfillment of God's provision for His people.
- In **John 6:35**, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

#### **IV. God's Provision Through Sacrifice**

- She may not have fully understood, but in that moment God was saying if you can serve me and others in your grief, there will be ongoing provision.
- There will be deliverance, healing and restoration with the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- And you may not know or understand this right now but one day I will

send you the bread of life, my son Jesus Christ, who will be my provision for my people.

- He will fulfill the law once and for all and your sins will not just be covered up by an imperfect sacrificial lamb but will be completely forgiven by the perfect lamb of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!
- Her act of service was an act of faith.
- She trusted that God would provide, even when all evidence seemed contrary.
- **When we serve others in our pain, it requires faith—faith that God will meet our needs.**
- In faith, the widow obeys Elijah's word, and as promised, her flour and oil do not run out and they had food throughout the famine.
- The Bible says, in **1 Kings 17:15-16 "So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family."**
- This miraculous provision sustains Elijah, the widow, and her son.
- **God's work is not dependent on what we possess, it's dependent on our obedience!**

- **Obedience refers to the act of hearing, trusting, submitting, and surrendering to God's will.**
- It is a fundamental principle in the relationship between God and His people.
- **Obedience is not just about following rules but involves a heart that is aligned with God's purposes, motivated by love and faith.**

## **V. Serving as an Act of Healing**

- When we offer what little we have, even in grief, God shows up in miraculous ways.
- God doesn't always take away our grief immediately, but He sustains us and works through our sacrifice to bring about His provision.
- Serving others in times of grief can be a source of healing for ourselves.
- Serving during grief is not only a sacrifice, but it is also an opportunity for God to heal us and others through our obedience.

### **5) APPLICATION:**

- What is God asking you to do, even in your grief?

- Maybe you find yourself in a place of deep sorrow—whether from the loss of a loved one, a dream that is crumbling right in front of you, or its the uncertainty of a future that seems super unclear.
- Maybe it's a broken relationship.
- Or could it be that you feel like you have nothing to give or you're just not ready.
- You have no resources, no time, no money, no passion, no purpose, no skills, no talent.
- Maybe you are experiencing church hurt and you are deeply wounded by someone in your church.
- All you see is the emptiness of your jar.
- But what if God is inviting you to take a step of sacrificial service, even in this moment of pain?
- The widow, in her desperation, had nothing left but a handful of flour and a bit of oil.
- She thought she and her son would die, but God asked her to give, to serve Elijah first.
- She trusted, and God met her in that sacrifice. Her faith, though small, unlocked God's provision.

- God may be asking you to serve in the area of your brokenness, in the area where you feel you don't have enough.
- Maybe it's through offering comfort to someone who is grieving, just as you are.
- Perhaps it's as simple as being present for someone else who needs a listening ear—knowing that through your presence, God will also minister to you.
- You could have experienced homelessness and God is calling you to help others experiencing that right now.
- You could be a recent widow and God is calling you to help others who are going through the same thing.
- Maybe your childhood was hard, and now, as an adult, you want to be the support for others that you desired in your own life.
- You could be the person that you didn't have when you were younger.
- Serving a preschooler and seeing the love of God through their innocent eyes can begin to heal your hurting soul.
- Helping an elementary student as they wrestle with their growing faith might help you process your own journey with God.
- And in that, you may find healing and unexpected joy.

- In other words, reaching out to help someone else in their pain can be a comfort and a blessing for you as well.
- When you take that step of faith to serve, even when your own heart is heavy, God can use that as a tool for healing.
- I want to give you some **Steps for Serving in Grief: Pray, Engage in Acts of Kindness, and Be Present.**
- Begin by **praying** for others, even if you're struggling.
- Lift them up to God and ask Him to provide comfort and strength for both them and you.
- **Engage in acts of kindness.** Look for small opportunities to serve others.
- Maybe it's sending an encouraging note, helping with groceries, or offering to sit and listen to someone who is hurting.
- Sometimes the best way to serve is simply to show up and be present.
- Be there for others, even if you feel like you have nothing to give.
- Your presence can be powerful.
- If you're looking for practical ways to step into sacrificial service, consider these upcoming opportunities:

- Our **NextGen ministry** is always looking for people who can be nurturing, supporting, encouraging, praying, and providing spiritual guidance to our children and youth.
- Pouring into their lives can bring healing into your own.
- **Serve the teachers** of our community of Garland, by providing them a meal on October 29.
- Your presence and service may lift someone else up, even if you feel worn down.
- Participate in **Arbor day** on Nov. 2!
- A small act of giving back to the environment can renew your sense of purpose.
- Pack hygiene kits on Dec. 13 for those in need.
- Even small, tangible acts of kindness can bring a sense of healing.
- As you step into service, even through your pain, you may discover that God meets you there, providing for your needs and bringing unexpected blessings.
- **For more information about serving, text SERVE to 96995.**
- It may feel like a sacrifice, but it's often in those moments of sacrifice that God brings about His greatest work in us.

- Mahatma Gandhi said, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” – Mahatma Gandhi

## 6) CONCLUSION:

- Remember that tough conversation that my friends had with me after I wasn't chosen to be a campus pastor?
- They said, “If you run away from this situation, and decide not to help my brother with the new campus, it shows that the minute things don't go your way, you quit. But if you stay, God will bless you and bring you to the place He has prepared for you.”
- I had a lot to think about that.
- Was I going to run away from the situation or was I going to trust God and serve in my disappointment?
- I chose to serve in my disappointment.
- I showed up despite what I perceived as a rejection.
- I tried not to focus on the “no” and focus on my “yes” to what God was calling me to do.
- Some days I cried before I went to church, but I showed up.

- I helped to set up that campus and manage the volunteers so that it was ready for the congregation to enjoy and prepare the atmosphere to hear the Word.
- Some days I left upset.
- Some days I was just plain ole jealous.
- But most days, I could feel God slowly healing my heart, helping me to remember that it wasn't about my wounds but it was about all those who needed me to show them God's love.
- Even though I went to help reluctantly, God was teaching me what it would take to run a campus.
- I learned leadership skills I didn't have before.
- And I learned to love people where they're at.
- And it was that experience of saying "yes" to God, even when I didn't feel like it, that prepared me for here.
- So, they were right!
- Right before I left FL to move to TX to be at Springcreek Church, my pastor said, "When I didn't give you the campus pastor job, I thought you were going to leave and I wouldn't have blamed you for leaving."

- He said “But when you stayed and went to help the new campus pastor, you showed incredible character!”
- He was right. God was molding my character through my pain and disappointment. He was healing the brokenness in my character.
- So today I ask you, where may God be calling you to say “yes” and serve during your season of disappointment, sorrow, or grief?
- ***And* How can you trust God with the little you have left, to be used for YOUR healing and HIS glory?**
- **Let's pray!**
- **Thank you for joining us!**
- **Be sure to share this sermon with family and friends who you think may need to hear it.**
- **To get updates on our online campus, text “ONLINE” to 96995**
- **See you next week!**