

Commitment to God

Joshua 24:15

In 1519 the Spanish explorer Cortez ships landed in the Gulf of Mexico and begin his conquest of Mexico with only 700 men. Legend has it that before they set off into Mexico's interior Cortez ordered the ships to be burned while his men stood on the shoreline and watched their only means of retreat sink to the bottom of the sea. Now for these men there was only one direction they could take, there was no other option. Their Commitment to success was now unchallenged.

The concept of Commitment is quickly becoming outdated, as people today are reluctant to make commitments without having loopholes or escape clauses built into them.

Take marriage for example. Pre-nuptial agreements are an escape hatch.

One comic strip I saw had two men talking,

“You know, it's odd, but now that I'm actually engaged I'm starting to feel nervous about getting married!” said one man.

The other man replied, “I know what you mean. It's only natural to be nervous! Marriage is a big commitment.... I mean, 7 or 8 years can be a long time!”

Sadly, today marriages are no longer even long-term commitments, much less lifetime ones. No longer are they until death do us part but rather it's until people no longer feel like it. Many marriages today are built around feelings, not commitments. Instead of working it out, it's “Let's call it quits, go our separate ways and we can stay friends.”

We live in a world where long-term commitments are no longer wanted or expected.

This is true in marriage, work, and even the church.

Today people fear commitments and instead live by the creed, “I want to keep my options open.” In other words, we don't want to get to the end of the buffet line and find out we have too many veggies and we have no more room on our plates for the pie and cake.

People today don't want to make commitments, and because of it they're missing out on building a great life and legacy for themselves and for their family.

When we make a commitment, we're choosing how we're going to invest our lives, our time and our resources.

If we refuse to make life's most important commitment, that is faith in Jesus Christ, we're missing out on a life that will count for all eternity.

The sad reality is that a lot of those who go to church today won't be in the next few years. Some will move away, some will be a part of another church, but the majority won't be found in any church because of a lack of commitment. They didn't or wouldn't fully commit themselves to God. They refuse to burn the ships in the harbor, and so when things get tough they retreat to the comfort of the ships and the old land they left behind.

Today's churches are filled with casual Christians, and while they say they're following the Lord, in reality they're only drifting along with the world.

If we're ever going to see a spiritual revival, then a commitment needs to be made by Christians much like the commitment made by Joshua.

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV)

What's so fascinating about what Joshua said is that he was now coming to the end of his life and was reaffirming the same commitment to the Lord that he made early on. As a young man Joshua was committed to God as he would stay at the tabernacle day and night. Even at the prospect of being put to death, Joshua stood firm on God's promise when all of Israel threatened him.

Because of his commitment to God, God honored Joshua, making him Israel's leader after Moses' death, allowing him to lead Israel into the Promised Land. And here, after they were securely settled in their new home land, Joshua calls them to reaffirm a commitment to God, and then before them all he states his personal commitment, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

Joshua proclaimed his commitment to God, loud and proud. It was out for all to see and hear.

When we come into that saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, we're making that same commitment. We're saying yes to Jesus forgiveness, that we will follow Him, keep His word, and serve Him with our whole lives.

So today, what does Your commitment to God entail?

In Joshua's commitment we see that it involves two aspects. It begins with a personal commitment, "as for me," and then a commitment to others we influence, "and my house."

Let's look at 3 major commitments we must make to God

1. Our Commitment Entails Our Will

Listen to what Jesus said, knowing that He was at the end of His earthly life and mission.

Matthew 26:39 (NKJV)

Jesus understood the cost of commitment to God, it was His human life.

Still He kept true to His commitment, fulfilling His Father's will and dying upon the cross. In His prayer we see He desired differently, but gave up what He wanted and committed to what the Father wanted.

Our will is the process by which we make decisions. It's our plan, made by our wisdom, for our benefit.

What Jesus did was to give over that decision-making process from what He wanted and placed His life squarely into the Father's hands. He exchanged His wants and desires for that of the Father's.

As believers in Jesus Christ, and therefore His followers, we also need to understand the cost of this level of commitment.

Jesus actually told what that cost would be so there would be no confusion when it comes to our commitment to Him.

Luke 9:23-26 (NKJV)

To take up one's cross was to walk towards one's death. Today we'd say that He was a "dead man walking". Today when we take up our crosses, we're virtually dead men and women walking.

James Calvert was a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands. The ship's captain tried to dissuade Calvert saying he'd lose his life but Calvert replied that he had already died before even making the voyage.

We must have that same commitment as we come to the Lord and are followers of Jesus. "Not as I will, but as You will Lord. No longer will it be what I want, but rather what You decide is best for my life."

2. Our Commitment Entails Our Finances

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NKJV)

God's people were commanded to give God their first fruits, which not only meant the first of what they made, but also their very best. This is clearly portrayed as Jesus was called the first fruits from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 (NKJV)

And while this term "first fruit" centers on our finances, it also involves every area of our lives including our time, energy, and possessions.

What it really boils down to is our motives.

In other words, it should all be coming from a heart that is totally in love with God, and our giving is just one of the ways we express or put our love into action.

I spare no expense when buying gifts for my wife because I love her... I go to Jared.

But here Solomon doesn't leave it at that but continues by making the connection between one's giving to God and God's blessings upon them. Full barns and overflowing new wine.

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

So we are to honor the Lord with our possessions and the first fruit of all our increase, which is what the Bible says we are to do in the giving of our tithes.

This is another way we show our commitment to God.

3. Our Commitment Entails Our Agendas

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

Solomon (the wisest and richest man ever) says that we are to trust the Lord and not our own understanding. In the Hebrews language this means to cling to and lean upon the Lord with all of our being. To trust in the Lord is to place our hope in Him and to lean completely on Jesus and not upon our own knowledge or experience.

That is, we're not to base our decisions upon our take or feelings on the situations were facing.

The reason is simple, we're fallible beings easily capable of making mistakes. Therefore we need God's guidance if we're ever going to make decisions impacting eternity.

We're also told to acknowledge God in all our ways.

To acknowledge in the Hebrew language doesn't just mean to admit His presence; rather it means to get to know God in an intimate way, much like a husband or wife is to know their spouse. Such intimacy can only happen by spending time with God.

Someone once said that if many only spent as much time with their spouse as they do with God, then the divorce rate would skyrocket.

Therefore trusting God along with taking the time to personally know Him, will result in God getting intimately involved in our lives showing us the right path to take through this life leading into His blessings.

It was this very idea of making God's agenda theirs that saw the first church grow so fast and dramatically.

Acts 2:46-47 (NKJV)

They allowed the Lord's agenda to be theirs, and God added daily to their number.

When we follow God's agenda, doing church His way, then we'll see similar results in our own lives, the lives of our family and the life of the church.

This is the first part then of Joshua's overall commitment, that is, a personal commitment. Yet Joshua also talked about commitments to relationships when he talked about his household.

Jesus also spoke about this when He gave the second part to the Great Commandment

Mark 12:29-31 (NKJV)

Within the dynamic of the first church there is an interesting reference,

Acts 4:32 (NKJV)

Earlier we saw where they were all in one accord, but now they're of one heart and soul as well. What we see is that there is nothing so wonderful as coming together and putting our differences aside for the good of God's kingdom.

Earlier I made mention that some will not remain in the church because many of them will no longer be walking with God. The reason is that there are some barriers that we erect to making commitments.

1. Our Past Experiences

We are often afraid to make commitments because we've been hurt in the past. Maybe it was a bad relationship that now prevents us from getting close to anyone because we don't want to be hurt like that again. Maybe it was a bad experience in a church therefore we never commit to any church.

Our past experiences, more often than not, sabotage every future potential commitment. Therefore we need to stop allowing our past to determine our future.

2. Our Selfishness

Selfishness seems to be the number one reason why commitments fail.

If you say you love your family and spend absolutely no time with them, then all you're doing is paying lip service to the commitment.

Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve our possessions and God at the same time. We cannot say we love God and at the same time commit ourselves to worldly pursuits.

Now, this is not saying we cannot be successful at our jobs or careers, but what this is saying is that in all we do, God needs to be our number one priority.

This is actually the first commandment, which is not having any other gods in front of or taking the place of the Lord in our lives.

And by the way, not committing to anything is the height of selfishness.

3. Our Complacency

There is a tiny east coast harbor town on the ocean shore where many ships have crashed on the rocks in violent weather. This town became well-known because of a dedicated rescue team which aided mariners in distress. The rescue team would rally to the sound of the siren and rush to the scene of the accident, risking life and limb to save the sailors from drowning.

As time went on, the citizens of that tiny town raised enough money to build a rescue station close to the shore.

While this greatly facilitated the operation, it softened the dedicated team as well.

As time went by they added more of the comforts and conveniences that other rescue stations had. Through the years the rescue station slowly became a social club where the town's people gathered to have fun and relax.

Ships would still crash upon the rocks, the alarm would still sound, but eventually no one responded. They were reluctant to leave their comforts because their commitment to rescue the mariners was no match for their complacency.

Complacency kills commitment and prevents us from following God's call upon our lives.

I cannot tell you how many ministries have been thwarted or never realized because of this one thing.

God needs a church that is totally committed to Him. What that means is that we need to be 100 percent devoted to God, His word, His way, and His will.

Look at what that small handful of fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ did. They evangelized the entire world in a single generation.

Studies have actually confirmed that just 2 percent of a population can change the culture of an entire nation. This is why we here in America don't need a moral majority, but rather a committed minority who will live authentically for Christ.

Being a casual Christian is a contradiction in terms. It's like saying we're sort of married. You either are or you're not.

Today will you make that commitment to fully follow Jesus.

Today do you have the courage to be like Joshua and commit.

Deuteronomy 23:21 (NKJV)

"When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.