

*The Challenge
of Commitment*

By Ken Weliever

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Published by
Spiritbuilding Publishers
9700 Ferry Rd.
Waynesville, OH 45068

Printed in the United States of America
THE CHALLENGE OF COMMITMENT

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*“The greatest challenges
you can create are
the challenges that
empower you.”*

—Peter Hirsch, *Living with Passion*

Introduction

The Scottish minister, David Livingstone was one of the most popular national heroes of 19th century Britain. He was known as an explorer, scientific investigator, anti-slavery crusader, and Protestant missionary martyr.

The story is told that Livingstone once received a letter from the London Missionary Society inquiring about his work in Africa. They asked the explorer, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you?"

Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

Commitment. Livingstone was looking for others who were committed to his cause, not their personal convenience. He wanted men willing to suffer hardship, not those seeking a life of ease. He desired co-workers who were dedicated, disciplined, and duty-bound; not folks who simply wanted to make a mission trip without any trouble, trial, or inconvenience.

Commitment. Success in any field of endeavor depends upon it. In fact, success and commitment are often linked together. The late news anchor, Walter Cronkite, stated unequivocally, "I can't imagine a person becoming a success who doesn't give this game of life everything he's got." This is witnessed in sports, business, education, and politics.

Commitment. It is a quality necessary for the spiritual growth, maturity, and success of every Christian. Interestingly, standard translations of the

Bible never use the word commitment! Yet, the concept is woven throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

What was the common characteristic of all the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11? Commitment! They had a commitment to God, commitment to a righteous cause, commitment to personal integrity, and a commitment to their fellow comrades of faith.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount speaks to the quality of commitment: commitment to spiritual values, commitment to nobler virtues, commitment to a higher standard of living, commitment to a deeper sense of service, and commitment to a greater kind of love.

THE CHALLENGE OF COMMITMENT is our focus this quarter. This title carries a double meaning. We will be challenged, awakened, and aroused to examine our level of commitment; to rise up and accept the challenge and charge to which Christ calls us.

But commitment has its challenges, obstacles, and difficulties. Commitment is not always easy. We will be tested and tried. Our commitment will be threatened. We soon realize that Christian commitment is demanding.

Christ challenges His followers to commitment when he declares, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

Will you answer the challenge to commitment?



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#1 Commitment Is the Key



In his challenging book, *Living with Passion*, Peter Hirsch asserts that commitment is one the 10 keys to success. Here's part of an empowering quote he shares from W. H. Murray regarding the importance of commitment.

“Until one is committed there is always hesitancy. The chance to draw back. Always ineffectiveness. The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issue from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents ... which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.”

Murray's observations remind me of Jesus' affirmation, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Read the context of Jesus' statement (Luke 9:57–62). My Bible heading for this paragraph says, “The Cost of Discipleship.” It might as well have read, “The Cost of Commitment.” Discipleship involves total commitment to Christ.

Commitment is the key, not only to accomplishment in life, but in our spiritual success as well. An uncommitted Christian is an oxymoron. Everything, as we shall see in the series, that relates to spiritual life and godliness is centered around commitment.

Commitment is the key, if you want to be all that God created you to be.

≡ *Reflect* ≡

What synonyms, or words connected to commitment, come to your mind?

Think of someone you know well that you would call a “committed Christian.” What qualities, attitudes, attributes, and actions does that person possess that speak to their commitment?

≡ *Realize* ≡

“There is a difference between interests and commitment. When you are interested in doing something, you only do it when it is convenient. When you are committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results” (Ken Blanchard).

I. WHAT IS COMMITMENT?

A. Defined.

1. A promise to do or give something; a promise to be loyal to someone or something; the attitude of someone who works very hard to do or support something (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* online).
2. “Commitment is what transforms the promise into reality. It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions. And the actions which speak louder than the words. It is making the time when there is none. Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year. Commitment is the stuff character is made of: The power to change the face of things. It is the daily triumph of integrity over skepticism” (Top definition in *Urban Dictionary*).
3. Commitment is sticking to something long after the emotion of the moment you said it has passed.

B. The word “commitment” is not used in the Bible, but the concept is present as noted in the introduction.

C. However, the word “commit” is found in the sense we are using it.

1. “Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).
2. “Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established” (Proverbs 16:3, NASU).

3. “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

II. COMMITMENT BEGINS IN THE _____.

A. The heart is the source of _____ issues (Proverbs 4:23).

1. The heart is the whole of man, the inner being.
2. It involves the intellect, emotions, conscience, and will.

B. Commitment is induced by _____.

1. Those on Pentecost were cut to the heart. Their conscience was pricked and they saw the need to change, the need for a new commitment, a change of loyalty, and so they dedicated themselves to Christ.
2. The commitment is not one of convenience, comfort, or political correctness.

C. Commitment is established by _____.

1. It is a decision we make. It is a choice to be committed to the Lord (Joshua 24:15).
2. There is a song that says, “I have decided to follow Jesus.”
3. The decision comes as we process information, and through reasoning induce the need to do something.

D. Commitment is fueled by _____.

1. We should feel passionate about our beliefs. There is no half-hearted commitment.
2. The apostle Paul is a great example of having a passionate commitment to Christ and to faithfully living the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:26).

E. Commitment is sustained by the _____ or _____ (Acts 11:22-23).

1. With purpose of heart you need to stay committed. Keep on going.
2. A strong purpose will sustain your commitment.

III. COMMITMENT IS THE KEY TO ...

- A. An intimate _____ with _____. Your commitment will ...
1. Furnish _____ (Psalm 86:5).
 2. Produce _____ (Philippians 4:7, 9).
 3. Generate _____ (Hebrews 3:18).
 4. Cultivate _____ (Matthew 22:37).
- B. Satisfying relationships with _____.
1. Based on the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12).
 2. Based on the 2nd Great Commandment (Matthew 22:39).
- C. Spiritual _____ in the _____
_____.
1. Through Mutual Encouragement (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NIV).
 2. Through Mutual Ministry (Galatians 5:13).
 3. Through Mutual Burden-Bearing (Galatians 6:1–2).

Colossians 1:29_____

2 Timothy 2:9_____

Acts 24:16_____

Galatians 1:10_____

1 Timothy 1:18_____

The late Paul J. Meyer was a successful businessman and the founder of Success Motivation Institute. He dedicated his life to “motivating people to reach their full potential.” He once wrote, “The totally committed man isn’t hard to recognize. He stands head and shoulders above every crowd. He wears success blinders. He looks neither to the right nor left, only straight ahead. He asks only for opportunity; he knows he can make the most of it. He doesn’t want to hide in a sea of mediocrity, humbled and dulled by failure. He wants to make mistakes, to learn, to profit by those mistakes and inevitably to succeed. He wants to live at the crest of the hill, to walk among the stars.”

What if we imbibed of that attitude spiritually? What if we embraced the spirit of commitment that leads people to success in the business world? What if we rejected spiritual mediocrity in our churches, in our families, and in our personal lives? And what if we lived with a passionate commitment for God that sought a daily walk and an intimate relationship with Him? I wonder what would happen? Would we become the epitome of what it truly means “to be the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”?

≡ *Resolve* ≡

1. It has been observed that you can tell what someone is committed to by looking into their check book register and seeing what is on their calendar. In other words where do you spend your money and your time?

Do you agree that this accurately depicts your commitment to the Lord?

2. On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate your overall spiritual commitment?

___1 ___2 ___3 ___4 ___5 ___6 ___7 ___8 ___9 ___10

Why did you give yourself this rating?

3. Commitment is the key to your relationship with God, satisfying relationships with others, and spiritual “bondedness” in the church family. Write down three things you will do in each area to develop deeper commitment.

#1 Relationship with God

#2 Relationship with your church family

#3 Relationship with your earthly family
