

LeaderLesson 2: Commitment

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Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2 HCSB

Webster's Dictionary defines commitment in this way: it is an agreement or pledge to do something in the future. Effective leadership flows from commitment – commitment to doing the right things. That commitment sets the stage for the future God has for us as we trust and follow Him in Jesus' name.

As followers of Jesus, the single most important commitment of our lives is to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Any true (and eternal) success we experience as leaders will flow from that commitment. The Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1-2 urges us on God's behalf to devote ourselves to the Lord. The word "Therefore" in verse 1 points back to all that is written before this point in Romans. So, in light of God's mercy, which justifies, sanctifies, and will someday glorify us, we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices to Him. God's mercy freely given should drive us to absolute commitment.¹

When we think about security and significance in life, we must remember who God is in relation to commitment. God is a covenant keeping God from the beginning until today. Even when Israel broke their covenant with Him, He said that He would make a new covenant with them so that they all would know Him, from the least to the greatest.²

God's grace is always previous to our response and demonstrates His unshakeable commitment to us. "Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."³ This loving God who is committed to us provides a supernatural sense of security and significance, so that the most reasonable response we can give is to commit ourselves to Him.

When I counsel couples who want to get married, I tell them that a feeling of love is not enough to make marriage succeed. There must be commitment to one another, a loyalty to one another that will weather sickness or health, poverty or riches, to love and to cherish one another until death alone parts them. Quality relationships are founded on the bedrock of commitment. God expects this of us, in our relationships with Him and with others.

Many of those who first followed Jesus were just curious. Others were convinced of the truth He shared. But only a few were completely committed to Him. When the crowds began to leave Him, Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked if they were leaving too. Although they probably didn't understand the Lord that much better than those who were departing, they knew that there was no turning back from following Him. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to remain committed to Him even when we do not understand Him.

As a Christian leader, you have made a commitment to serve the Lord. Sometimes we find it easier to make a commitment if we try somehow to limit the scope of that commitment, that chosen area of obedience. But God does not let us pick and choose what we will obey, or to what we will commit ourselves. We must do as He says, serve as He leads, whatever the situation or the need before us. The call to commitment is a call to constant vigilance in maintaining and understanding the standards of that commitment. We must maintain our focus on serving the Lord.⁴

Henry Varley said, "The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a person who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him." Maybe it will be this year of focused obedience that will allow us to see what can truly happen when we live out commitment to God, in Jesus' name and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that we will be the generation that answers this call to covenant with the Lord.

Lord Jesus,

Grant us the favor of being led by You,
under the direction of Your providence and Your Word.

Grant us Your blessings with bitter things,
to brighten and quicken us,
not to depress and make us lifeless;

Grant us, like Gideon of old, way-tokens,
 by removing things that discourage us;
 Grant us succor beneath the shadow of Your sympathy
 when we are tempted.

Accept our unceasing thanks
 that we are not cast off from Your hand
 as a darkened star or rudderless vessel.

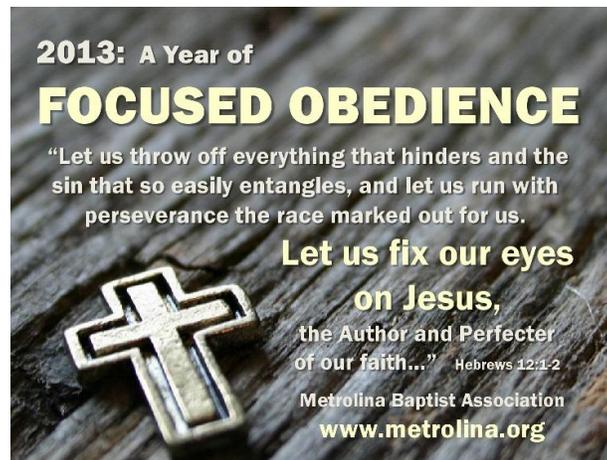
Do not allow our lives to extend beyond our usefulness;
 Cast us not under the feet of pride, injustice, riches,
 worldly greatness, selfish oppression of men;
 Help us to wait patiently, silently for You,
 not to be enraged or to speak unadvisedly.

Let Your mercy follow us while we live,
 and give us aid to resign ourselves to Your will.

Take our hearts and hold them in Your hand;
 write upon them reverence for Yourself
 with an inscription that time and eternity cannot erase.

To Your grace and the care of Your covenant we commit ourselves,
 in sickness, and in health,
 for You have overcome the world,
 fulfilled the law,
 finished justifying righteousness,
 swallowed up death in victory,
 and taken all power everywhere.

Mark this covenant with Your own blood in the court of forgiving mercy;
 Attach unto it Your name in which we believe, for it is sealed by our unworthy mortal hands.⁵



¹ *Handbook to Leadership: Leadership in the Image of God*, Kenneth Boa, Sid Buzzell, Bill Perkins. Trinity House, 2007. p.27. (This yearlong study will use this text as a primary source. I encourage anyone who would like to go deeper on this journey in 2013 to get a copy of this excellent resource. It is also available on Kindle.)

² Jeremiah 31:31-36.

³ 1 John 4:10.

⁴ *Handbook to Leadership*, page 32 (John 6:60-69).

⁵ "Covenant" from *Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett, Banner of Truth Trust, 1975. Page 141. (adapted with updated language here.)