

Commitment

Dale Foster

For our Bible class today, we're going to be talking about successful Christian living. There are many characteristics that are necessary for successful Christian living. The first one I want to talk about is a life of commitment. When you talk about loyalty and commitment, Ruth is a prime example. In the book of Ruth, chapter 1, verses 15 through 17. She was willing to leave her family and her homeland. She was willing to go leave and go and live among a strange people. They who had different customs and different beliefs. And she was willing to be committed to her mother-in-law, Naomi. And she was willing to be committed to Naomi's people, and to Naomi's God.

Commitment is important in every area of life. The automobile manufacturers say they are committed to excellence. Professional athletes are committed to being the very best that they can be. And we must be committed to the Lord and His Church. We're convinced that commitment is foundational to living a successful Christian life. A commitment in marriage is very necessary. It's one of the top three things that couples listed to have strong and lasting marriages. It means that divorce is out of the question. If commitment in marriage is certainly necessary in living the Christian life.

Let's define what we're talking about with commitment. It means "to bring together," "to join together," "to entrust one's self to someone or something," "to put one in another's hands," "the pledging of oneself to another." Commitment is the promise to do something and then do it. Ruth made a commitment to Naomi and she kept her commitment. God has committed to keeping his promises. We read in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 23, "We are to hold fast to our profession, because he who has promised is faithful." God always keeps his promises. There is not one promise that God ever made that he did not keep.

We also read in First Peter, verse 23, chapter 2, verse 23. Jesus committed himself to the will of God. Timothy was told to commit, or entrust, the Word of God to others. 2 Timothy 2:2 — part of our work as preachers or evangelists is to train others to be preachers and evangelists. How many of you are training other men to speak? We are to commit these things to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

Men can also commit their ways to be sinful. Jesus said in John chapter 8, verse 34, "Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin." We also read in Romans chapter 6, verses 16 and 17 — They once were the servants of sin, but then they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was committed to them, and they became the servants of righteousness. We're encouraged to commit our ways to the Lord. In the book of Psalms, chapter 37, verse 5 — "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass."

We also read in 1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 19 — when we suffer according to the will of God, we are to commit our souls to him in well doing. As Christians, and especially as preachers, we must be committed to living the Christian life. Let me give you an illustration. A president of a Bible college was faced with a tremendous decision: his wife had become very ill, very sick. It got so bad that he could not continue his work as president of the Bible college. If he took care of his wife. Now his closest friends advised him to put her into an institution to take care of her, and then he could continue on with his work? Besides, he was only 57 years old. But he made the decision to resign and spend his time taking care of his wife. He had committed himself to her 32 years ago, when they got married. He promised to stay with her in sickness and in health, to love, to honor, and to cherish. And so it was a matter of integrity with him to take care of his wife. After she died, he wrote of the joys and blessings he received as a result of spending this time with his wife. That's taking a commitment seriously.

To be a Christian is a choice that I make, and we need to stay with the choices that we make unless they are wrong. Jesus said in Luke 9:62, “No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” When we make a choice to serve God, we must stay with it. We show our integrity by our commitment. We've considered the cost of discipleship and we've made the commitment to stay with it.

In Luke chapter 9, verses 23 through 25. Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.” We're not Christians only on Sunday. We're Christians every day. We're Christians, not only in the church building, but also in the office building, the school building, or wherever we are. In our business dealings, we must be Christians. We do not lie or try to cheat someone, because we've made a commitment to God that we're going to be faithful to Him, and to others.

It's a promise that is sacred to God and others, and I will keep. It is to hold steady when the temptation is to run from a difficult situation, or relationship. A commitment gives staying power to preserve my relationship with God. Notice what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 23, and verse 3. Jesus condemned the scribes by saying, “Don't do according to their works, for they say, but do not.” That means that we must be people of our word. And what we say we will do, we do.

So what does commitment require? Let me mention two things. Number one, commitment requires trustworthiness. A lack of trust is learned by children. There was a man who had a three year old son, and he told him, “Stand on the table and jump off, and I'll catch you.” He did it three times. And three times the father did not catch him. And then he said, “Now son, learn a lesson. Trust no one.” So that little boy grew up not trusting anyone. His father could have caught him each time and said, “You can trust me, I will catch you.”

This is why unfaithfulness on the part of a mate is so devastating. It destroyed the trust that had been built between them. But what about our trustworthiness to God? Do we show our trustworthiness by our actions? We read in the book of James chapter 2, verses 21 through 24...

Abraham proved his trustworthiness by doing what God commanded him to do. We're not just to be hearers of the word, we also must be doers of the word. Is our word good? Can God truly trust us? We must be people of our word.

The second thing that commitment requires is endurance. To endure infers that there are hardships to go through to remain committed. Love helps us to endure. We read in 1 Corinthians 13, verses 4 through 8. "Love bears all things, believes all things and it endures all things." Our love for God enables us to endure the tragedies and problems and trials of life.

Our hope helps us to stay committed. We read in Romans chapter 8, verses 24 and 25. Sometimes we use hope in the sense of a wish. But in the Bible hope is more than just a wish. It not only is a wish, but it's an expectation of receiving what we hope for. Since our hope is in God, it enables us to be committed because we expect God to fulfill His promises.

Jesus' example of commitment at the end of his life should be an example to us. He prayed in Matthew chapter 26, verse 39. He said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." We should always bend our will to the will of God. By Jesus example, we should be strengthened to do this. On the cross he could say, "It is finished," John chapter 19, verse 30. Jesus said he had finished the work that God had given him to do, and it was on the cross that he finished what the Father given him to do. He was faithful to the end. Likewise, we must be faithful to the end.

As we've seen, marriage is for life. We made a commitment to that end, and we need to keep it. But hopefully for a richer life, there should be no doubt in our commitment to serve God. We belong to, and have committed our lives, to serve Christ. It's a commitment for life, even unto death. We read in Revelation chapter 2, verse 10. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." We must never turn our back on Christ. He will never turn his back on us.

And so, as preachers, I encourage you to honor your commitment that you've made to Christ, to faithfully preached the gospel. And if you're not a preacher, I encourage you to honor the commitment that you've made to be a faithful Christian. So that concludes our lesson on commitment.