

Back to the Basics

How Great is Your Commitment?

Commitment Illustrated

Memory Verse:
Romans 12:1-2

On August 11, 1978, Double Eagle II, a large helium balloon, and her crew of three eased into an almost windless sky above the potato fields of Maine. Their destination was Paris, France. The aerodynamics of ballooning are somewhat complex, but one thing is certain. In order for the balloon to stay aloft as the journey progressed, ballasts (that which is used to add weight) had to be expelled. As they approached continental Europe six days later, one of the crew wrote, “We have been expending ballast wisely, but as we neared land, not cheaply . . . over went such gear as tape recorders, radios, film magazines, sleeping bag, lawn chairs, most of our water, food, and the cooler it was in.” (Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, pg 70)

How great is your commitment to Jesus Christ? We would like to naturally assume that the longer a person has been a Christian, the more committed he has grown. Tragically, the behavior manifested within the lives of some Christians serve as evidence to the contrary. Maybe our own lives are telling another story of commitment, a story we would prefer not be told. Just as the balloonist from the story had to get rid of expensive equipment such as recorders, radios, etc., so too must Christians be willing to give up whatever it takes to remain committed to Jesus Christ.

Consider the example of commitment seen in the story of Jephthah. (Judges 11) Jephthah, a mighty man of valor, was preparing to lead an army against the people of Ammon. In his preparations, Jephthah made a vow to the Lord. Jephthah said, “*If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s, and I will it up as a burnt offering.*” (Judges 11:30-31, NKJV)

When Jephthah returned from the victorious battle, his only child, his daughter, came out to meet him. Upon seeing his daughter and remembering his vow to the Lord, Jephthah tore his clothes and said, “*Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it.*” (Judges 11:35, NKJV) According to Judges 11:29, Jephthah “*carried out his vow with her which he had vowed.*”

It is the purpose of this lesson to ask the question, “How great is your commitment to the Lord?” With this lesson, we will show what committing one’s self to the Lord requires as well as examining the role of sacrifices in one’s commitment to the Lord.

What Does Total Commitment Require?

Total commitment requires one to count the cost of the commitment. When Jephthah made his vow, it is apparent that he did not count the full cost. How could Jephthah have anticipated his daughter meeting him at the door upon his return home? Within our lives as Christians, it is crucial that we count the cost of our Christianity. Consider the following excerpts from Jesus as recorded in Luke 14:25-33:

- Q *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”* (v. 26, NKJV)
- Q *“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”* (v. 27, NKJV)
- Q *“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”* (v. 33, NKJV)

Requirements of Commitment

- *Count the cost of commitment*
- *The will to be committed*
- *Complete love for the Lord*
- *Trust in the Lord*
- *The attitude of a servant*

As is obvious from the statements from Jesus, there is no small cost in being committed to Him. One who would follow Jesus must love Jesus above all others, including himself. He must be willing to “bear his cross” or accept all the challenges that will come with the journey of following Jesus. The cost of following Jesus is to forsake all. Even if we find the cost to be greater than what we expected, we must be willing to follow through with our commitment.

There is another requirement in being committed to the Lord: We must possess the will or determination to be committed to the Lord. Jephthah’s sacrifice to the Lord took a lot of will and determination to follow through with the vow he had made to the Lord. A person who wills himself to be totally committed to God will make the determination to be committed.

Let us take a look at the following statement made by Jesus: *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’* (Matthew 16:24, NKJV) Focus on the word “desires” (“will” - KJV). The Greek word translated as “desires” is thelo. Consider the following definitions given for thelos:

- Q 1) to will, have in mind, intend 1a) to be resolved or determined, to purpose 1b) to desire, to wish 1c) to love 1c1) to like to do a thing, be fond of doing 1d) to take delight in, have pleasure (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon)
- Q “to will, to wish,” implying volition and purpose, frequently a determination, is most usually rendered “to will.” (Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vol. 2, Page 162)

Before a person can deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus, he must first have a desire to do so. He must will himself, having in his mind the intent to make the journey. He must make the resolution to follow Jesus Christ. Only then can a person seriously consider the journey

of following Jesus. This journey of commitment requires great cost. It requires a denying of oneself.

A third requirement for remaining committed is possessing complete love for the one to whom we are committed. In this case, our complete love is for the Lord. Jephthah apparently loved the Lord more than his daughter. This is not to say that Jephthah was not remorseful for having to fulfill his vow, but his respect and love for God took precedence. We must love God more than any other person or thing which might challenge our commitment to Him. This includes loving God more than we love those who may be the closest to our hearts. (Matthew 10:34-39) Jesus plainly stated, *“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”* (Matthew 10:37, NKJV)

Psalms 37:5-6

Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.

David (NKJV)

Total commitment to the Lord also requires that you trust the Lord. You trust His ways, His directions, His corrections, His rebukes, and His love for you. Peter wrote, *“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, NKJV) We must commit the keeping of our souls into the hands of the Lord. We must entrust our spiritual health to the hands of the Great Physician. Consider the faith of the apostle Paul: *“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”* (2 Timothy 1:12, NKJV) Trusting in the Lord requires that we do whatever His word tells us to do, no matter the cost.

Paul's Commitment

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:7-8, 13-14, NKJV

The attitude of a servant is likewise required if you are going to commit to the Lord. A person who is committed to Jesus Christ will live with the understanding that he is simply a servant of the Lord. Every Christian, having been set free from sin, should live as a slave of righteousness. (Romans 6:16-18) Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price so that we might be set free from our bondage to sin. The apostle Paul wrote, *“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”* (1 Corinthians 6:20, NKJV) Let us not forget the words of Jesus when he said, *“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ ”* (Luke 17:10, NKJV)

Commitment Requires Sacrifices

When Jephthah made his vow, his commitment to the Lord, he honored his commitment despite the cost of his sacrifice. When a person becomes a Christian, he is vowing or committing himself to Jesus Christ. In order to honor that commitment to the Lord, he must be willing to make the necessary sacrifices.

One of the first sacrifices that any Christian should make is to turn away from any and all sinful practices in his life. When you became a Christian, you repented of your sins. (cf. Acts 2:38. See lesson two, *Understanding My Salvation*, pg 12) To repent of your sins meant to turn away from your sins, turning to a life of serving the Lord. As such, your decision demanded that you stopped all sinful practices. It may be that in your early stages as a babe in Christ, there were certain things which were sinful that you were unaware were sinful. With a repentant heart and a determination to change, once you learned that a certain deed was sinful, you stopped the practice. Such things you may have given up may have included drinking alcohol, using foul language, engaging in immoral acts, engaging in premarital sexual relations, etc. (See Romans 1:28-32, Galatians 5:19-21, Colossians 3:5-10, and 1 Peter 4:1-3 for a listing of sins from which every Christian must turn away.)

There is another side to making sacrifices as a Christian. There are times when we will have to make sacrifices in order to obey the Lord. Consider the following areas of commitment where we may have to make great sacrifices.

- Q Studying God's word daily requires that we sacrifice our time. If we do not study God's word, then we, like Israel, will "be destroyed for a lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6) It is through the study of God's word that we improve our lives as Christians, and thereby gain God's approval. (2 Timothy 2:15) The Bible will give us all the instructions we need to live a righteous and obedient life. (2 Timothy 3:16,17)
- Q We must also make the time to pray to our Father in heaven. As Paul wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica, we are to "pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17) We are to offer up prayers of intercession, supplication, and thanksgiving. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
- Q Assembling with fellow Christians can call for sacrifices. (Hebrews 10:24-25) This would include regularly scheduled worship services and Bible classes, Gospel Meetings, Lectureships, etc. It is not on Sundays and Wednesdays that you make the decision to worship the Lord. You made that decision to worship the Lord the day you became a child of God, a slave of Jesus Christ. The questions which you must ask yourself is this: What are you willing to give up so that you are able to assemble with saints? What is currently hindering you from being present at all the assemblies of the saints?
- Q Personal evangelism involves great commitment and sacrifices. Each and every Christian should do their best to learn how to conduct a home Bible study. This begins with developing the courage to ask someone to study with you. Are you willing to sacrifice the time needed to study God's word so that you might be able to teach the lost? Are you willing to put aside fear and shyness so that you can invite someone to the worship services and Bible classes?

Q Correcting fellow saints who are in error requires sacrifice. (Galatians 6:1-2) It is not always easy to help a brother to turn from his error. Many Christians have found it easier to talk about the erring brother rather than to talk to the erring brother. Each Christian should make whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to be willing to try to turn an erring brother back to the Lord. Here are two questions for you to consider: Are you willing to risk angering a brother in order to show him the error of his ways? Are you willing to withdraw your physical fellowship from a brother who is unwilling to repent and change? (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

Worth the Cost?

You pay \$20,000 for a car. The car runs 2.38% of the time. Did you get your money's worth?

Jesus paid the ultimate price for our soul's salvation. When our service is limited to 2.38% of the time (4 hours a week), is Jesus getting His "money's worth?"

- Q Doing your part as a member of the local congregation may require sacrifices. (1 Corinthians 12:12-20) For instance, a local congregation may need you to teach a Bible class. If so, then this will require commitment and much study time on your part. The local church needs you to contribute financially to the work of the church. There is also a need for you to contribute to the upkeep of the physical meeting place. Also, participating in the worship services by singing and by following along in your Bible during the sermon is another way of doing your part.
- Q Raising your children to respect God and to study His word takes sacrifices. (Ephesians 6:4) You should teach your children the purpose of the worship services. You should teach your children to study their Bibles during the week. This weekly study time is a great opportunity to do their Bible lessons before Sunday or Wednesday. Also, you can teach your children to sing and to listen to the sermon, following along in their Bibles. If your children see commitment and sacrifices within your life, then they will learn to be equally committed to serving the Lord.

Remember: True commitment begins and ends with sacrifices. Consider the following illustration: A hen and a pig approached a church and read the advertised sermon topic: "What can we do to help the poor?" Immediately the hen suggested that they feed them bacon and eggs. The pig thought for a moment and said, "There is only one thing wrong with feeding bacon and eggs to the poor. For you it requires only a contribution, but for me it requires total commitment!" (Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, pg 73)

The Lord does not accept contributions only. He expects and accepts acceptable sacrifices. Paul wrote, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" (Romans 12:1, NKJV) Please be away that Paul did not write, "present your bodies a living contribution," instead, he wrote, "present your bodies a living sacrifice."

Ten Questions

1. Which Bible character did this lesson use to illustrate commitment? _____
2. What types of people did Jesus say “cannot be my disciples?” _____

3. What are the requirements of commitment? _____

4. Whom did Peter say should “commit their souls to Him in doing good . . .”? _____
5. After we have done all that we have been commanded, what should we say? _____

6. What does it mean to repent of your sins? _____
7. If we do not study the Bible, in what way will we become like Israel? _____

8. Will assembling with the saints sometimes require sacrifices? _____
9. What is your responsibility towards the brother who has sinned? _____

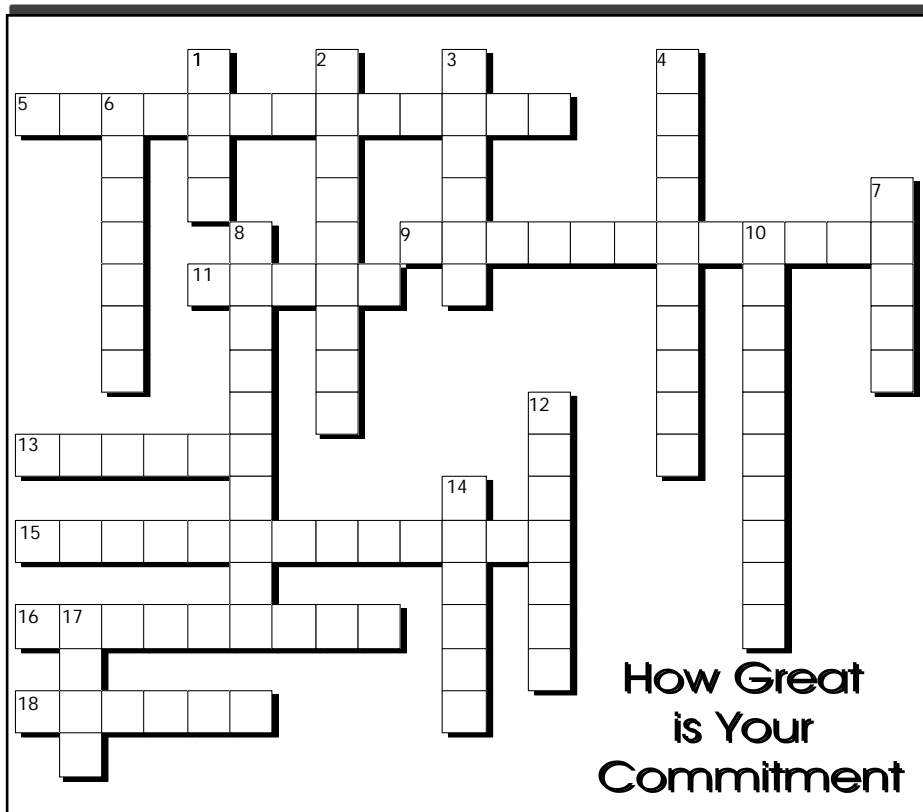
10. According to the apostle Paul, how are we to present our bodies to the Lord? _____

True or False

1. T or F : When Jephthah returned from his battle, a goat came out first to greet him.
2. T or F : A person must “hate his father and mother” in order to be a disciple of Jesus.
3. T or F : Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him embrace himself and take up his cross, and follow me.”
4. T or F : Possessing complete love for Jesus Christ is necessary to being committed to Christ.
5. T or F : A Christian should possess the attitude of a servant.
6. T or F : When becoming a Christian, it is not necessary to turn away from one’s sins.
7. T or F : Christians should make the time to pray.
8. T or F : Our commitment to the Lord does not involve personal evangelism.
9. T or F : Correcting erring Christians is a part of being committed to the Lord.
10. T or F : True commitment begins and ends with sacrifices.

A Little Fun

(Use the lesson text to answer these questions.)



Across

5. In order to be committed to the Lord, one must possess the will or _____.
9. "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are _____ servants . . .'"
11. "He who _____ father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."
13. "_____ your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, . . ."
15. "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of _____."
16. This type of person is to try to restore a brother who has been overtaken in a fault.
18. "Therefore let those who _____ according to the will of God commit their souls to Him . . ."

Down

1. Paul told the brethren in Thessalonica to "_____ without ceasing."
2. "My people are destroyed for a lack of _____."

3. Paul told the saints in Rome to present their bodies as "_____ sacrifices."
4. True commitment begins and ends with _____.
6. To whom did Paul write, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, . . ." (KJV)
7. Who said, "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."?
8. This lesson asked the question, "How great is your _____ to Jesus Christ?"
10. Paul wrote, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the _____ of ourselves together, . . ."
12. "So likewise, whoever of you does not _____ all that he has cannot be My disciple."
14. Doing your part as a _____ of the local congregation may require sacrifices.
17. Who wrote, "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, . . ."

Passages in this Lesson

Judges 11.....	pg 67	1 Corinthians 12:12-20	pg 71
Judges 11:29	pg 67	Galatians 5:19-21	pg 70
Judges 11:30-31.....	pg 67	Galatians 6:1-2	pg 71
Judges 11:35.	pg 67	Ephesians 6:4	pg 71
Psalms 37:5-6	pg 69	Philippians 3:7-8	pg 69
Hosea 4:6	pg 70	Philippians 3:13-14	pg 69
Matthew 10:34-39	pg 69	Colossians 3:5-10	pg 70
Matthew 10:37	pg 69	1 Thessalonians 5:17	pg 70
Matthew 16:24	pg 68	2 Thessalonians 3:14-15	pg 71
Luke 10:17	pg 69	1 Timothy 2:1-4	pg 70
Luke 14:25-33	pg 68	2 Timothy 1:12	pg 69
Acts 2:38	pg 70	2 Timothy 2:15	pg 70
Romans 1:28-32	pg 70	2 Timothy 3:16,17	pg 70
Romans 6:16-18	pg 69	Hebrews 10:24-25	pg 70
Romans 12:1	pg 71	1 Peter 4:1-3	pg 70
1 Corinthians 6:20	pg 69	1 Peter 4:19	pg 69