

A Majestic Commitment

1 Peter 2:9, Luke 14:25-33, Revelation 2:8-10, Matthew 10:16-22

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Commitment. Now there's a word that's loaded with both hope and frustration; hope that someone will fully involve themselves, be reliable and responsible and frustration that arises when that hoped for commitment fails to materialize.

A woman hopes her man will be "committed" to their relationship, then grows frustrated when he seems to drag his feet.

A coach hopes a talented young athlete will "commit" herself to the team and grows frustrated when other interests take precedence.

A teacher hopes that an intelligent student will commit himself to learning, and grows frustrated when he seems more interested in gaming than study.

An employer hopes that a capable employee will commit themselves to the company, and grows frustrated when that employee proves undependable.

A director hopes that a new volunteer will commit themselves to the purpose and work of the non-profit, and grows frustrated when the volunteer doesn't seem to grasp the importance of the work or not showing up to do it.

So today, as we continue with the "Majestic" series, we are going to learn about commitment.

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Now, we all understand that commitment is good, and a lack of commitment is bad.

But there's a reason why many people don't commit themselves to anything. I mean, a reason beyond the sorts of things we typically grumble about.

You know, "this generation doesn't..." blah blah blah, or "People nowadays just don't..." yada yada yada. The underlying reason beneath all that is that commitment is hard.

It means showing up when we don't particularly want to. It means staying when there's someplace else we'd rather be.

It means effort when we don't feel like it. Lack of commitment is easier, at least in the short term.

Since commitment can be hard, we tend to be, or at least should be, careful about to what we commit ourselves.

Most of us know that when we make a commitment, we need to do our absolute best to honor it. None of us want the reputation that goes with being the sort of person who takes commitment lightly.

Commitment can be hard. That's usually why we're slow to make commitments.

It's why we make temporary commitments, commitments that we know have a certain shelf-life when we enter them.

It's why we change commitments; we commit to one thing for a while, then shift our attention elsewhere and commit to something else.

All of us recognize, at least on some level, that the Christian life is a life of commitment.

That's why some of us hesitate to be baptized in Jesus' name. We know that water baptism is crossing the Rubicon. It means we're all in for Jesus, come what may.

We shouldn't be under the illusion that water baptism means we're pledging ourselves to a life of absolute perfection, but it does mean that we're pledging our complete allegiance to Christ and His Kingdom above all others.

It means that we're promising Christ and His Church that we'll walk in His ways and take up His cause.

We know that's not the sort of commitment a person makes, then abandons in favor of some other temporary interest. It's a commitment that lasts a lifetime, and affects our eternity.

So, it's good to count the cost, as Jesus said. Since the Christian life is a life of commitment, an entire life of commitment, it's good to know what that entails.

And to do that, we've got to turn to the Scripture. Understanding Christian commitment requires understanding what the Bible has to say about the Christian life.

The trouble is that there's not one, single equivalent idea in the Scripture that we can study and say, "*This is what Christian commitment means.*"

To understand Christian commitment from the Scriptures, we must have a grasp of a few, different, overlapping Scriptural ideas that, taken together, help us understand what it means to be committed to Christ.

If you've not been baptized in Jesus' name, all this should help you understand more of what following Jesus means. If you have been baptized, it'll remind you of what you pledged yourself to.

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First, we understand Christian commitment by understanding the Scriptural idea of discipleship; the Christian life is a commitment to being Jesus' disciple.

Luke 6:40, *"The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher."*

It's a commitment to a life of learning, to a life lived in the discipline of the Master. You see, Jesus isn't just your teacher, He's your Master and Lord. So, discipleship means that you follow Him.

It means that you build your life around the framework of His values. It means that you walk in obedience to His precepts. It means that you take up His work in the world as your own.

Discipleship involves discipline and structure. It's not just a matter of being a "spiritual person" since we're all "spiritual" by nature. We were created with a spiritual interest, but being a disciple goes beyond that.

Being Jesus' disciple isn't a matter of us following our "spiritual" nature, it's a matter of our heart hearing Jesus' call and you saying "yes" by following Him.

Jesus' call is always a call to discipleship, and that involves discipline and structure. There are things to learn. There are practices to take up. There is work to do.

So, at times discipleship will involve self-denial and at other times it involves suffering, but Jesus' disciples are granted things that no one else has!

Jesus grants his disciples a level of understanding and enlightenment that the general crowd will never have.

The Gospels show that Jesus taught the general crowds in parables, but He taught His disciples plainly. He explained the parables to them! Jesus showed His disciples the mysteries of the Kingdom of God!

Jesus opened to His disciples a revelation of His person that the general crowd will never have.

Today, people may think of Jesus as a good teacher, an exemplary man, or even a great prophet, but to His disciples Jesus reveals Himself as Lord and Christ; as God and King.

Jesus entrusts His disciples with His mission. They become active participants in Christ's work in the world.

The general crowd may try to cloak their goals in Jesus-talk, but disciples are commissioned; Jesus has passed his mission on to His disciples. They take up His role in God's plan for the ages!

So, Christian commitment means discipleship.

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Next, we understand Christian commitment by understanding the Scriptural idea of faithfulness.

Matthew 25:21, *"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"*

In the Scriptures, faithfulness is about three things: a life of faith, keeping faith, and keeping the Faith.

Remember that “faith” is about persuasion. If you have faith, you’ve been persuaded.

So, faithfulness is about living your life as if you were persuaded about the truth of Jesus and what he said. That’s what the “life of faith” is about!

If you’re a man or woman of faith, then you live your life in light of that faith. If you’re someone who has faith in Jesus, then you live as if you believe what Jesus said and did is true.

Faithfulness is about keeping faith. In other words, when others place their faith in you it means you’re trustworthy. It means that you do what you say you’ll do. It means that you’ll be where you say you’ll be.

It means that you’re true to those you’re in relationship with; your spouse, your kids, your family, your friends, and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

It means that you keep your word, that you keep your promises, and that others can place their confidence in you.

Faithfulness is also about keeping the Faith. It’s about staying true to the teachings of the Word of God because those things matter to you! It’s about staying true because God has been true to you!

Faith flows to faithfulness. One is necessary to the other. If you have faith, you’ll live faithfully.

That means you live the Christian life because you believe, and not because you’re under some sort of obligation. It’s important that you get that; when you’re a Christian, you do what you do because you believe.

You're faithful to pray, to Sunday Worship, and to Midweek Online because you believe; you're persuaded of their significance and value. Faith flows to faithfulness.

You're faithful in your financial support to our church because you believe; you're persuaded of the good that it has brought into your life. You're persuaded that that's important because faith flows into faithfulness.

You're faithful in your Christian service because you believe; you're persuaded that each member of the Body can and should do whatever they can for the Kingdom.

You'll serve here, there, and everywhere, and you'll do it in faith because faith flows into faithfulness.

The rewards of the Kingdom are given to those who are faithful! In Matthew 25, Jesus taught that rulers and leaders will be chosen from among the faithful. In Revelation 2, Jesus said that a crown of life awaits the faithful.

In Revelation 17, it says that Christ's great victory over all the corrupt, immoral, and broken systems of this world will be accomplished.

Who do you think is going to be there with Him when He triumphs? You guessed it! The faithful! So, Christian commitment means faithfulness.

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Finally, we understand Christian commitment by understanding the Scriptural idea of endurance. This simply means that over the course of your Christian walk, you've developed staying power.

Matthew 10:22, *"You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

It doesn't mean that you're stronger than everyone else. It doesn't mean that you're more gifted than anyone else. It doesn't mean you're more spiritual than anyone else.

No, it simply means that somehow the work of God's grace in you took the form of a dogged determination to stay.

The idea of "endurance" in the New Testament is just that; you stay committed when everyone else has gone, when everyone else has turned back.

If your family forsakes their commitment, you stay. If your friends forsake their commitment, you stay. If the ministers forsake their commitment, you stay.

If religious systems brand your commitment heretical, you stay. If influencers label your commitment hateful, you stay.

If employers make your commitment untenable, you stay. If governments declare your commitment illegal, you stay.

That's endurance; you stay, you last, you endure, in it all and through it all.

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Conclusion

It's those who endure who will be saved in the end! It's those who don't give up who will reap the harvest!

It's those who hold their confidence to the end who will share in all that Christ's return brings to the world! Christian commitment means endurance.

Yes, the Christian life is a majestic life. It's a life that makes you one of the chosen, the royal, the holy, and the precious in His sight.

The majesty of that life calls for a majestic commitment to Christ and His Kingdom. A commitment that's revealed in your discipleship, your faithfulness, and your endurance.

Let's be able to say, as Paul wrote to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 4:7-8, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."*