

A Call to Commitment

Matthew 26:47-56

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

“A pledge or promise to do something”

Issues: The world has seen what real commitment can do. From biblical heroes to the twentieth century's Lenin, we have ample proof that the truly committed are the truly effective.

Is there anything lacking in your commitment to the Lord: Is it strong enough that you can endure suffering, now and in the future? Is it strong enough to ensure your part in carrying out the commission Christ gave us to make disciples of all the nations?

Total commitment is the need of our times.

Who do you know who is totally committed to the Lord God? Of examples in the Scriptures, I think first of the commitment of John the Baptist, who did no miracles but whom Jesus said was the greatest of all prophets.



He was totally committed to preparing the way for Christ. His commitment meant preaching repentance, living very simply, exalting Christ, and explaining Christ's mission. He was a moralist and a preacher of righteousness, and this cost him his head when he confronted King Herod.

Another man totally committed to the Lord, despite his faults and sins, was David. In fact, in [Acts 13:22](#) we read how God described David as *"a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to."*

I think especially of these qualities in David's life of commitment:

- He was a servant, having learned servant hood as a boy by caring for sheep and taking food to his older brothers who were in combat with the Philistines.
- He was not vengeful. Though he had the opportunity to slay his pursuer King Saul, he did not. In making this decision he rejected the advice of his well-meaning fellow soldiers.
- He learned how to receive abuse from friends as well as enemies.
- His mind and heart overflowed with God's word, as his many psalms testify.
- And finally, David recognized that he was a sinner.

There are others today who show total commitment to various causes. Listen to the testimony of **Bob Boardman**: “While on a train in the Soviet Union my wife and I met a Russian schoolteacher who worked in the summer handling mail on the train. She spoke some English, and we talked. As far as I could tell by her sincerity and her words, she was entirely committed to communism.

Her commitment reflected the zeal of Lenin, who, while meeting with a small group of people in London in the early 1900s, set down these four "totals": **total** acceptance of the cause, **total** dedication to the cause, **total** discipline in the cause, and **total** action for the cause. In those days in London the communist movement was only a handful of people. Today it embraces a third of mankind. That's what total commitment can do."

REACHING TRUE OBEDIENCE

WHICH ATTITUDE IS YOURS?

I'll do what I want. I don't care what God wants me to do.

If God will give me what I want first, then I'll give him what he wants.

I'll give God what he wants first, with faith that he'll then give me what I want.

I'll give God what he wants, regardless of what he gives me.

True commitment will mean not only turning to something, but also turning from something, just as Paul commended the Thessalonians for turning "**to God from idols to serve the living and true God**" ([1 Thes. 1:9](#)).

For the disciple of Jesus Christ, **commitment means turning from serving self to serving others**, for Jesus said the one who would be first must be the servant of all. ***It means turning from pride to humility.*** When the seventy returned after being sent out by the Lord, when even the demons submitted to them, Jesus told them, "**Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven**"

([Luke 10:20](#)). We cannot glory in the works that God himself does in us and through us. We, like Paul, must not boast "**except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**"

([Galatians 6:14](#)).

As committed Christians ***we must also turn from a hardened heart to a tender heart and conscience.*** The twelve disciples had to do this, for "**their hearts were hardened**"

([Mark 6:52](#)). The right standard was pointed out by Paul: "**I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man**" ([Acts 24:16](#)). A man's conscience is the Lord's searchlight exposing his hidden motives, and we must nurture a tender conscience, though it takes a lifetime.

But why should we be fully committed? One reason is to equip us for present and future suffering. In *Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn said there was only one way a prisoner could overcome the torturous interrogations of the Soviets:

"So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?"

"What do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap?"

"From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you. At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: 'My life is over, a little early to be sure,

but there's nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die—now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me.'

"Confronted by such a prisoner, the interrogator will tremble.

"Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory."

His last sentence echoes Christ's requirements for his disciples: "*Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple*" ([Luke 14:33](#)); and, "*He who stands firm to the end will be saved*" ([Matthew 24:13](#)).

But to what must we be committed?

To God's word. What does the Bible mean to you? Is it precious beyond all else?

To God's will. We need to say with Jesus, "**I have come to do your will, O God**" ([Hebrews 10:7](#)).

To Jesus Christ himself—to be in love not with a cause, but with the one who gives us the cause. And to give ourselves to him means obedience, for Jesus said, "**If you love me, you will obey what I command**" ([John 14:15](#)). We cannot say with our lips that we love him unless we support it with obedience in things both great and small. We must love him with all our heart and soul and might. But it is difficult, isn't it?

It may be helpful for you to evaluate your love for Christ in terms of these stages leading to obedience:

During the **first stage** we may think, "I am going to do what I want, and I don't care what God wants me to do."

At the **second stage** we say, "If God will give me what I want first, then I will give him what he wants." Childishly, we may put this in terms of a fair trade, an equal exchange. Have you tried that with God? **A little further down the road** is to say, "I'll give God what he wants first, and then I will have faith that he will give me what I want."

But the **last stage** is this: "I will give God what he wants regardless of whether he gives me what I want." This is true obedience and love. At which stage are you?

We must be committed to God's word, to God's will, and to Jesus Christ. This will also require commitment *to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ*. This was the vision Christ shared with his disciples at the end of his time on earth. He shared it not with rich or powerful men or with professional religionists, but with ordinary men who because of their very weakness would be dependent on him. They were perfect candidates for his grace, just as you are if you feel it is difficult for God to use you in disciple making.

This vision of Jesus was one of power, and the disciples were to express this power in their words and in their lives as they communicated Christ's message. Jesus told them, "**You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses**" ([Acts 1:8](#)).

Where were the disciples to go with this message? Jesus told them to make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:19](#)). But he said their ministry was first in Jerusalem, then **"in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"** ([Acts 1:8](#)).

The beginning point for us—our Jerusalem—is where we live. You must begin in your own Jerusalem. Crossing an ocean will not make you a missionary. You have an opportunity right where you are, and you must be successful there before proceeding on.

But eventually we must go farther. Billy Graham said recently he believed the gospel probably has been proclaimed more extensively throughout America than in any nation in history. In a way we are saturated, and it is our responsibility and privilege to get Christ's gospel out to the ends of the earth.

In [Acts 1:8](#) it may seem strange to us that Jesus would specifically mention Samaria. But he knew that if he did not mention Samaria specifically, the disciples would go to all the nations except Samaria, which was the land of their traditional enemies.

Once again listen to **Bob Boardman's** testimony: "My own Samaria has been the Japanese people. Four years before I became convinced God wanted me to go to Japan, I committed myself to being willing to go anywhere in the world for the gospel. I thought I would be sent to perhaps China, India, Africa, or Europe, but I never considered Japan. I knew God was sensible and reasonable and that I would just never come close to the Japanese again, since we had had enough of one another in World War II. I volunteered for missionary service in several countries, but was rejected.

Later, leaders in The Navigators began to feel that a particular opening in Japan was tailor-made for me. They approached me about it, and I was dumbfounded. I struggled with a decision for weeks. Then in a gospel meeting I heard the testimony of a man who had been captured by the Japanese in the war, and tortured in prison. After the war, to fulfill a promise made to God in the prison, he went to Japan as part of a gospel team. After hearing this man I knew that if God's grace was sufficient for him, God could do the same for me. I made the decision to go to my Samaria."

There may be a Samaritan or a group of Samaritans in your life—someone in your family, or a neighbor, or another race of people, or perhaps a nation overseas. The key to reaching them is given in [2 Cor. 5:14](#)—"Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all."

Why is this vision of the Great Commission so important? Some of us may be hesitant to speak the gospel to other people because we believe it is a message of condemnation. But [John 3:17](#) makes the issue clear: **"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."** The gospel is a message of hope and enlightenment to a people already condemned. We are taking good news to those who are already under judgment. To preach this message, I must believe that they are lost and going to hell, bound by Satan and sin.

The Great Commission will be accomplished by prayer, by speaking, by writing, by sacrifice, and by faith. And we are responsible to help fulfill this commission in our own generation. You can tell the gospel to those in your Jerusalem and beyond as well. You can invest your life in the lives of others, and so multiply yourself as you make disciples.

You have every resource available. You have mass communications and the world's fastest transportation. As Billy Graham says, the world has become your neighborhood.

But do you have faith? And do you have the willingness to be involved in this Great Commission? Do you have a radical commitment to it?

If you do, the world is yours.