

A Call to Commitment

Romans 12:1-2

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I want to introduce you to a mythical church member that I am going to call Kenny. When we first meet Kenny he is attending services at First Church but he left because the services were too formal, every one on the platform wore a tie. He and his family then wandered over to Grace Church because they had a great choir. But before long, we hear they are “happy” at the Christian Worship Center. But before long they moved their membership to the Community Church because of the great Bible teaching. After that the youth program at New Hope catches their eye. Now at least for the moment, they are at the church uptown, at least until something else catching their roving eye. What ever happened to commitment?



Why do you suppose that there are close to 100 million church members in America yet they are not making more of a moral and spiritual impact? Why is it that on Sunday morning thousands of churches have more empty pews than full? Why is it that the average Sunday School in America has less than 66 in attendance and that the average worship service has 84? Why is it that only 50% of the number on any church membership roll can be expected to attend? If Christians really believe in a real Heaven and a real Hell, how can we be so silent? . . . **The answer to all of these questions is tragically simple! *God's people have made a decision about Jesus....but have never made a commitment to Him.*** [Charles Stanley. *Confronting Casual Christianity*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985) pp. 23-33.]

There is of course a difference between a decision and a commitment. Perhaps this cannot be seen any clearer than it is in the failure rate of marriages in America. According to statistics at least 50% of all marriages will end in divorce. Why do you suppose that is happening? Charles Stanley in his book, *Confronting Casual Christianity*, says that it is because these couples made a decision but did not make a commitment. Every person who married made a decision! They stood before a preacher and made promises and recited vows. They made a decision, they kissed each other and walked out together to live but not necessarily “happily ever after” and not necessarily together. So why did they divorce? **The answer is that they made a decision, but they did not truly commit their lives to each other.** But when a couple marries and makes a commitment to one another that is a different story. (Stanley. pp. 25-27)

The same is true in the church. The reason that the church is not making more of an impact in our society is that many church members made a decision about Christ, but have not made a commitment to Christ.

When the pilot of a giant airline is speeding down the runway, there is a certain point where it staying on the ground is no longer an option. When he crosses that line, he is committed to the air, he will take off or a disastrous crash is imminent. At the pilot the pilot can no longer change his mind he is committed.

Unfortunately churches are filled with members who have never got off the ground. They have been sitting there gunning their engines, making noise but getting nowhere. They have been planning on it, meaning to, wanting to, trying to, going to, aiming to, hoping to. But tragedy of tragedies, they have never got off the ground. (Stanley, p. 30)

I want to challenge you to “get off the ground.” In **Romans 12:1-2**, the Apostle Paul issues a clear call for commitment when he says, **“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. (2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”** (NKJV)

The word **“present”** is a technical Greek word used for offering a sacrifice. This is a voluntary act, it does not say “I command you,” it says **“I beseech you or I beg you.”** This is something that is completely up to you. He says the motivation is to be, remembering **“the mercies of God.”** Close your eyes for just a moment and think of all that God has done in your life. Think of the **“mercies of God”** based on what you have received can you really say that you owe Him nothing. When we reflect on the goodness of God how can we be anything other than committed.

Paul goes on to say that it is our **“reasonable service.”** Based on what we have received it is **“logical”** that we would commit ourselves to God.

Under the sacrificial system the animal to be sacrificed was committed to the priest, was killed and consumed on the altar. The believer’s are told that they are to present themselves as **“living sacrifices”** with the understanding that there is no such thing as **“partial sacrifice or a partial commitment.”** It is impossible to be **“sort of committed.”** You are either committed or you are not committed. It is not possible to be a partial sacrifice. “There is a story told about a pig and a chicken walking down the road together. As they walked along they read a sign advertising a breakfast to benefit the poor. The chicken said to the pig, “You and I should donate a ham and egg breakfast.” The pig replied, “Not so fast, for you it would just be a contribution, but for me it would be a total commitment.” [Paul Lee Tan. Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations. (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Pub., 1984) # 5211]

The pig at least understood that it is not possible to offer a partial sacrifice; neither is possible to offer a partial commitment.

To commit ourselves to God means that we are to yield ourselves to Him, surrender to Him, abandon ourselves to Him, entrust ourselves to Him and place ourselves at His disposal. **True commitment is not something that you can take back.**

Verse two says, **“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed...”** There are two words in the original Greek that deserve special attention. The first is the word translated **“conformed”** this is the word that we get our English word **“scheme”** from. It means conformation that it is outward without necessarily any inner change. The word is also sometimes translated **“fashioned.”** He is saying, **“Do not allow yourself to adopt the fashion of this world, to be forced into its mold.”**

The second word is the word translated **“transformed.”** This is the word that from which we get the English word **“metamorphosis.”** This is an inner change, which has observable outward manifestations. This is not something you do yourself. If you **“present yourself as a living sacrifice”** and you reflect on the **“mercies of God”** you will be transformed progressively. This is a work of the Holy Spirit but it requires cooperation on the part of the believer. The end result is that you may **“prove,”** that is test out and discover by proof, what is the will of God. It all begins with commitment. Today I want you to see with me three clear calls to commitment that every believer has to face. **This is based on the supposition that you made more than decision about Christ and that you have already made a personal commitment to Christ.**

Commitment to Personal Growth

We are called to commit ourselves as disciples. Disciples are learners. We should never reach a point in life at which we are no longer learners. One of the things that I admired about Nola Abbot, (she's gone on to be with Lord) was that at one hundred four years of age she was still reading, she was still a learner.

We never reach a point in life at which we have arrived. Even Paul said about himself **“not that I have already attained or am already perfected; but I press on ...Brethren I do not count myself to have apprehended...” (Phil 3: 11-12)**

The truth is that most believers have never reached past the point that Paul says they have to be fed with milk when they should be ready for meat. **(Heb 5:2, 1 Cor 3:2)**

Make a commitment to continue to grow spiritually. Take positive steps to do so. Start a Bible reading plan. Set aside time each day to pray. Read good Christian literature. Watch some good Christian programming. Never give up on learning.

Commitment to the Local Body

The author Jerry Bridges comments in an article on commitment, “As I have watched the parade of people through our church, and other churches. I wonder why so few commit themselves to a local body of believers in a significant way. Many sit and soak

and do little else, and they flee at the first sign of trouble or pressure. They fail to become involved or to give; the priority for corporate worship falls far down on the list. They criticize all that is wrong with a specific local congregation. . . What can we do besides comment or complain? We need to accept the challenge to commit ourselves to responsible membership.” [Jerry Bridges. Spirit of Revival. “Commitment” (April, 1994) p. 29-30]

The local church is the first level of commitment outside of our personal relationship with the Lord. The local church with all its imperfections is still the Lord’s major avenue through which He accomplishes His work. The church gathers for worship, teaching and fellowship to gain power to carry out the ministry as each member is scattered to their various places of responsibility in the world. The member who **“forsakes the assembling together” (Heb 10:25) forfeits the power of a corporate identity.**

But some people just do not see church attendance as a necessity.

They see recreation as a necessity.

They see Yard work as a necessity.

They see Entertaining as a necessity.

They see viewing sporting events as a necessity.

But church attendance and participation rank with visiting Grandpa’s grave, calling your college roommate and viewing the new wing of the art museum. You have every intention of doing it . . . , unless of course something else important comes up. In far too many lives, church attendance seems to be relegated to last place. I sometimes think that the Rotary club does a better job of eliciting weekly attendance from its members than the church does. **Be In your place!!!!**

Commitment to church is deeper than just attendance to the worship services, but it does begin there. But if we are really to get to know the people of our church it will be in the context of involvement in a small group such as bible study, home group or a Sunday school class. You will never truly feel a part of this church by attending the Sunday morning services and going home. **Be Involved!!!**

Commitment to a local church also demands loyalty. When we criticize our church to the outside community we are shooting ourselves in the foot or as my father says, “Cutting off our nose to spite our face.” Who is going to come with you to a church that you have torn down in their hearing? You need to be loyal to the staff and workers of this church. If you have concerns then go directly to the person concerned. No they are not perfect but then neither are you. Do not be guilty of spreading seeds of discontent. **Be loyal!!!**

When you miss the services of your own church to attend “something special” at another church you are guilty of being disloyal. Some of you need to make a commitment to get involved in the life of the church. Be faithful to the services. Get involved in the church. Get to know the other people of the church. Invite people outside of your current circle to your home. **Be loyal to your church!!!**

Commitment to Ministry

Commitment to a local church means deciding on a church “home” and moving in for a permanent stay. Commitment to the local church also means actively using the talents and gifts to serve in the various ministries of the church.

Paul reminds us in **Romans 12:6** that “**we have different gifts, according to the grace given us.**” Ministry means putting those gifts to work. **We need to be a part of what the church is doing not just spectators.**

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 Paul tells us, “**There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. (6) And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. (7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: (11) But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**”(NKJV).

We are told that God has sovereignly placed individuals with the various gifts in each of the churches. If the persons with those gifts are not using their gifts then those jobs are not being done. **We must commit ourselves to the ministry of the local church and use the spiritual gifts that God has given us.**

Conclusion

Will you make a commitment today? If you have not committed yourself to the Lord, then you need to begin there. Once you have committed yourself to the Lord will you commit yourself to personal growth, institute some practical steps to do so beginning today.

Will you commit yourself to this local church? Be in your place. Don’t allow yourself to be distracted from being a part of the church. Be Involved. Commit yourself to begin building some new relationships with in the church. Be loyal. You will never get your neighbor to visit a church that you are constantly finding fault with.

Will you make a commitment that you are going to look for opportunities to put your talents and abilities to work? **The greatest ability is availability.** Don’t wait for someone to ask you, volunteer to help.

If we all make those commitments today, the church would be a different place. **The church would be what the Lord intended it to be!!!!**