

Commitment 3: Interest without Commitment?**9702**

In Mark 7.8 we read, 'You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men'. It is sort of like we are trying to hold too much in our hands; we have all had the kind of load where we just had to set something down so that we wouldn't lose the whole load. We let the least precious to us go; we keep hanging on to what we want the most. To the people Christ was talking about, there was nothing more precious than their own tradition, not even the word of God. But Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15.2 that we must 'hold on firmly to the word I preached unto you.' We must hold on to that truth with as tight a grip as we can; it is the anchor of our soul and without it we are simply adrift in the world of sin. But we must let go of the world: we cannot hold on to both God and mammon. We sometimes want to be able to walk down the middle of the road so that we can run to which ever side has something that we want. How far does our commitment go? What part of the world are we willing to give up to please God? Our commitment means that we must make a decision, we must get on one side or the other and stay there. Read what William Barclay has to say in his book Fishers of Men: In too many of the Church's members there tends to be interest without commitment... But there is all the difference in the world between enlisting in an Army and joining a club. If a man enlists in the Army, he accepts an obedience and a discipline which are absolute; he submits his will to a higher authority; he abandons the right to run his own life and to make his own decisions. On the other hand, when a man joins a club he can go to it when he likes and he can stay away when he likes; he can play as much or as little a part in its activities as he wishes. He has no really binding obligation to it. There are too many Christians for whom membership of the church is far more like joining a club than it is like enlisting in an army. If we are interested in Jesus Christ it means that He is one of the competing interests in life; if we are committed to him it means that he is the dominant dynamic of life - and nothing else will really do.

Which description fits us here? How have we approached the church, as a club or an army? Is it an interest or a commitment? Too many times we want stimulus without relationship, we want curiosity satisfied without commitment. To be what God wants we must become involved; we must turn our thought and belief into action.

Let us compare it to our personal relationships. Juan Carlos Ortiz writes in his book Disciple:

We have to make time for loving. A student in our congregation always seemed to be so busy. Every time we approached him about something, he'd say,

'Oh, excuse me, pastor, but I have no time. I'm studying and I'm also working eight hours a day. So you can imagine how I can't do anything more than that. I can make the meetings once a week, but the rest of the time I'm occupied.'

Then one day he fell in love. Suddenly he had time to visit his girlfriend three or four times a week.

Commitment is directly tied to the degree to which we are 'in love'. Our love for God must be a consuming, motivating love; it must produce action and desire. If we think how we want to be loved, we can appreciate how God feels about it. Do we want someone who only 'puts in appearances', attending regularly, but who never really participates? Do we want someone who only 'small talks' with us, who never enters a real in-depth conversation with us, who never listens to us because they are always preoccupied with their own concerns? I know that we have all been like this at certain times in our lives. But we should be growing into the kind of commitment that gives God what He wants.

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