

COMMITMENT

I grew up in a household that took responsibility and commitment very seriously. I can remember one of the only times that my Dad got obviously mad with me was on a day when I brought the car home later than he had expected it to be home. He always left for work an hour prior to his starting time, even though it only took twenty minutes to get there. The day I was late he needed to go leave two hours prior to his starting time. I don't remember if there were a meeting that he had to attend or what it was, but I discovered when I brought the car back that he wanted to be at work very early. It's just the way he was. In relationship to his job and his other commitments he was very responsible. I learned that from him and from my Mom who, too, took her responsibilities quite seriously.

Both Bev and I are from this take-your-commitments-seriously mold. And I am glad, even if at times I find that this approach to life has tired us out at times. We seldom miss anything if we have made a commitment to it. Honestly, this has benefitted my work and our ministry together. As someone has said, half of life is showing up. I see the mess that is created by colleagues and others when responsibilities aren't taken seriously. And, it seems to me, that following one who took the way of the cross is a serious commitment.

Still I wonder sometimes about commitment that is a matter of law, not gospel. From my observation, commitment for some becomes a matter of shoulds and oughts. And when that happens resentment and anger begin to develop. Commitments and responsibilities become great burdens that feel like nooses around people's necks. I don't think that the difficulty of responsibility can ever be taken away, but the best commitment comes from a heart of joy, not from a heart of obligation.

Commitment isn't something we have to do. ("I should go to church.") Commitment is something that we want to do, something we are free to do. I don't attend worship because I should but because of the great gift that comes from being together as the people of God. Wow! What a privilege it is to gather regularly with God's people! What great gifts flow to me and from me because of that gathering! For this reason I don't like to back out on the commitment that I have for regular worship. Commitment is a way for me (and for you) to live out grace. The discipline brings me such wonderful things.

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