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RESTORING THE CHURCH - PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

Local Church Commitment

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this lesson is to help the believer see the need to be committed to and actively involved in a specific local church if they are to realize their full potential in Christ, become mature in their personal growth and development and find full release and expression in the ministry that has been given to them by Christ.

KEY VERSE:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

I. WHAT DOES THE WORD “COMMITMENT” MEAN?

The word “commitment” itself does not occur in the King James version of the Bible, but when we understand the meaning of this word, we find that it is a concept that occurs throughout the Bible and is the basis for the entering into and maintaining all covenants.

- A. To be committed to someone is to cleave to, to be attached to, to join oneself closely to or to stick to the side of another.
- B. In the Greek language, the concept of commitment implied a gluing together, a firm fastening and a giving of oneself steadfastly to another.

II. IN WHAT AREAS DOES GOD TEACH US COMMITMENT?

- A. God wants us to be committed, firmly attached and joined closely to **Himself** (Acts 11:23; 1 Corinthians 6:17).
- B. God wants everyone to be committed to the **Word of God** as a foundation for our life (Psalms 119:31).
- C. God wants **husbands and wives** to be bound together closely in a strong covenant relationship (Gen. 2:24).
- D. God wants believers in Christ to be committed to **each other** in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6, 16).

III. WHAT ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CHURCH DOES GOD GIVE US TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR COMMITMENT?

God uses many means to teach us commitment. There are three main concepts God links with the church to help us understand how we fit in with one another.

- A. The Church is a **temple** composed of living stones that are built, or fitly framed, together (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5). As stone in a building, we are to stand alongside some stones, come under the authority of other stones and provide covering and protection for others. If any stone is out of place, the walls of the temple will be incomplete and vulnerable.
- B. The Church is a **body** composed of individual members that are interlocked and vitally linked to each other (Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:20, 27). As members of the body we must be in our place and functioning in harmony and peace with other

members of the body if the body is to fulfil its purpose and perform effectively.

- C. The Church is a **family** made up of many brothers and sisters (Ephesians 3:15; Galatians 6:10). Each member of that family has a responsibility to watch and care for other members of the family to see others fulfilled and growing in their relationship to the Heavenly Father.

IV. WHAT WAYS DO WE DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT TO ONE ANOTHER?

The Bible lists many responsibilities that Christians have to one another. Every believer must measure their body relationship according to these guidelines.

- A. There are many things Christians do toward one another because of this commitment.

1. They love one another (1 Peter 1:22).
2. They comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
3. They exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25).
4. They build up one another (Romans 14:19).
5. They admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).
6. They serve one another (1 Peter 4:10).
7. They forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32).
8. They submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
9. In addition, they pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, have compassion one to another and are kindly affectioned one to another.

- B. There are many things Christians do not do to each other because of this commitment.

1. They do not condemn or criticize each other (Romans 14:13).
2. They do not go to law with each other (1 Corinthians 6:7).
3. They do not speak evil of one another (James 4:11).
4. They do not envy one another (Galatians 5:26).
5. They do not hurt or do anything that would harm another (Galatians 5:15).

V. HOW IS OUR COMMITMENT EXPRESSED IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

God not only wants us to relate these truths to our relationship to the worldwide Body of Christ, but He wants us to demonstrate a commitment to a local family or body of believers. When a person is committed to a local assembly it means several things.

- A. It means that he is committing himself to a specific church family (Psalms 68:1-6).
- B. It means that he is willing to support the vision and direction of that family.
- C. It means that he is willing to come under the authority in that family (Hebrews 13:17).
- D. It means that he is willing to give his time and energy to that family.
- E. It means that he is committed to the gathering times of that family.
- F. It means that he is committed to the financial support of that family.
- G. It means that he is committed in a special way to the members of that family.
- H. It means that he is willing to bear the burdens of that family.

VI. IS THERE A NEED TO VERBALIZE OUR COMMITMENTS?

Yes! Verbalizing commitments actually confirms them or renders them more firm.

- A. This is true in marriage in the exchanging of vows.
- B. This has always been true in various relational commitments in the Bible.
 - 1. Joshua before Israel.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Joshua 24:15

2. Ruth to Naomi.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Ruth 1:16

CONCLUSION:

God is showing His body the need for being committed in these days. Every general commitment to Christ and His Church, however, must manifest itself in a specific commitment to a place or it is a false commitment. To say you are committed to what God is doing in a general way and not identify with a local church in a specific way is to dwell carelessly and it could lead to deception. For a child to do this in the natural – to say that he belonged to the great family of mankind but refused to identify with a specific natural family – would seem ridiculous. Yet, how many of God's people desiring to identify with the universal Body of Christ and Family of God have refused to identify and commit themselves to a specific local assembly? God help us to have the courage to make steadfast commitment in these days.