

5. Jesus Showed How to Develop Commitment

Christ invited the disciples to follow Him and promised that He would change and transform them so that they would become fishers of men. As the disciples followed Christ, they developed a strong commitment in their lives to Christ, and they were shown how to develop that same commitment in others. Paul did the same thing with the people he helped develop and mature in their spiritual lives. In 1 Timothy 4:15, we read, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” Jesus showed the disciples how to develop commitment in others. Paul followed the example of Christ and did the same.

First, Christ showed the disciples how to meditate on the things He was teaching them. In Matthew chapters 5 through 7, Christ taught the disciples what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. Although the crowds were listening, Matthew 5:1-2 makes it clear that the primary concern of Christ was His disciples. Those verses say, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...” As Christ concluded His teaching, He said, in Matthew 7:24, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Christ told the disciples that if they wanted to be wise men, they had to both hear His Word and do what He taught.

In order for the disciples to do what they had heard, they had to meditate and think about the things Christ had taught them. Moses gave similar instructions to Joshua many years earlier. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Joshua was told to meditate on the Word day and night so he would be able to do what was written in the Word.

People can become committed to a lot of different things. However, Christ knew that if the disciples were going to be able to show others how to develop commitment to Him, they had to meditate on the things He taught, and then, do the things that He taught. We will never develop effective godly leaders unless they meditate on the things Christ taught, and then, do the things He taught. It takes time for people to learn the Word of God and meditate on it. Then, it also takes time for them to be shown how to obey what they have learned.

That is why, among the qualifications given for spiritual leadership, 1 Timothy 3:6 says, “Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.” If a new Christian is given a position of spiritual leadership, this verse tells us that there is a great danger of pride. Such a person has not yet learned to yield to the Holy Spirit and do things in the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead, such a person will try to lead in his own strength. Instead of providing true spiritual leadership, such a person will lead others in the world’s way, instead of following the example of Christ. Mark 10:42-45 tells us that godly leadership leads in exactly the opposite way of worldly leadership.

Second, Christ showed the disciples how to commit themselves entirely to the things He was

teaching them. That was why Christ both taught them and showed them how to obey the things He taught so they would develop a true commitment to what He taught. Many people know what the Word of God says, but they have never been shown how to obey what they have learned. Christ said, in John 13:13-15, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” Christ told the disciples, in various ways, that they were to serve one another. However, none of them really learned to serve one another, until they saw the example of Christ.

One of the other things Christ showed the disciples was the importance of loving one another. In addition to being committed to Christ, He also wanted the disciples to be committed to one another. After more than three years of showing the disciples how much He loved them, Christ gave them a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Christ knew that true commitment to Christ, and His teaching, must come from a motivation of love.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, we read, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” People will only develop true commitment to Christ, and His teachings, if they are motivated by the love of Christ. Otherwise, their commitment will be based on a fear of people. All people are motivated by one of two things. In the world, people are motivated by fear. It is very easy to get people to do what you want them to do if they are motivated by fear. However, what is accomplished through fear will never bring glory to God.

Fear was not the way Christ developed true commitment in His disciples, and it is not the way we will develop true commitment. If we drive people by fear, we will be able to drive them until they get out of our way. If we lead people by the love of Christ, we can lead them as far as we have gone in our own spiritual development. If we lead people by the love of Christ, and also serve them by showing them by our own example how to love, they will be able to develop their full potential for Christ, because we have shown them an example of how to serve others instead of drive others. People are either driven by fear or led by love. We need to regularly examine our own lives to make sure we are committed to lead others in love, not drive them with fear.

Third, Christ helped the disciples develop the kind of commitment that made their progress evident to all. This is illustrated very clearly in a couple of places in the book of Acts. Acts 4:8-13 says, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the “stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.” Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and

John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” In these verses, we see the commitment of Peter and John. They were committed to:

- ◆ depending on the Holy Spirit
- ◆ preaching about Jesus Christ
- ◆ sharing the Word of God
- ◆ teaching that faith in Christ is the only way to receive salvation
- ◆ speaking with boldness, as they depended on the power of the Holy Spirit

The commitment of these men to Christ, and His Word, was so clear and evident that the Jewish religious leaders were amazed as they saw the boldness of Peter and John. They realized that these men did not have the formal training that the Jewish religious leaders had received. They realized that being with Jesus had changed and transformed these men. Our goal is to develop this same kind of commitment in those the Lord gives us to train. That will only happen as we show that kind of commitment by our own example.

Acts 5:27-29 shows another example of this commitment as the apostles were again brought before the religious leaders. Those verses say, “And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!’ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” The apostles made it very clear that they were committed to obey God, and that, as a result, they had no fear of men.

The disciples learned how to pass on this commitment to others by their example. Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” By their example, they were able to pass on this same commitment to those who had become Christians through their witness. Acts 8:1 and 4 say, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles... ⁴Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” The newer Christians had a commitment to preach the Gospel wherever they went. They did that without fear, because they had been led by the example of the apostles.

These verses show us that commitment to Christ, and His Word, is best taught by example. We will not develop that kind of commitment if we are driven by fear and drive others. However, we will develop a similar commitment in others as we are motivated by the love of Christ and lead others to follow our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example of commitment to Christ and His Word.