

Committed to Follow: Joshua 1:1-9, 24:1-15

It was a blessing to see and hear from Harley this past Sunday. I was absolutely amazed by how much God has changed her over the past few years. I was even more amazed at the Kingdom work God has her involved in. As I sat listening to her and then as my week went along, I found myself wondering about my passions in life, my desires for ministry, my faithfulness to you guys, and ultimately, my own commitment to God. What I discovered is that my followership is lacking because of all the things which usually occupy my time and keep me busy. You see, Satan loves to use our busyness. He loves to use it against our mind in hopes that if our minds are preoccupied, we'll forget about who our heart truly belongs to. And when we stop following our heart, we'll quickly find ourselves in trouble. Paul taught us to be on guard against such tactics when in **2 Corinthians 11:3** he said, *"I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."* This verse led me to consider preaching a series of messages about *our sincere and pure devotion to Christ*. So, over the next few weeks, I am going to invite you to consider just this... Are you truly COMMITTED?

Let's first consider what it means to be committed. The Cambridge dictionary defines commitment as *a promise or firm decision to do something. Also, a willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something you believe in*. In other words, the **committed** Christian, is someone who has whole heartedly decided to give up their time and energy for the purpose of following Christ. When our commitment to following Christ is genuine, then all our ways will reflect a genuine love for the Father. **1 Kings 8:61** says, *"Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day."* Listen, it's important to understand that following Jesus is serious business. It's not something to be taken lightly and approached in a lighthearted manner. Today's churches are filled with far too many people who are wishy washy with their faith!

When is the last time you considered your commitment to Christ? When is the last time you evaluated the impact your commitments have on your life? When is the last time something you were committed to had a profound effect on the Kingdom? Let's look at someone from Biblical history who understood the powerful affects of being committed to God. **Read Joshua 1:1-9**

We see here the commissioning of Joshua. God informed him that not Moses, but he, Joshua, would be the one to lead His people into the promised land. And in commissioning young Joshua, God knew the difficulties Joshua would face as he accepted this charge. God knew that His people were wishy washy. God knew that they were weak in faith and wimpy followers. God knew these wimpy and weak Israelites would never be able to truly possess the land as He always intended. Why? Because they lacked commitment. The same holds

true for us as New Testament believers. We cannot be committed to Jesus and be wimpy, weak, and not committed. In these few verses we see the phrase, “***Be strong and courageous***” repeated a couple of times. God knew that Joshua and his family were solid. They were committed! But God also knew Joshua needed to be encouraged to remain strong, remain courageous, remain committed to the cause. That’s why I want to borrow these words this morning with hopes of encouraging each of you to be strong in your faith. If you’ve decided to follow Jesus, then don’t give up or give in. Be courageous as He leads you. Trust that God has your back. Trust that He *will never leave you or forsake you*.

Now, look with me to the last chapter of Joshua. Let’s look at Joshua’s final message to the people as his life draws to a close. **Read Joshua 24:1-15.**

In these verses we see Joshua explaining to the people some important details about belonging to a larger community of committed followers. He’s explaining that being committed to the cause brought with it some painful moments, some moments of extreme discomfort, some inconveniences, and yes, sometimes, some suffering. As much as we cannot stand hearing the word **commitment**, we don’t like hearing that following God may bring all these things to us as well. Instead, we like to think that God and the Church should be serving us and taking care of us. Simply put, we like being comfortable. So much so, that if our commitment to Jesus causes any form of discomfort or pain, we’re ready to throw in the towel and run back to what’s comfortable. Generally speaking, the current day Jesus follower is not much different than the ancient Israelite following God during Joshua’s time. Joshua’s call to the people in verses 14 and 15 stands as a reminder that we too must decide which God we will worship and serve. Will it be the “*the gods your ancestors served*”? Will it be “*the gods of the Amorites*”? Or, will it be *God, who has done great things for us*?

Let me explain this a bit. Joshua presented them with three choices. First, choose to return to the idolatrous ways of their past, what was known and comfortable to many. It’s not easy to move on from things in our past. Especially when it involves our friends and family. Because of the prosperity and season of plenty that God had given them, Joshua was encouraging them to continue laying aside their idols from before. He was saying... it’s time to lay aside yesterday and embrace tomorrow.

Second, Joshua knew that some of his people had embraced the practices of the Amorites and set aside the ways of God. They found it easier to go along with the society they were now in than it was to go against the grain and stand firm in their faith. Is this not an accurate picture of what has happened in our society? It’s much easier to accommodate than it is to go against the grains of the populous. Even if it means we compromise portions of our faith. Especially if it brings pain or suffering.

Finally, Joshua, reminded them about God. The one who had brought them out of Egypt. The one who had preserved them. The one who had protected them. The one who had fulfilled every single one of His promises to them. Joshua wanted the people to understand that the false gods of their past and the false gods of their present had done nothing for them. The third choice was to return to God, to remain faithful to the one true, faithful God. He wanted them to recognize where they were and to count their many blessings and COMMIT to a future with God.

This is the message still for us today. We must choose between the things of our past, the present things, and the promise of eternal hope found only in Jesus Christ!

I know this. Following Jesus doesn't promise unicorns, rainbows, and fat banking accounts. You know why? All those things are representative of the imaginary and the temporary. Jesus is not imaginary, nor temporary. He is real. He is permanent. Following Him is the most satisfying, most transformative, most adventurous, most rewarding commitment one can make. You know, we may not know where or what following Jesus has in store for us, but we can find comfort in knowing that He is the best choice for our life. He is trustworthy and faithful to lead us in a direction that serves and honors the Father.

Joshua, on his death bed, implored his people to continue choosing God. Today, I implore you to choose Jesus. Can I tell you the specifics of what that means for your life? No. Can I tell you the decisions or demands that may place on you? No. Can I tell you that it will be the best relationship you'll ever enter into? Absolutely!! Rewarding? Yes!! Blessed? Yes!! Loved? Yes!!

Jesus calls those He encounters to a choice, to make a firm commitment, to follow Him. Will you stand firm in the manner Joshua did? Can you say, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*"? Are you strong enough and courageous enough to step forward, without inhibition, and commit to following Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?