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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**Greetings in the wonderful name of Jesus! May His grace and peace be with you.**

I want to thank all of you for your letters and prayers. This is an exciting time, things are happening all around and you are destined to be part of it. My heart is heavy with regret that our people are in such a state of complacency. I long to see the Church rise up and denounce the ungodly, wicked behavior that is gaining influence throughout our society.

During my lifetime, I have had the opportunity to observe many people as they have dealt with the complexities of so-called normal living. Since February of 1997, those observations have mainly been of those professing Christianity; some in the Horse Show world, others in the business world, and still more in prison.

Some grew quickly and flourished spiritually; most floundered. Some made an impact; others made no difference whatsoever. Some grew in Christ; others dried up spiritually and withered away. Some rejoiced and offered encouragement; others moaned, complained, and griped. Some deepened and softened; others became more shallow and hardened. Some grew old with Godly grace and Godly influence; while most just grew older.

Many times, I have pondered over the obvious differences and wondered "Why?" While in prison, God clearly brought to my attention that the people He brought into my life all had significant problem areas in their lives. My lightning quick brain took about two years to figure out that each of them was just like me. That was a significant revelation because I began to understand how it might be possible to love my neighbor as myself. They were people with problem areas and although we each tried to solve those problems in differing ways, we did share the basics of life. In addition, in a couple more months, God brought me the revelation that, if they were just like me, then I was just like them! We shared the human condition. We were the same.

As I observed my Christian brothers, I began to note that some of them clearly reflected deep spiritual growth, while others seemed to stagnate showing no more growth, and of course there were those who fell away completely. I prayed and wondered, *what was the deciding issue* that represented the plateaus or forks in the road that led to the backslidden, lethargic state some were trapped in. I recalled the parable of the sower and could identify the varying states, but I was unable to answer the question of "Why?"

The unction to write on this issue is Holy Spirit motivated, of that I am sure. I believe the foundational issue is specific commitment. Several months ago I was led to adopt a survey which could be used to identify specific areas of life to pray about. In addition, today, I am motivated to write about the need for specific commitment.

I am seeing that ordinary people like you and me, who make simple, spiritual commitments, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, make an extraordinary impact on their world. Hallelujah! The end result is not determined by education, gifts, abilities, or opportunities. The result is determined by commitment.

More than anything else, I believe this revelation is in answer to the deepest cry of my heart. It took so long for me to grasp this fundamental truth, because I needed a lot of spiritual repair to be in a position to accept it. I was not eager to fully commit to anything because I feared what it might do to me and the things I wanted to do.

Do you recognize the bug-a-boo of selfishness?

I was clearly shown and I pray I might be given the power to relay that message to you, to quicken you and make you aware of what it takes to become a “difference maker” in your world.

To be committed means there is no turning back, no escape clause, no way out. That very thought scares people who have been living in a worldly society that says to “keep all options open.” We have been groomed to value freedom and self-will. Our parents had obligations, we sought freedom; my father had a wife, son, mortgage and a position of status in society; I had options. I was not accountable to anyone except superficially. It did not satisfy me, but I believed it would someday.

No one ever approached me and suggested that I was plagued with a fear of commitment. That malady has truly become epidemic in the Western civilization and is quickly spreading to the third world countries as they westernize their ancient societies. Student’s dropout of school in unprecedented numbers, those who go on to college wait longer and longer to make a choice of major study. Couples live together but avoid being tied down by marriage. Those who do marry, do so knowing they can opt out and try again repeatedly. People take jobs and immediately begin to look for another. Company workers rarely demonstrate loyalty and commitments. Couples postpone having children to retain personal freedom and options. Women abort the unwanted fetus and continue to fornicate because they have the freedom to do it. Society’s children find themselves living in the backwash of mothers and fathers who are pursuing their individual personalized freedom.

I have adopted a belief that we will never be able to solve the problem unless we deal with the root of the problem. So, what is the root?

### **Selfishness!**

It is not fear or hesitancy to take a calculated risk. It is just plain Selfishness. Charles Swindoll calls it the “do-your-own-thing syndrome.” It’s the “if-it-feels-good do it” philosophy of the Humanist. However, I had assumed that Christians --- evangelical Christians --- would not fall into that trap.

**Unfortunately, we do. We go blindly into the devil's trap. Just living in this society leads you to be caught up in a whirlpool so vast that we are not even aware that we are being drawn into the vortex. We just seem to unknowingly succumb.**

**Among my Christian family, I have seen non-commitment take all kinds of very subtle forms. The "right" activities, church attendance, "correct" doctrine, Bible Study, all these things can easily mask a lack of deep commitment. This creeping worldliness, a desire to be a Christian, but to live like a non-Christian, is very toxic to the Church. Today there is very little difference in the secular lifestyle and that of the Christian. The divorce rates are nearly equal. The rate of pre-marital sex is barely distinguishable. The teenage suicide rates are equal. Alcoholism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, and self-indulgence are practically the same in the Church and the World.**

**Consider the recent survey results from Barna Research Group:**

- **Nine out of ten adult Americans own at least one Bible**
- **A large number of Christian Church attendees embrace beliefs that conflict with scripture and the teachings of their own church.**
- **42 % of the respondents who professed to be Christians, agreed with the statement "when on earth, Jesus Christ sinned, like other people."**
- **50 % of the professing Christians responded "yes" to the belief that anyone who "is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in heaven."**
- **74 % of the respondents say, "When people are born they are neither good nor evil ---they make a choice between the two as they mature. Furthermore, 52 % of the evangelical Christians agreed with this statement.**

**The cause is much deeper than today's psychologists like to even consider. Lack of commitment to God eventually takes its toll, even in the church. We have been terribly weakened by this insidious conformity to the way of the world.**

**A handful of disciples, who submitted themselves to Jesus and were truly committed to God, turned the whole world upside down. Most of the Church today does not want to turn the world upside down, they wish to maintain status quo. We are no longer a "peculiar people," we merely look and speak as if we are different.**

**Must we follow the same path that Israel traveled? The Bible has many stories about people who would not dedicate their lives to God; the innate desire to conform to those around us infects adults, children, and adolescents alike. The desire to be accepted, liked and part-of something is always present. We are never immune!**

**We need to be lovingly accountable to one another. Our productiveness is directly related to our prayer life. Praying together will help us stay on the path that God desires. Sadly, I see people shying away from corporate prayer. I have heard an alarming number of Pastors say that the prayer service is the poorest attended service they have. Astonishing! However, true.**

**Author/Pastor Richard Fosler says, "*To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling***

*to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The more we pray, the more we come to the heartbeat of God. All the options of life fall before us. At that point we will either forsake our prayer life and cease to grow, or we will pursue our prayer life and let Him change us."*

**A deep relationship with God takes time and effort. It cannot be formed in just a few fleeting mechanical moments. And it cannot be built on an emergency basis either. It takes committed time and effort. E. M. Bounds wrote, "God's acquaintance is not made hurriedly. He does not bestow His gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers." The willingness to commit yourself to God and the Body of Christ is a matter of heart and attitude. We must live for God and express an attitude of gratitude for what He has done for us.**

**We need to express to God, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and ourselves, how self-love has made us unjust to others, how vanity tempts us to be insincere and hypocritical, how pride disguises our true motives to ourselves and others. We have got to abandon self-rule, our own agenda, and once again become God's people, reflecting Him to the world, a true peculiar people, serving obediently, the one true God.**

**We have become committed to everything but the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I used to marvel at the great numbers who committed themselves to the weight pile or basketball, football or soccer. Because those activities became too important to them, they dedicated their time, their money, and their social lives to the fascinating activity. And because of this commitment, they didn't have time for prayer, worship, or fellowship with God. They didn't have money to tithe or use as a gift to the needy. They socialized with their secular buddies on the weight pile, basketball court, softball diamond, football field, or any other place where they had committed their time. The close fellowship with the Christian family didn't exist or matter anymore. It wasn't planned, it just happened with very subtle choices, one after another; until separation took place and they became more comfortable with the secular activity than with the body of Christ.**

**With the large numbers of believers in our evangelical churches today, this world, country, state, city and family, ought to be a very different place. The great revivals that have taken place are way behind us. This should be a time of awakening, a time of intense fervent prayer, a beginning to a great and mighty revival of commitment to truly worship, pray and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that Jesus asked His faithful disciples, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46 NKJV)**

**We truly are a selfish people. It is time to draw together. Together, we will have the presence of God continually and we will worship and pray and serve, as God would have us do. We could then be lovingly accountable and help one another stay on the path that Jesus prescribed for us.**

**Romans 13: 11-14 speaks to us,**

***"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of***

sleep; for *now* our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, *the day is at hand*. Therefore *let us cast off* the works of darkness, and *let us put on the armor of light*.

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

We must once again become a peculiar people. A people who seek God's will continually and obey His Word. Complacency and apathy abound in our Christ professing churches. They believe, but don't act upon what they profess to believe. They go to church, attend Sunday school and Bible studies, which causes them to look good as far as public appearance, the “outward garment,” but inwardly we conceal stubborn hearts, holding onto selfish desires.

“Therefore also *now*, says the Lord, turn and keep on coming to me with *all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning* (until every hindrance is removed and the broken fellowship is restored). *Rend your hearts* and not your garments (Joel 2: 12-13 Amp., emphasis mine).

Can't you hear the Spirit's call?

Come and keep on coming . . . don't quit; don't give up, COMMIT YOURSELVES TO GOD. Give Him all of you . . . don't hold back. Trust God and prosper as you've never before experienced. Sacrifice your own agendas . . . serve the Lord Jesus Christ and none other, not even SELF. God is more impressed with inward submission than any outward appearance of Christianity.

Please note that the prophet Joel elaborated by telling us to *gather together*, none are exempt.

“. . . Call a sacred assembly. *Gather the people*; consecrate the assembly, *bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing . . . Let the bride groom leave his room and the bride her chamber.*” (Joel 2: 15-16 NIV)

{Consecrate (6942) declare holy, dedicate, wholly dedicate}

“And it shall come to pass *afterward* (after obediently coming together; after obedience) that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh . . . I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” (Joel 2:28-29 NIV)

The time is now. We are the bride of Christ, and we have a crucial role in making ourselves ready to be united with Him. Please carefully read Rev 19:7 and see “... His wife *has made herself ready.*” We must respond to His call, we must come to Him whole-heartedly, without reservation. We must

**commit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obey. There is no other way.**

**Jesus said to count the cost. The cost of discipleship, the cost of commitment to God is to crucify the self and give yourself wholly to God. Many of us willingly make strong commitments to all the wrong things, the things that move us away from God and God's people. We knowingly commit our lives to the chosen career, to being successful, to leisure activity, a new home, a new electronic toy, to new clothes, to yards, cars, or to consuming hobbies. Intense commitment to worldly things, keeps us from making more significant commitments to God.**

**I truly believe that most Christians want to commit themselves to God. They don't want to live wasted, hypocritical lives. They don't want to be "lukewarm." Understanding commitment from God's viewpoint would certainly help us re-align our commitments to agree with the wishes of our heavenly Father. We don't want our Lord Jesus to say to us, "I never knew you, go away."**

**Don't you agree that it is time we re-align ourselves and live obediently to the expressed will of God?**

**Folks, it takes determined prayer to change our circumstances, to change our hearts and create a burning desire to serve our Lord, to enable us to commit ourselves to God's way. Jonathan Edwards, an 18<sup>th</sup> century theologian and preacher, stated his commitment very clearly:**

*Resolve: To follow God with all my heart.  
Resolved also: Whether others do or not, I will.*

**When I asked God for a scripture to use to begin my day, He gave me Psalm 9:1,2.**

*I will praise you o'Lord, with my whole heart,  
I will speak of all Your marvelous works.  
I will be glad, and rejoice in You, Lord.  
I will sing praises to You, o' most high.*

**My friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, will you dedicate a few moments to do the following things?**

- 1. List your major commitments, both spiritual and secular.**
- 2. List one or two areas of life in which you think God may be urging you to make a commitment.**
- 3. Can you identify commitments you are engaged in which you believe God may be saying "increase" or "decrease?" List them.**
- 4. What are the barriers you sense to doing what God is urging you to do? List them.**

**Now, we have information, which will allow us to specifically pray for God's help and guidance. Please do it often. You are to represent the Lord Jesus Christ until He comes for us. We are charged with the responsibility to occupy the land until that day comes. We have the ability and the virtuous power to be a true difference maker in this world. That is God's plan; the real question is whether or not the body of Christ, the Church is committed to that plan.**

**Are we living for Christ or self? Please pray and ask for God to help you answer that question from His point of view. Each of us has a place to fill in the Body of Christ, when your spot is unfilled, the Body is severely hampered. Pray often, and honestly. Consult your accountability partner frequently and search for those things the Spirit of God is wanting to help you change.**

*Jesus loves you. . .  
so do I!*