

# Introduction



## ALL IN: A LIFE OF COMMITMENT

You're going to see one word come up over and over again in this study: *commitment*. Jesus spent three years fulfilling His earthly ministry, and during those three years He talked a lot about commitment. In fact, Jesus made it clear that commitment was a key part of being a follower of Christ. In the Gospels, we see many examples of people who followed Jesus because of what they hoped He could offer them, but they weren't truly committed to following Him, no matter what. And when Jesus encountered those folks He consistently challenged them to "count the cost" of following Him.

We're going to look at the call on the Christian life to be committed to Christ, His Word, the church, prayer, worship, and His mission. But one of the most beautiful things about what we'll learn is that God is committed to us first, before He calls us to an "all in" commitment. As you jump into this study, go ahead and "count the cost" of following Him. What you'll discover is that you can never make any greater or more fulfilling commitment than that of being fully committed to God and doing His work.

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## SESSION 1

# Christ's Commitment to Us



### QUESTION 1:

*What lessons about commitment were you taught growing up?*

## THE POINT

Even at our worst, Christ was fully committed to love us and bring us to God.

## THE PASSAGES

Romans 5:6-12,18-21

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

*Commitment.* Does that word make you nervous? Our culture is becoming increasingly averse to the idea of commitment. The bottom line is that we don't like commitment. To illustrate, we're ready to jump at the special pricing promoted by the phone company or cable provider, but then we cringe when we discover the rate comes with a one-year commitment.

More seriously, traditional marriage has been on a steady downward track for decades, but it's almost in free fall now. Among young adults, it is estimated that 25 percent of them will never marry.<sup>1</sup> One reason is commitment. People would rather not make a lifelong commitment that deep down they're not sure they can actually fulfill.

Commitment is more palatable when we know the other person is absolutely committed to us and has our best interests in mind. That's what makes our relationship with God so special: He was committed to us before we were even committed to Him. And on top of that, even when our commitment to Him wavers, He never stops being committed to us. The greatest display of this is in our salvation.

## Romans 5:6-8

**6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

**7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.**

**8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

**KEY WORDS: righteous ... good (5:7)**—A *righteous* person is upright in his or her relationship with God and others, while a *good* person is noble, generous, honorable.

*Gospel.* The word means good news, and we find the best news we'll ever receive in the Bible. In the apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans, he gave the clearest explanation of the gospel. It's good news that, when we were helpless and hopeless in our sin, God didn't sit back with His arms folded, expecting us to get our act together before we could enter into a relationship with Him. He made the first move.

What was the first move? Jesus Christ, God's only Son, came to this earth to die to pay the price for our sins. That's the good news. Our relationship with God is not made right by our good works or our ability to obey all of the Ten Commandments. As a matter of fact, Scripture says that is impossible. We can't keep all of God's commandments, so God came and did it for us in the Person of Jesus. He lived a perfect life and then died in our place on the cross of Calvary, paying the penalty of our sin for us.

That brings us to an important question. *Why?* Why would God leave the glory of heaven to come to this planet just to die for us? The Scripture is clear: He loves us. Arguably the most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave

his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Love is the key.

In Greek, the word for *love* has a deeper and more profound meaning than in our English language. The word for *love* used in Romans 5:8 is *agape*, which carries the idea of commitment or sacrifice. *Agape* conveys action. In other words, God’s love for us was more than just a feeling or emotion; it was a commitment to us He put into action by willingly dying for us. And the beautiful thing about God’s love is that He offered it to us even when we didn’t deserve it. God came to us while we were still helpless in our sin. He made the first move and demonstrated His love for us when we couldn’t demonstrate it to Him. This “good news” is what separates Christianity from every other belief system that has ever existed.

<p><b>Other Beliefs</b></p> <p>If you are good, God will love you.</p>	<p><b>Christianity</b></p> <p>You weren’t good, yet God loves you anyway, even to the point of dying for you.</p>
<p>If you get your act together, then God will accept you.</p>	<p>You were helpless in your sin, but God helped you and accepts you anyway.</p>

**QUESTION 2:**

*How did you come to recognize your need for Christ?*

**Romans 5:9-11**

**9** Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

**10** For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

**11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.**

**KEY WORDS: Justified** (5:9)—When we're *justified* by God, we're officially considered to be individuals who have been made right with Him.

**Atonement** (5:11)—*Atonement* takes place when enemies stop fighting each other and become friends who go in the same direction together.

The good news of the gospel is that, while we were still helpless in our sins, Christ came to this planet and died for us. Paul highlighted three things that happen to us because of the death of Christ on our behalf.

1. **Justified by Jesus' blood.** The word *justified* means having "right standing" or "right conduct." It means we are made righteous. To understand the beauty of this, we have to first understand the nature of sin. God is perfectly holy, and because of His absolute holiness, He cannot be in the presence of sin. The bad news is that we "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and not one of us is righteous in and of himself. So when the day of our death comes and we stand in the presence of this perfectly holy God, the only hope we have of entering into His presence is if we are completely and totally righteous. We can accomplish this in one of two ways.
  - (a) We can live perfect lives and never sin (which is just not possible).
  - (b) We can have someone else's righteousness imputed to us. *Imputed* is a fancy theological word that means, "given or substituted." When we recognize our inability to live the perfectly obedient lives God requires of us,

then we must repent of our sins and place our faith in Jesus Christ. Then God declares us to be righteous in His sight and imputes the righteousness of Christ to us through faith; therefore, when we stand before Almighty God, He sees the righteousness of Christ that has been given to us. How do we receive this righteousness of Christ? “By his blood.” When Jesus died and shed His blood for us, His blood sacrifice covers us and gives us His righteousness. But to receive the righteousness He offers, we must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and believe that He died for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day (Rom. 10:9-10).

2. **Saved from God’s wrath.** When Christ’s blood makes us righteous, we are saved from the wrath of God. We don’t like to think about God as wrathful, but when you get your mind around it, this actually helps us better understand His love for us. God hates sin, and since He is a righteous and just God, He must punish sin. Would we want to follow a God that simply allowed sin to occur and never dealt with it? Of course not. But the beauty of the gospel is that God poured out His wrath for *our* sin on Jesus at the cross of Calvary. Because of the blood of Christ, we never have to experience God’s wrath, but only His love and acceptance.
3. **Reconciled to God through Jesus’ death.** Not only are we made righteous in God’s sight and saved from His wrath, but we also are reconciled to God through the death of Christ. At the heart of the gospel, we see God reaching out to us to reconcile us to Himself. The greatest joy and contentment we can experience is not in money, friends, or cool experiences, but in a personal relationship with the One who created us. But sin keeps us from experiencing that relationship because our sin broke our relationship with God. Jesus’ death reconciles us back into a relationship with Him. In other words, Jesus’ death restored what was broken and allows us to



live in fellowship with God, as we were meant to live. Christ's commitment to us didn't just make us better people; He has brought us back to who we were created to be.

**QUESTION 3:**

*What causes you to rejoice now that you know Christ?*

**Romans 5:12,18-21**

**12** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

.....

**18** Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

**19** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

**20** Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

**21** That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

So far we've seen truly good news of what Christ has done for us, but God didn't stop there. Christ's commitment to us did not end when He made us righteous in the sight of God; Christ's death also means we get to be with God when we die. Because of Jesus' commitment to us, when we breathe our last breath, our souls will be instantly transported into the presence of our Lord and Savior, where we will live with Him forever in perfect peace and sinless bliss.

Why is that the best news of all? As we see in verse 12, all humanity inherited Adam's sin nature. That means we are headed

for hell if we don't receive this amazing gift of God's grace. But if we receive through faith the amazing gift Jesus provides through His death on the cross, God gives us eternal life. God didn't just want to save us from our sin, but He wanted to be with us forever. That's a pretty amazing commitment!

For some people, this sounds too good to be true. "*Considering all the ways I've sinned, God would never want to make me righteous and be with Him in heaven forever.*" From a human perspective, that makes sense, but it doesn't take into account God's grace. Paul was clear in these verses that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." That means we can't out-sin the grace of God. Christ's love is that great, and His commitment is so immeasurable, that even the greatest sinners among us can be saved through the radical grace of God.

I love the words of the song "Amazing Grace."

*Amazing grace!, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now I'm found,  
Was blind, but now I see.<sup>2</sup>*

And then there's the classic hymn "It is Well with My Soul."

*My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!<sup>3</sup>*

#### **QUESTION 4:**

***What can we learn about the impact of sin from these verses?***

It's all by grace! The president of the United States can offer a full pardon to a convict, freeing him from prison, but that doesn't mean that former convict can move into the White House. But in

His limitless grace, God pardons and brings us into His kingdom to live forever in His presence. God's grace truly is amazing.

One question remains: have you received this righteousness-imputing, wrath-saving, reconciling, eternal life-giving love of God? "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Your action step in receiving this gift of amazing grace is simply to believe God. It's called faith. Pray right now to God and confess that you are a sinner who needs His forgiveness and you want to receive that forgiveness through the sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross through the shedding of His blood. God loves you more than your wildest imagination, and He is fully committed to bring that love to you.

#### QUESTION 5:

***What are some ways you've seen grace multiplied in our group?***

### ENGAGE

***Think of a time in your life when you felt helpless and had to depend on someone else to get you through. Briefly describe that situation:***

How did it feel to rely on others to accomplish what you typically would do on your own?

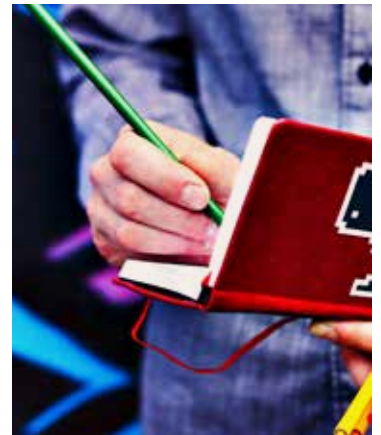
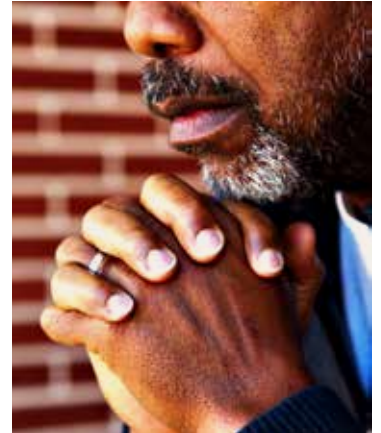
How does this scenario compare or differ from our being helpless in sin and having to depend on Christ to save us?

***If time allows, gather with one or two others in your group and share your thoughts with one another.***

## LIVE IT OUT

How will you respond to Christ's commitment?

- ▶ **Pray.** If you never have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, do so now. Find someone you know who is a committed Christian and ask him or her to walk you through the steps of trusting in Christ as your Lord and Savior. You can also read the inside-front cover of this book for help.
- ▶ **List.** Pray and reflect on Christ's commitment to you. Ask yourself: "How am I living in light of Jesus' great commitment to me?" Write down some ways you can live differently because of His great gift to you.
- ▶ **Share.** Share the love and commitment of Christ with someone this week who has never heard it. Pray that God would bring to your mind a name of someone who needs to hear the good news of the gospel, and then make it a priority to share that good news with them.



### END NOTES

1. Wendy Wang & Kim Parker, "Record Share of Americans Have Never Married," Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends, September 24, 2014, [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/#will-todays-never-married-adults-eventually-marry](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/#will-todays-never-married-adults-eventually-marry).
2. John Newton, "Amazing Grace," 1829; Public domain.
3. Horatio Spafford, "It Is Well with My Soul," 1873; Public domain.