

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4

PART 4 - "COMMITMENT"

MAIN IDEA FOR THOUGHT: Making a commitment to something causes that decision to become a priority amongst all other things, both good and bad. In order to make a commitment to financial giving, we have to place it as a higher priority than our other financial commitments. What will that mean for you?

OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the most "committed" person you know? To what are they committed?
2. What does commitment mean to you? To what are you committed?
3. When has commitment cost you or caused you to rearrange things?

DISCUSSION GUIDE



A. COMMITMENT REQUIRES FOCUS.

| READ 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

Commitment requires focus. As you seek to make a commitment financially, it will require you to forsake other pursuits, to turn from other things you may have previously done. It will be hard. It will feel like you are being pressed from all sides, and you will be tempted to turn away. Because your commitment is not a legal document and has no collateral like a home or other possession tied to it, you will feel as though you can “let it go” when hard times come. But this commitment to God is bigger than a legal commitment. This is not a commitment you are making to your church; this is a commitment to your God. When Paul says to Timothy to “be prepared in season and out of season,” he is warning Timothy that keeping the faith won’t always be easy. Keeping your word will require changing things around a little bit, doing things on God’s time instead of your own. It will feel different, and it will require unashamed, unwavering commitment to God who has called you to give in this way. So stand firm, and know that he is God. He wants to take you to the next stage in your generosity and do transformative work in you.

What makes you nervous as you think about making a two-year commitment to generosity for the 2nd Stage initiative. How can your Group be praying for you to help you overcome this?

B. WHAT YOU ARE COMMITTED TO REVEALS THE NATURE OF WHO YOU ARE.

| READ MATTHEW 6:19-24

What you are committed to reveals the nature of who you are. Think about what you are truly committed to financially—things that even in a season of drought will still get paid. You only have \$x,xxx in a certain month to cover all of your expenses. Who gets paid first? Likely, it will be the things that you can't stand to lose. For you, what are those things? Your home? Your medical expenses? Your cell phone? Your gym membership? When things get tight, we are forced to prioritize. And we often prioritize that which is most important to us. Does your giving to God fall into that category? Jesus writes, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What he means is that you will do anything for the things you treasure. You'll work harder, you'll spend smarter, you'll do anything for what you treasure. Do you work hard to have the house you have, or do you work hard to be able to give big? Where does your giving truly fall in your line of commitments?

Jesus shares with us that a treasure in heaven is one that cannot wither away. Every other treasure we invest in is temporary. Every single one—even relationships. Investing in God's Kingdom is the one thing that won't wither away.

Have you ever totaled up the total investment you have made in the Church? Have you ever thought about your cumulative giving like that? God sees it like that. As you make your commitment to the 2nd Stage generosity initiative, see this as an extravagant investment into a lifetime of giving that you are making into the Kingdom. How does this change how you think about your giving?

C. COMMITTING TO A LIFE OF SURRENDERED GENEROSITY IS NOT THE AMERICAN DREAM. IT'S THE HEAVENLY CALL.

| READ LUKE 12:13-21

Committing to a life of surrendered generosity is not the American dream. It's the heavenly call. There is a passage in Proverbs that says, "One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty." (Proverbs 11:24) Many generous Christians have learned by experience how true this proverb is. It's amazing how giving away seems to result in abundance. It may not even mean abundance in wealth, for those who seek wealth are not seeking God's heart. But it may mean abundance in relationships, abundance in opportunities, abundance in ministry impact, abundance in significance, and abundance of treasure in heaven. With the way you handle your resources, would you say you are committed to a life of giving away, or a life of storing up? Be honest. Sometimes storing up and retaining control of our resources is acclaimed by many as a wise thing to do. It is said that you are "providing for your future." While part of that may be true, to what degree are you providing for your future at the expense of investing in the Kingdom now? Is your balance of saving versus giving a healthy one?

Some people struggle with spending too much, and other people struggle with saving too much. Both are indicators of our desire to live the American dream and control our situations rather than to turn them over to God. Do you resonate with this passage and struggle with excessive saving or excessive control over the future?

D. SURRENDERED GENEROSITY ALLOWS GOD TO DO IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN ALL WE COULD ASK OR IMAGINE.

| READ EPHESIANS 3:14-19

Surrendered generosity allows God to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine. Allow this passage to be a final encouragement and inspiration as we seek to honor God with our commitments to the 2nd Stage initiative. All he asks is that we first trust him. He has provided promises to us, but he is now asking us to respond. Will we? Will we honor him with all that we have and all that we are? Will our commitment be something that causes us to say we are standing before him with confidence, knowing that we have made a decision that causes us to rely only on him? His power will be at work within us, so long as we commit our lives to him. Immeasurably more generosity. Immeasurably more commitment. Immeasurably more impact both in us and through us as we seek to continue being transformed in him?

EXERCISE AND REFLECTION TO DO AT HOME PRIOR TO COMMITMENT SUNDAY:

List out the financial commitments that you currently have—those that go beyond a one-time payment and that have a time duration to them. Examples would be a home mortgage, a lease agreement, a car loan, a cell phone contract, your child's tuition for school, your own tuition for school, etc.

Now write out the commitment you are planning to make for the 2nd Stage initiative. Where does it fall in the priority of these other commitments? Do you need to change or modify one or more of these other commitments to be able to fulfill your 2nd Stage commitment? What if you wanted to raise your commitment? What would that require? Is there a financial commitment you currently have that appears to be prioritized above your ability to make a truly surrendered giving commitment to help move God's mission forward?

If someone who didn't know you looked at your financial commitments, what would they say that you value?

| Would that statement be true about you? Or is there something that needs to be explained or modified?

| If you keep this commitment over the next two years, what type of spiritual growth might that cause in you?

How will you leverage this change to influence others such as your children, your co-workers, your friends, your family, others in your circles of influence?

Pray over your commitment as you prepare to lay your card before God this Sunday—Commitment Sunday. And let's unleash life-changing and eternity-changing generosity together. Let's allow God to transform us as we go to the next stage of our trust in him!