

Total Commitment

by Bill Rudge

Everybody wants it, but few are willing to give it: Coaches want it from their players; drill sergeants demand it from new recruits; teachers and professors love it in students; employers require it from their employees; husbands and wives desire it from their spouses. What is this characteristic most everyone wants from others? Total Commitment!

While speaking at a pastors' conference I asked, "Do you believe in God? Everyone said a hearty Amen! So I asked again, "Do you *really* believe in God and Jesus Christ?" Same response as they all acknowledged they did. Then I asked, "Do you *really* believe the Bible is God's Word?" They all enthusiastically affirmed they did. So I said, "If you really believe in God, Jesus Christ and the Bible, then it should radically affect your life: how you live, what you watch, what you say and what you do." They got the message.

However, as I travel and minister throughout the U.S. and around the world, I find that many who profess faith in Jesus Christ – even many leaders and pastors – are not totally committed to Him as Lord of their lives.

Heart Commitment

When I use the words *total commitment*, I am not talking about what you say with your mouth, or what you appear to be on the surface. I am talking about a heart commitment. I have learned from experience that outward appearances and words can be deceptive. Man looks at the externals, but God looks at the heart. Are your heart, your motives, your will, your goals, and your desires fully committed to Jesus Christ?

Many Christians believe the Bible and live for the Lord, so long as it poses no difficulty and agrees with their preconceived beliefs and ideas. When Scripture contradicts what they want to hear or do, they

discard, deny, compromise, or attempt to twist it to say what they want it to say. Many have a "dip and skip" mentality: They *dip*

into all the promises, blessings, and miracles, but *skip* all the responsibilities, commitment, and obedience.

For every gift and privilege God gives, responsibility and commitment are required:

If you want the mountaintop, you must walk through the valley. If you want the benefit and blessing, you must pay the price of commitment. If you want the victory, you must fight the battle. If you want the gifts of the Spirit, you must develop the fruit of the Spirit. If you want spiritual power, you must develop spiritual muscle.

God Wants First Place

Throughout the Old Testament, God emphasized the principle that He wants first place in our lives: When He

said, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse," He was saying, "I must be first regarding your finances." When God said, "The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work," He was saying, "I must be first concerning your time." When God said, "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God," He was saying, "I must be first

in regard to your business and livelihood." When God asked for the firstborn of all cattle, He was saying, "I must be first regarding your belongings." When God said, "You must give [consecrate] to Me the first-born of your sons," He was saying, "I must be first concerning your family."

God does not need your money, cattle, produce or your possessions; He wants you! Jesus said:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

When Satan tempted Jesus by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world, he said, "All this I will give You, if You will bow down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Then Jesus said to him, "Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him



only” (Matthew 4:10). Jesus clearly revealed that God not only wants first place, but He must be the only Lord and God in our lives.

Why does the Lord not allow anyone or anything else to be god in our lives? Because not only has He created us and deserves that unique position, but He knows that anyone or anything else controlling our lives becomes our *god* – and eventually that god destroys us. In contrast David said, “Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 144:15).

Take Up Your Cross

If you think total commitment is only for those in Christian leadership, look closely at Scripture. Luke 14:25-27 says:

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: “... Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple.”

Jesus is *not* saying we are to carry a literal cross around, but He *is* making it perfectly clear to the crowds that to be His disciple requires total commitment.

The disciples knew what Christ meant when He said:

If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it (Mark 8:34,35).

Being well aware of Roman crucifixions, and of their context in the culture, they knew that Jesus was speaking of dying to self and of total commitment to Him.

Evaluating the Four C’s

There are acceptable and unacceptable types of commitment mentioned in the Bible. Which of the following four categories is most like your commitment?

Committed to Rebellion

Are you like King Ahab who, in outright rebellion against the Lord, did evil in His sight with no desire for repentance?

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him (1 Kings 16:29, 30).

Although Ahab was king of the northern tribes of Israel, he openly rebelled against God. Similarly, there are many who name the name of Jesus Christ outwardly, but according to God’s Word, their hearts are in outright rebellion in the way they live, the things they do and in their associations.

Committed – Sort Of

Do you serve the Lord halfheartedly like Amaziah, king of Judah?

Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Jehoaddin; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly (2 Chronicles 25:1, 2).

Wholeheartedness matters to God.

Committed – Sporadically

Like Uzziah, king of Judah, when the Lord blessed him and he became powerful, he also became proud and turned away from the Lord.

Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. ... He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success. But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God... (2 Chronicles 26:3-5, 16).

Do you want to serve the Lord wholeheartedly, but have not maintained that commitment your whole life?

So far we have three types of commitment: those who live in outright rebellion and do evil before the Lord; those who only halfheartedly serve the Lord; and those who wholeheartedly serve the Lord, but only for a short duration. Will you run the race for two, or even twenty years, then get weary and fall away?

Wholeheartedly Committed

Or are you like Abraham, Moses, Caleb, Ruth, Elijah, Daniel, Paul, and many others who made their commitment to the Lord, and served Him wholeheartedly all the days of their lives? It is this kind of commitment that God desires from those who name the name of Jesus.

Consider the words David spoke to his son, Solomon:

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Do not serve the Lord halfheartedly all your life – or even wholeheartedly half your life. Instead, serve the Lord wholeheartedly all of your life!

Beautiful Waterfalls

I believe the old adage, “You are only as good as your word,” and I do everything possible to keep mine. If you make a commitment to Christ today and then next week you give up, then it really was not much of a commitment. A true commitment isn’t for just one day or one week,

but the rest of your life. It isn't just one or two hours on Sundays, but twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We should seek to live under His Lordship and glorify Him, not only when in church, reading our Bibles, praying or witnessing, but also when we are at home, at work, at school, engaged in sports or social activities, working out at the gym – anytime and anywhere.

When I was on a speaking tour in Tobago, in the West Indies, I learned there were two waterfalls on the island. One was an easy two or three minute walk. Although very nice, the other one was far more beautiful, but would require a 45-minute hike through streams, over stones and rocks, across slippery ledges, and through thick brush.

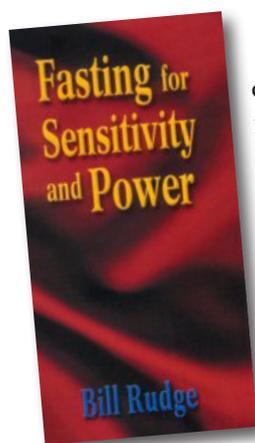
Having a few hours of free time, my ministry team decided to go with me on the longer excursion. The waterfall was awesome, forming three tiers of pools.

When we swam in the cool and refreshing waters, it was like being in paradise.

Most people visiting Tobago avoid the more difficult way and are satisfied to see just the first falls. As one who is willing to pay the price for that which is truly worthwhile, I led the team into a breathtaking area, unsurpassed in beauty and serenity, rather than to settle for second best.

Too many people settle for convenient Christianity. But real blessing, power, and victory manifest in the lives of those totally committed to the Lord, with all their hearts. Believe me, it is well worth it!

Excerpted from *Reaching Your Maximum Potential in Christ* which is being expanded for its third edition in book and E-book form. In a future newsletter we will discuss “Bridge Burning” as we continue this series. 🇵🇸



Bill Rudge has challenged thousands of believers and Christian leaders to fast and pray. Fasting enables you to enter God's presence with a hunger in your belly that represents the hunger in your soul. This powerful booklet will equip you to master the ancient biblical principles of fasting, which have so greatly impacted Bill's life and ministry. Bill's new and updated E-Book on fasting is a great way to

start the New Year as it teaches you:

- The Purpose of Fasting • Biblical Fasts
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- Principles of Prayer • Powerful Prayers
- Personal, Family, and Ministry Prayer and Fasting Lists

Bill's E-Book on fasting is available free of charge on our web site (billrudge.org) or you can purchase it for .99 from amazon.com (in order to list it, we were required to charge a minimal amount).

Looking Back at 2018

Jim Weikal

“Absolutely pointless!” says the spokesman. “Absolutely pointless! Everything is pointless” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

As you look back at 2018, how do you feel? How were those 365 plus days? Your 52 weeks? Hopefully you don't feel as Solomon did nearing the end of his life that it was all “vanity” or “pointless.”

You may be looking to set some new goals for 2019: better house, lucrative job, career advancement, new car, wedding, weight loss, an island vacation, perhaps. None of these objectives are naturally bad, but how about some spiritual goals: read some verses of Scripture daily, pray for family, fill a need in your church. You can think of more ideas yourself.

Following Solomon's evaluation of his life – after decades of pleasure, prestige and security – he has this advice to share with you as you seek to set goals for 2019:

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: **fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil”** (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

So, set high and lofty goals like fearing God and keeping God's commandments. For someday this same God is going to look back on your days and what is He going to see? 🇵🇸

Blessings to Burnie Anderson, Doreen Cunningham, Amy Fusco, Alice Garcia, Laurie Laurain, Cindy McKee, and Karen Shouse for providing and sending Christmas cards and writing special messages to some of the prisoners and chaplains to whom we minister across the country through our books and newsletters.

Sponsors Needed For

- Newsletter Production and Printing (\$500)
- Book Publishing as printed copies of several of Bill and BJ's books are almost out of stock (\$5,000 for 5,000 more copies)
- World Outreach Packages of our Biblical Resources to missionaries, military personnel, prisoners (\$25 a package)
- Radio Broadcasts (\$50 to \$200 a month per station)
 - Providing a Matching Fund (\$500 - \$10,000)

If you are interested in helping with any of the above or need additional information please send a note to P.O. Box 108, Sharon, PA 16146, email brm7@me.com, or call 724-983-1223.

**Leave a legacy that will bear fruit after you have gone to be with the LORD.
Please consider including Bill Rudge Ministries in your will.**

For the Love of Yesua

BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

Are you willing to endure ridicule, rejection or loss of a job for your faith in Jesus Christ?

A few years ago, four Iraqi youth under the age of 15, were beheaded by ISIS for not renouncing their faith in Jesus (Yesua).

Their response, “We have always loved Yesua; we have always followed Yesua; Yesua has always been with us” is reminiscent of what one of the first Christian martyrs said before he was tied to a stake and burned alive. With the opportunity to be released if he only renounced Jesus, Polycarp stated the following words:

Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?

While we may never experience what these young Christians did, are we willing to acknowledge Jesus Christ and demonstrate this same type of commitment in the face of opposition? Remember Jesus’ words:

Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32, 33). 

Fitness Starts With God

Joey Commisso – Lifelong Athlete

by Darlinda McDonald

It is Joey Commisso’s commitment to Christ that drives his life and work. As he says, “Fitness starts with God. You can’t separate the physical from the spiritual.”

When a car accident severely damaged Commisso’s back and shoulders in October of 2000, he was instructed to stop running, jumping, and participating in most of the physical activities he enjoyed. After three years of doctor visits and physical therapy yielded no results, Commisso spent the next six months determining how to correctly work on his lower back to regain his mobility and active lifestyle. His quest for functional health and fitness had begun. It was the subsequent passing of his mother that sparked Joey’s desire to help others “because I couldn’t save the one I loved the most.” Following the advice of his wife, Patti, he started individual training in their basement which progressed to weekly classes.

As a follower of Christ, Joey understands that it is an act of worship to God to take care of our bodies. He emphasizes how the five “allies” of health (spiritual, mental, emotional, nutritional, and physical) work hand in hand to allow the individual to serve God to the fullest. Placing God first contributes to a strong mind, which promotes the emotional balance to make proper food choices. Consequently, physical health naturally takes care of itself.

Joey is often asked to speak and along with his expertise in health and fitness uses the opportunities to share his faith. He likes to pass out Bill Rudge’s books, *Reaching Your Maximum Potential in Christ* and *Fasting for Sensitivity and Power* in conjunction with his classes and presentations. If you would like information about Joey’s classes, call 724-971-9886.

In Joey’s Words –

“When I moved from California in 1997, little did I know that I would meet Bill Rudge and form a friendship based on our common interests in Jesus Christ and physical training. My admiration for Bill’s commitment to keep his temple fit, even after he left the martial arts for his calling to ministry, deepened as Bill became a spiritual mentor.”



Bill Rudge and Joey Commisso

In Memory Of

Robert L. Anderson

by Jan Anderson

Jeff and MaryAnn Bryan

by Joe & Laurie Laurain

Jim & Betty Lou Calvert

by Jerry & Amy Calvert

Ray Chizmar

50th anniversary of his death
by Sam & Kathy Collovecchio

Jason Dunder

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Daniel A. Jones Sr.

by Dorothy Jones & Family

Ashley Sharba

by John & Debbie Setterberg

Irene Stewart

by Sue Thrappas

Bless You for Standing with Us

Thank you for helping us reach the \$9,800 matching gift and our year-end expenses, and for your generous support of our various outreaches and special projects! We are so grateful for your kindness, blessings, notes and prayers for us, our families and this ministry during the past year.

We enter 2019 with deep appreciation, great hope and the tremendous potential for reaching countless more people with the Gospel, and to encourage believers and Christian leaders in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

We hope and pray your support of BRM continues as we expand our efforts to reach this nation and world. We have worked together as ministry and supporters for 41 years and shall continue to the very end. We need your faithfulness and generosity this year as many of our supporters near the time of going home to be with the Lord.

May God richly bless you in 2019 and reward you greatly throughout eternity for helping us do the *impossible* in our local area, across the nation, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)!

Bill & Karen Rudge