I've Got Commitment Issues...

Cody Westbrook

By now I am sure that you are well aware that the millennial generation is causing quite a fuss in the world because they are different than previous generations in practically every way. They communicate, travel, take in media, dress, and work in ways that have economists and researchers scratching their heads. Books have been written, documentaries have been filmed, and research centers have been commissioned to study this generation so that somehow we might be able to understand something about them and adjust accordingly. Through all of the head scratching and wondering, one thing seems to be clear—millennials have serious problems with commitment. Or, as one writer put it, they are “commitment-phobes.”

There is a lot to be said about how millennial commitment issues impact society as a whole, but what about the church? Christianity is a commitment-driven religion. Jesus emphasized that in Luke 9:23 when He said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” So, it is impossible to be a faithful Christian without being willing to completely commit to following the Lord. If it is the case that more and more people have an aversion to commitment, then it is incumbent upon the church to emphasize it and embody it in order to build it. With that in mind here are three areas where commitment is sorely needed.

1. The local congregation. One study showed that 91% of millennials do not plan to keep their job for more than three years. It is not because they plan to move up the corporate ladder or find more money, they simply want to move around to see different places and try different things. Unfortunately this trend is sometimes seen in the form of membership in the local congregation. The decision to place membership with a local congregation is really a pledge of commitment to that congregation. It is an affirmation that one plans to be an active part of the Lord’s work in that place and therefore people can depend upon them. But sometimes people (not just millennials!) get bored or offended, and for whatever reason, instead of being faithful to the commitment they made to the congregation and remaining to work through the problem, leave and find somewhere else to work and worship. I sometimes wonder what the apostles would think if they were here today to see this in action. The New Testament is full of passages that emphasize the need to be faithfully committed to a local congregation. The Jerusalem brethren were faithful to one another in Acts 2:42-46 and sacrificed to help meet each others needs (Acts 4:32-37). Ephesians 4:3-4 speaks of “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” That means we are to work hard to promote unity within the body, and that takes commitment! Galatians 6:2 tells us to “bear one another’s burdens,” and Hebrews 13:7 and 17 tell us to submit to, honor, and encourage our leaders. None of which can be done unless we are willing to commit to the local congregation. We desperately need more church members like Epaphroditus who worked himself almost to death as a representative of the Philippian congregation in their effort to help Paul in his work (Phil. 2:25-30). He was committed to them and they were committed to him.

2. The family. A pew research center report from 2014 said that only 26% of the millennial generation is married. A 2015 report from the same institution may answer why—59% of millennials describe themselves as self-absorbed. Two thoughts come immediately to mind: first, godly families are extremely important; and second, godly families cannot exist without godly people who are willing to be committed to them. All one has to do to see the importance of godly families is to glance around the auditorium on a Sunday morning. Every person there, without exception, comes from a family of some kind. That is not going to change. For a long time now we have lamented the fact that so many of our children leave the faith
after they grow up and leave home. We have sought to find out why and come up with every kind of book, program, and ministry position imaginable in order to fix the problem. But the answer has been staring us in the face from the start—the family! If anyone is responsible for children leaving the faith, it is not the church, it is the family. A reading of Ephesians 5 and 6 reveals that wives have a responsibility to submit to and love their husbands, husbands have a responsibility to love and serve their wives, parents have a responsibility to “bring up” their children in the proper way, and children have a responsibility to honor their parents. The key term in each instance is responsibility, which basically means, “to give an account of one’s actions.” It should also be noted that the basis for each one of these responsibilities is Christ. He is our model. So, a home is successful when each member of the family imitates Christ as best as possible in the fulfillment of their roles. We have a responsibility to one another to do as God would have us, and when we do we will ingrain in the following generation, through word and deed, the will of God for every family. But of course, none of this is possible without being committed.

3. Godliness. Godliness can be defined as an attitude that one chooses to have toward God, which will manifest itself in action. It refers to piety, reverence, and the fulfillment of one’s duties, and it is commanded of God’s people. Paul wrote, “But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6) then commanded, “But thou, o man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience [and] meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11). To “follow after” means, “to pursue something with intense effort.” So, godliness is not something that comes about by accident. It is something that is shaped and perfected over a lifetime. The same thing is said about holiness in 2 Corinthians 7:1, which speaks of “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Paul described the various areas in which Timothy was to be an example in 1 Timothy 4:12 and in Philippians 3:12-15 relayed his own earnest pursuit of heaven. Entire articles and sermons could be produced about each one of these principles, but they all have one very important thing in common—they all require commitment! It is impossible for anyone to perfect holiness, live a godly life, and go to heaven without being absolutely and completely committed to the task.

It is true that commitment is a major problem among the millennial generation (of which I am one) but it would be woefully unfair to pretend that it is a problem unique to them. Christians have been struggling with it since the beginning. So, the church has a responsibility to rise up and meet that challenge. We must preach about it, teach it in our bible classes, and perhaps most importantly, we must embody it in every part of our lives. If all of God’s people will give themselves completely over to Him, then commitment will be a strength, not an issue.

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"Where No One Stands Alone"
Andy Baker ’06

M osie Lister, though not a member of the Lord’s church, used his talents and abilities to write many well-loved songs and hymns. What he is most known for is writing lyrics and music that are relatively well-suited to sing and fit well into quartet or solo style. In 1960, Elvis Presley, the king of Rock and Roll, when he had a brief stint into so-called “gospel music” recorded two of Mosie Lister’s songs – “Till the Storm Passes Over” and “His Hand in Mine” – the title track which won Elvis his first and only Grammy award.

Even though today, in the denominational world, Lister’s songs are seen as great soloist pieces. Yet, quite honestly, I cannot see how we could sing a song like “Where No One Stands Alone” without voices around us to blend together and raise to God the sacrifice of praise of our lips (Heb. 13:15). It seems counter to the message of the song.

As far as content goes, note that “alone” and “loneliness” are two different things. What the song writer is writing here is about the subject of loneliness. As a paradox, we are far more technologically connected than ever before, yet people feel lonelier (more alone) than ever before. People will tout how many friends they have on social media sites, and yet there is no real connection with people. They feel like no one cares and no one really knows them. This is the mood of the song. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 4:10, “For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.”

In this song, I’ve got to ask, “Where is the place where no one stands alone?” Is it heaven? Is it earth? From the song, it is the place where comfort is given. It is the place where tears are dried. It is the place where hearts are lifted and encouraged. It is the place where the Savior is. Friends, according to the Bible, the place where no one stands alone is the church! We don’t have to wait till heaven before we never stand alone – we stand together with others here. If you’re a “lone ranger” spiritually...STOP (Prov. 18:1)! If you’re a Sunday-morning only Christian, STOP (Heb. 10:24-25)! There are blessings you’ll never know until it is you spend time with the family of God (Eph. 1:3)!
PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

In Psalms 37:28 we find one of the favorite verses for the folk who teach "once saved, always saved" or "eternal security". If isolated from the context of the chapter and the rest of Bible teaching one might well build a case for a doctrine that is popular indeed but nevertheless Scripturally wrong. Notice the passage:

"For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."

The verse immediately prior to this plainly reminded the people to "depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore". Evidently it makes a difference how one lives and the decisions he makes as to whether he is considered a saint who will not be forsaken and who will be preserved! My mother used to make some great "peach preserves" but some of them never made the breakfast table because I dropped the jar, broke the glass and ruined the delicious provisions so perfectly prepared. My human mistake foiled a grand plan of a loving parent. There is a parallel in the preservation of the saints. God's plan is perfect but sometimes the clay will not co-operate with the Potter's will (Jer. 18). Also, the Bible tells of some saints who quit being saints and thus removed themselves from Jehovah's preserving power. Take Demas (II Tim. 4:10); or, if you please, 23,000 servants of the Lord who perished in one day because of sin (I Cor. 10:1-12). Jude, verse 21, Hebrews 3:12 and II Peter 3:17 urgently remind us to:

"Keep yourselves in the love of God"
"Take heed lest you fall from your own steadfastness" and beware lest an evil heart of unbelief separate you from the living God!

All three of these passages were written to Christians warning us what can happen to the saints of God. A saint is one who is separated from the world—set apart—called out of sin and into a sacred nearness to the Lord. As long as one maintains that spiritual stance he cannot fall.

If, the Bible tells of some who left such a blessed arrangement and returned to the beggarly elements of the world (Gal. 4:9-11). The only way the eternal security doctrine could be true would be for us to lose our power of choice upon becoming a Christian. But, II Peter 2:20-22, II Corinthians 12:21 and Galatians 5:4 forever prove that children of God can choose to leave the Truth, become impenitent and even fall from grace. We dare not allow [creedal] positions, denominational dogma and personal bias to cause us to deny clear Bible teaching!

In II Chronicles 7:14 we have a great commentary upon Psalms 37:28. In this emphatic verse we learn that if God's people will humble themselves, seek Jehovah's face and pray then God would forgive them and bless them. Notice also 11 Chronicles 15:2 as a precise application of man's volition and God's actions:

"The Lord is with you, while you be with him, and if you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you."

...truly, if we follow Christ wherever He leads us (Rev. 14:4) we shall be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom (II Tim. 4:18). However, if we choose (Joshua 24:15, John 7:17, Romans 11:22) to depart from godliness the Bible tells us in Jeremiah, chapter 23 the last two verses, that God will forget, forsake, and cast out of His presence, bring everlasting reproach upon us and perpetual shame. That very potent passage sheds some light upon Psalms 37:28 for sure!

In Jude 12 we read of some who were "twice dead". There is only one thing that verse could mean. It refers to those who had once been dead in sin and then obeyed the truth - thus coming alive in Christ (Romans 6:11). Later, they left the Lord, returned to the world (I John 2:17) and became spiritually dead again!

Psalms 37:28 plainly tells us of God's ability to do His part in keeping the saints saved. The problem always belongs with human beings who choose to "kick out the traces" and thus leave the grace of God. A perfect closing passage to graphically portray the divine and human parts in the drama of salvation is Romans 11:22 which depicts the goodness and severity of God and the decisions men make. Read that verse carefully for a perfect commentary on Psalms 37:28.

Johnny Ramsey
Record for the Week of June 4, 2017

Bible Class ................................................................. 133
Morning Assembly ......................................................... 223
Evening Assembly ........................................................... 153
Iglesia de Cristo
Morning Assembly ......................................................... 21
Contribution ................................................................. $576

Please Remember in Prayer:

Charles Houston’s hip replacement surgery will be today.
Jerrold Johnson will undergo back surgery on June 13.
Philip Brumback had an emergency appendectomy last Wednesday and is recovering at home in Memphis, Tennessee where he is a student.

Health Concerns: Joyce Altizer, Autumn Felps, Betty Kellsmurphy, Dolores Kennedy, Al Macias, Elvira Martinez, Bob Richter, Bud Wade

Shut-in: Bo Browning, Jeannette Hansen, Charles Houston, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Ginny Oswald, Billie Marie Pursley, Bob Richter

Others:
Roger McCown requests prayers for his mother, Nell, who recently suffered a fall.

The Word of Life
Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life

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Brett Gerhardt
David Locke
Bill Siebert

Preachers:
Cody Westbrook

Intern: Austin Armagost

Southwest School of Bible Studies
Director: Rick Brumback

Worship and Study Opportunities: Sunday, Bible Classes 9:30 am, Worship 10:30 am and 6:00 pm
Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men’s and Ladies’ Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm

Radio Program – The Word of Life | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life

Placed Membership
Diane Miller
8025 Izetta Ln
Austin, Tx. 78744
dianemiller64@hotmail.com

Digging for Answers

VBS | Saturday, June 24
9:00 am

Invite your neighbors and other children you know for a day of Bible classes for children ages 5 to 6th grade.

Lunch will be provided by Chick-fil-A.

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