

COMMITMENT SERIES 2006

Commitment Weekend Nov 11/12

Overall Theme Transforming lives through Jesus Christ
Series Theme: Living for a Cause
Sub Theme: An Adventure in Spiritual Growth

Introduction:

At one level commitment series is about the Commitment Day offering. The practicalities of funding ministry demands that finances be addressed. However, there is a far more important reality. That is the Adventure of Spiritual Growth. The commitment issues cannot and must not be seen primarily in the context of fund raising. It is profoundly a faith raising series and a vision casting series.

This is not only right, it is extremely biblical. It is no less than Jesus who indicates that our attitude to money and possessions is the ultimate barometer of our spiritual growth.

Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Matt 5:21
Consequently we are to 'store up for ourselves treasures in heaven.'

Therefore, we must never think, "Do we have to have a commitment series again?" or 'Maybe we should leave it out this year?'.

That sort of thinking generally comes because asking for finances makes us slightly uncomfortable. However, not challenging God's people about finances robs them of the most significant avenue of spiritual growth.

2006 commitment series will be a series of six messages from Philippians. It will pick up 6 big themes based around chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 and summary messages on week 5 & 6. It is not intended to be an every verse exposition in 6 weeks and consequently some sections will be omitted or mentioned obliquely.

1. A Life For Christ: Chapter 1:12–26

Preacher: Rod Irvine October 14/15

Key verse: Phil 1:21 *'For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain'*

Paul is in prison awaiting possible execution. Yet he is not unduly depressed by this. The entire focus of Paul's life is Christ and this resonates through out the message.

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| 1. Everyone seems to know he is in chains for Christ | v13 |
| 2. People are therefore speaking boldly for Christ | v14 |
| 3. Paul is excited Christ is preached whatever the motive | v18 |
| 4. Paul denies that he will never dishonor Christ | v20 |
| 5. A summary of Paul's life is Christ | v21 |
| 6. Paul longs to be with Christ | v23 |
| 7. Being alive means ministry for Christ | v22 |

It would be difficult to find a passage that illustrated the difference between religion and Christianity better than this one. There is no hint of the formal trappings of religion here. Everything by contrast is centred around a deep and all embracing relationship with a real living person, Jesus Christ.

I intend to do an appeal for commitment and conversion during this message.

2. A Life for Community: Chapter 2:1-11

Preacher Bruce Clarke 6,8,10; Stuart Starr, Fuse, October 21/22

Key verse is verse 4. *"Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also the interests of others."*

This message should be a good follow-on to 40 Days of Community. It can pick up and reinforce some of the 40 Days themes. It could also be an opportunity to highlight some of the 40 Days issues.

This section contains one of the most important passages in the New Testament, the famous Christ hymn of 2: 5-11. While this passage is justly famous, it can easily be extracted from its context.

It is given primarily not so much to give us doctrinal understanding of the nature of the Trinity or the person and work of Christ. It does that of course. It is given in the context of the letter to use the example of Christ v5, to stimulate us to live lovingly, humbly and caringly with our neighbors.

Therefore the section 2:5-11 is not to be the primary focus of this message but the underlying sub-stratum that encourages us to act in a godly, selfless way.

Hence 2: 1-4 is the main focus of the message for this series. As a believer I need to have unity of mind, love, spirit and purpose with fellow believers. I need to put aside conceit and ambition and my own interests. I must be looking to the interests of others. These interests could be their physical or spiritual welfare. It could mean putting myself out so they can be saved.

Why Bother? Because Jesus my Savior did this for me.

He put aside his glory	v6
He emptied himself	v7
He humbled himself	v8
He died on the cross	v8
He is now exalted	v9
He will be confessed as Lord willingly or unwilling	v10

3. A Life For A Cause: Chapter 3:1-14

Preacher: Rod Irvine October 28/29

Key Verse: 3:13/14 *But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what is ahead.*

The apostle Paul lives for a cause. The cause is Christ and his kingdom and His ministry. Nothing is going to shake Paul from it. Again this is not about religion. Paul has all the religious pedigree in the world but it counts for nothing compared to knowing Christ and living for Christ.

There are of course some very clear similarities between some of the thrust here and the thrust of chapter 1. The difference will be that in chapters 1, I wish to focus on Christ and Paul's commitment to Him. In this message I wish to take up the related theme about how this devotion to the cause of Christ gives his life focus, a direction and meaning and purpose.

Paul is in prison because of Christ. His preaching of Christ has upset religious people who oppose his message 3:2.

He counts knowing Christ more important than anything	v8
He wants complete identification with Christ	v10
He lives a life of focus and purpose	v13
He lives a life of certain hope	v14

I wish to encourage people that true happiness comes from living beyond themselves and living for a cause.

People like Bill Gates have a cause that is now giving his life meaning and purpose beyond money and Microsoft (ie giving a lot of his money away) God's people have the greatest cause of all, the Kingdom of God and His purposes in Christ. That gives our life meaning and purpose and hope and destiny.

4. A Life of Contentment: November 4/5 Preacher: Rod Irvine

Paul is in prison but he is content as God supplies his material needs. This message will address how we live in a consumer society that actually aims to make us discontented. Allied with this there is a lot of secular research being done on happiness. Happiness or wellbeing is not normally associated with how much material possessions we have. Naturally, if we have absolutely nothing or very very little we will be unhappy.

However, once basic physical needs are met our happiness depends far more on:

1. Meaningful work
2. Someone to love and love us
3. Something to live for.

Those later 3 are all summed up in the cause of Christ.

While Paul has learnt contentment, he commends the Philippians. They have participated in his mission. They have shown great generosity.

1. They have sent aid repeatedly v16
2. their gifts are a fragrant offering v18
3. their gifts please God v18
4. in turn God will look after them v19

This will be the major message that will focus on generous giving and God's supply.

I wish also to use this message to explain a biblical view of the "prosperity doctrine". Does God promise prosperity to believers? The biblical answer as indicated here is that God will look after you. It is not so much give and you will get a BMW. That would be a very wrong and self centered motive. It is far more that you give to support God's Kingdom and God will not hang you out to dry. In fact, there is a real, legitimate biblical expectation that '*as you sow so shall you reap*'.

However, God's blessings are so that in return you can be a channel of blessings to others; see 2 Corinthians 9:11

5. A Life of Celebration: Phil 4: 1-7 Nov 11/12

Preacher: Rod Irvine

Key Verse: "*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice.*"

Phil 4:4

This is the actual Commitment Day, which I hope will be a service of joy and celebration. It is also a day when I want to focus on a theme that pervades Philippians, joy.

It should be a key aspect of the Christian walk. Despite the ups and downs of day to day existence and the general trials and tribulations that life brings, God's people are people of joy. Naturally there are times of sorrow and sadness but our over-arching condition is one of joy and rejoicing. That is because in Christ, with the hope and certainty that comes from knowing Christ, a life of purpose brings joy and rejoicing.

Paul is in prison. His is under the threat of death. The people to whom he writes are themselves undergoing severe trial 1:29. Yet the constant theme that Paul brings forth is joy.

He rejoices in their fellowship and partnership 1:4, 1:25, 4:10, 4:1

He rejoices in the face of death 2:17&18

He rejoices in the preaching of the gospel 1:18

He continually urges the Philippians to rejoice 2:2, 2:29. 3:1, 4:4

He obviously rejoices in their generosity. 4:20

The thrust then is that on this day we bring our financial gifts and pledges to God. It should be a day of great cheerfulness and partnership in the ministry because God loves a cheerful giver.

6. A Life of Consecration: Phil 1:27-30, 3:17-21, 4:8-9. Nov 18/19
Preacher: 8, 10 Bruce Clarke: 6pm and Fuse: Stuart Starr

This is the weekend following Commitment Day. I wished to continue the theme for one week. There is still a major theme untapped. Secondly, a significant number of pledges and gifts come in post Commitment Day and this final sermon will also keep bringing the big ideas of the Commitment Day before the people.

The big idea here is living a life worthy of the gospel. In one form or another Paul emphasizes holy and godly living. The Philippians are to be:

1. pure and blameless until the day of Christ 1:10
2. conduct themselves worthy of the gospel 1:27
3. shine like stars in the universe in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation 2:15
4. Put into practice what is true, pure, noble admirable etc 4:8

God's people are on an adventure of faith. We are in this world but not of it. While we are in this world we have gospel labour to do. We cannot simply be monks and withdraw from the world. However, while we are in it we must be ambassadors for Christ and live to His glory.