

What Men Need to Know

Week 4 - Committed to her...

"When a man takes an oath, he is holding his own self in his own hands, like water, and if he opens his fingers, then.... he needn't hope to find himself again".

Thomas Moore in Robert Bolt's, *A Man for all Seasons*

INTRODUCTION

Commitment is *loyal love*: working for her well-being and that of the relationship.¹

Commitment involves the other elements:

Christ centeredness

Our love is rooted in God's love toward us and our spouse.

"We love because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19

"The love of Christ compels..." 2 Corinthians 5:14

We can work for her good because God is always working for our good.

e.g. we can forgive b/c we have been forgiven

e.g. we can move toward difficult issues b/c the Spirit will guide, comfort and instruct us.

Seeing our 1^o job - to follow the Spirit NOT fix her.

e.g. we can be honest b/c what God believes about us is decisive

We can suffer without retreating or retaliating because we entrust ourselves to God.

1 Peter 2:21-25

Part of our commitment is moving her and the relationship toward Christ-centeredness & you can't lead her where you don't go yourself.²

e.g. if you don't get the gospel how can you help

e.g. if you care little for God's Kingdom then you won't notice or act on character or commitment issues in her life if they:

- ...don't threaten what you want (e.g. if she goes to women's group, I've got the kids and then **I don't get to** play *Call of Duty*; or finish that project; or hobby) OR "if she goes, **I do get to** play"
- ...don't affect you directly (e.g. if she doesn't get along with women she might need you for support, so she's not critically focused on you for a while); short term gain but long term loss
- ...don't rock your boat (e.g. some things you can live with or tolerate because it's better than a fight you don't think you can win BUT if you're not the God of your own life, then He might want you to rattle cages for the good of his church {including her}).

Delighting in her

Her sense that you appreciate her; are enthusiastic about her and want to create a life with her is the background music for commitment.

This tone makes it difficult for her to believe that you are against her. It tells her that you like her and are on her side.

¹ It is important to distinguish her from the relationship at times.

It might seem sacrificial for you to 'let her off the hook' for something but the relationship might suffer for it (e.g. maybe she's sexually aversive and it will seem most sacrificial to not initiate this but the oneness of the relationship suffers {this apart from how the husband is personally affected}).

On the other hand, some guys can feel that what they want/demand is 'obviously' what the relationship needs.

² God's kingdom and glory is the mission of the marriage.

Intimate with her

If you are not honest with her then you have a weak commitment. Your commitment to your private goals trumps the relationship.

If you are not curious about her then your disciplinary role will backfire because she has no reason to trust you **and** you have no reason to believe that you are right about the things you think are 'issues'.

Also, if you are superficial in your closeness then you will 'not notice' many important things that actually need attention.

These are part of commitment but are not the same thing as commitment.

Commitment itself is working for her well-being by helping her become what God intends.

For many men, commitment means something more passive. It means something like, "I won't leave you for any reason."

There's something valuable, even admirable, in this kind of commitment - the sense that you are not keeping some exit out of the relationship open; that you really are in this for the long haul. We should keep the exits closed.

By itself, however, it is a pale thing. For instance, when we say that a Navy Seal is committed, we don't simply mean that he won't desert his company, we mean that he's all in for the mission/for his buddies, no matter what.

The best sense of the biblical view of commitment is found in God's posture toward us. The Hebrew term that fits this is *chesed* (a.k.a. *hesed*)

God is full of *chesed*³

The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and *chesed*! I am slow to anger and filled with faithful love and dependability.

Exodus 34:6

Your goodness and *chesed* will pursue me my whole life and I will live in your house forever.
Psalm 23:6

***Chesed* – means 'loyal love'; 'faithful love' or 'covenant love'**

It is acting for someone's good because you have vowed to do it.

It is a term that is equivalent to *agape*, according to some theologians.

In marriage, this means that you work for her well-being...

...regardless of what she does or says⁴

...in spite of what she does or says

...especially when you feel insignificant to her

MOVING TOWARD HER

(God brought the woman) to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man

³ *Chesed* is sometimes translated as *mercy* or *love*. However, the term, *love*, can mean things that *hesed* does not mean (i.e. it isn't mutual; it is not a feeling; it is not owed by virtue of the recipients behavior) AND the term, *mercy*, can mean things that *hesed* does not mean (i.e. it isn't a feeling of empathy; it isn't intrinsically tied to atonement)

⁴ God is faithful even in the face of Israel's infidelity (c.f. Hosea); God is faithful when we are faithless (2 Tim.2:13)

shall **leave** his father and his mother and **cleave** to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
Genesis 2:22-24

Leaving

This certainly means that the family of origin is no longer the priority relationship⁵

But, it also means that you are, in an ongoing way, turning from people/things that threaten the relationship.⁶

Bad things (flirtations; fantasies) as well as neutral or

Good things that have become inordinate (competing life goals, hobbies, ministry, friends or even kids)

There are often powerful competing motivations in our hearts urging us to serve & preserve ourselves.

We want peace and quiet and our spouse seems to threaten that goal, so we withdraw, stonewall or fight.

Those legitimate relationships that may vie for your attention don't end up with less of you but with more of you because you will better serve them as a flourishing couple.

Cleaving

This word means to have a strong personal attachment.

Moving toward; having a 'we' focus instead of individualistic focus.

The tense of the verb *dabaq* (i.e. or *da' vak*) is also ongoing (keeps moving toward; keep identifying with the relationship).

Some of us are more inclined to 'cling' than to cleave. We have an attachment style that makes it more likely we will move toward her to soothe our own anxieties about the relationship.⁷

Some of us are more inclined to avoid/retreat than cleave. We have a natural or developmental inclination toward autonomy and feel threatened by the closeness or dependency of our spouse.⁸

To keep cleaving means that we keep moving back toward them for the sake of 'us' (with the resources that God provides).

Some fight rather than cleave (i.e. to win/save face/compete; to train her to avoid certain areas; to back her off a particular area)

Sexuality is tied in with commitment; just like it is with the other principles.

The rest of the sentence in Genesis 2:24 reads, *wēhāyû lēbāsār 'ehād* which is translated, "and keeps becoming one flesh with her."⁹

5 A married couple is not like an addition on the parents house; they are like a new house.

6 The tense of this verb translated 'leave' *azab* is interesting because it carries the idea of continual marginalization of competing loyalties.

7 See the handout concerning attachment style

8 Ibid

9 note: 'becoming one flesh' is a preferred translation over 'be one flesh' b/c the Hebrew phrase carries the idea of a process of development rather than an instantaneous event; Becoming one flesh is not a poetic description of intromission; else, Paul would not have said that intercourse with a prostitute was the act of joining Christ with a prostitute. The term *bāsār* translated 'flesh' is not simply a term for bodies but carries the idea of a unique relationship (Gen.29:14 (Laban identifying with Jacob); 37:27 (Judah's argument to not kill Joseph); Lev.18:6 (refs. to close relatives); Lev.25:49 (close relative); 2 Sam.19:13-14 (relatives)).

HELPING HER SUCCEED¹⁰

Honoring & understanding her

In the same way¹¹, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.
1 Peter 3:7

Sacrificing to help her toward God's goals.

<p>²¹...submit to¹ one another out of reverence for Christ...</p> <p>²⁵ For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. ²⁷ He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.</p> <p>²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹ No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for³ it, just as Christ cares for the church.</p> <p>³⁰ And we are members of his body.</p> <p>³¹ As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."⁴</p> <p>³² This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.</p> <p>³³ So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself...</p>	<p>Subject yourself to your wife <u>out of respect for Christ</u> ¹<i>hupotasso</i> – to arrange yourself under</p> <p>Agapeo your wife <u>just as Christ did</u> the church and gave himself up for her</p> <p>to sanctify her with the word ²<i>rhema</i> – the term means the specific application of truth in a situation; the fact that the 'word' he's referring to made the church righteous must mean that he has the gospel in mind. so that the church would be faultless He purposed to make her glorious, holy and faultless. <u>In the same way...</u></p> <p>Agapeo your wife as your own body loving her is loving yourself (i.e. the implication is that she's part of your body v.30)</p> <p>nourishing her tenderly loving her ³ <i>thalpo</i> – to warm and hence to tenderly love <u>just as Christ also does</u> the church because we are members of His body</p> <p>(Gen.2:24)</p> <p>Our oneness with our wife, the example and provision of Jesus are the bases for husbanding.</p> <p>Contra-conditionally serve her in the same manner that you do so for yourself; as if you were doing for yourself.</p>
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¹⁰ It is here that we see a divergence in the biblical instruction along the lines of gender.

¹¹ This passage refers back to Christ's example in 1 Peter 2:21-25; Godly husbands do not retaliate or threaten. They entrust themselves to God. They remain grateful for their redemption, SO THAT, they can be considerate and respectful; becoming a kind of redeemer for her.

Goal 1 – Loving God

Encourage her toward and in the means of grace: Bible; Prayer; Fellowship; Serving & Response to Hardship¹²

Help her identify and turn from her ‘God substitutes’

What are her typical negative emotions?

What behaviors do you notice in her when she’s feeling this way?

What false thing might her triggers, feelings & behaviors suggest that she believes?

Tell her the behaviors you see and ask her what she’s thinking & feeling that leads to the behavior.

How does the gospel fit these issues?

Goal 2 – Loving others

Keep the big picture in mind

God’s goal – to grow his Church

If you look at your wife through that lens, you’ll see things she could do that will give her joy & honor God at the same time.

Encourage her toward fellowship and ministry

If you look at your wife through that lens, you’ll see reasons she’s less effective than she could be

Keep your eyes peeled – notice your wife in the context of others.

Identify her gifts, burdens and opportunities.

How does she fit with Up – In - Out?

Where are the gaps she can fill (Up – In – Out) whether they fit her well or not.

- Identify roadblocks, things that are keeping her from spiritual success
What are her negative triggers?
Note: These will be tied to the idolatries in goal 1 and will help you notice those idolatries.
- Pray for her daily in a visionary way (3x5 visionary prayer card)
[ID her gifts, burdens, opportunities; ID roadblocks that might be keeping her from fully expressing those gifts, burdens or taking advantage of those opportunities; pray gratefully about how God put her together & pray for her to get unstuck if she is]

¹² See Gary Delashmutt’s XSI plenary from 2011 – *Stewarding Your Suffering* AND Fernando’s, *The Call to Joy and Pain*.

[see the intercessory prayer handout]

- Pray for, look for and act upon opportunities God provides for you to encourage¹³ & challenge¹⁴ her.

You want to matter.

In one sense, it's settled in Christ.

In another sense, what you devote yourself to will also tell a story about your life (Eph.2:10; Ps.23:3).

God will bring glory to you for doing the things he has for you to do.

Decide & keep reminding yourself to be married so that you can honor God - by sacrificing yourself for her good and for your relationship.

¹³ Keep in mind that the frequency of positive leadership should far outweigh the times you need to discipline.

¹⁴ Men often assert their authority where it matters the least - usually in order to not be inconvenienced or in order to get some desire satisfied. This is why we must constantly recognize the self-sacrificing role we are to play.