

How to Have a Wonderful Relationship with Your Higher Power

Part 2: What Is Commitment?

What does it really mean to **make a commitment to Jesus Christ**, and why is it so important? We tell people, "All you have to do to be saved is ask Jesus to come into your heart and save you," and we know the Bible teaches us that salvation is by GRACE through FAITH, and that NO works or good deeds of ours are involved in receiving our salvation - **it is a total GIFT from God** (Eph. 2:8-9). That's all true, but sometimes we forget about the commitment AFTERWARDS. It's like telling a bride and groom, "All you have to do is say, 'I do' in front of a minister and two witnesses, and you're married." That is true, also, but there is a commitment involved that is MORE than just saying those little words, "I DO." If you are familiar with the traditional marriage vows, there is a part that the bride and groom repeat and VOW to each other that they will **"forsake all others"** and **"cleave only to each other"** as they make this lifetime commitment. That means they stop seeing old boyfriends or girlfriends (cut off all former romantic relationships), and guard themselves from emotional entanglements or romantic ties in the future. To "cleave" to your mate means **to rely on that person as your source of joy, delight and intimate companionship** - you don't look to others to fill that need for intimacy. Jesus wants us to have such an intimate, loving relationship with Him that He even refers to Believers collectively as His bride (II Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:30-32, Rev. 21:9-10). We are to come to Him and cling to Him as our only source of joy and delight.

- **John 15:4-5 & 11 "ABIDE (remain in close relationship and fellowship) in Me, and I in you.....I am the vine, you are the branches. He who ABIDES in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. These things I have spoken to you, that My JOY may remain in you, and that your JOY may be full."**
- **Psalms 37:4-5 "DELIGHT yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way (life) to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."**
- **Psalms 40:16 "Let all those who seek You REJOICE and be GLAD in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, 'The Lord be magnified!'"**
- **Psalms 5:11-12 "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for JOY, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be JOYFUL in You."**

So, is it so unreasonable of the Lord Jesus to expect us to give up **the former things to which we were attached**, whether they seem like good things or bad things to us? If you were turning to those things for emotional support, pleasure, escape from stress, or guidance, those things are now considered "idols" from which you must turn away. The new groom does NOT go back to his old girlfriend, no matter whether she was a wonderful person, or a tramp. We must give up MANY things from our old life **as we begin our NEW LIFE with Jesus**, but some are more obvious than others. Most people realize that they need to give up the "bad" things - for instance, the heroin addict and alcoholic must no longer turn to heroin or alcohol for "escape" or pleasure, they must learn to turn to the Lord Jesus when life gets rough and stressful. I heard on Christian radio this morning the testimony of a woman who owned and **made her living from** three topless nightclubs. She closed them all down on the day that **she gave her heart and life to Jesus Christ**, trusting Jesus to provide for her financial needs in a more wholesome way - and He did! In the Bible, Zacchaeus the crooked tax collector gave his life to Jesus and said he would stop extorting money from people, and would repay all that he had taken dishonestly (Luke 19:1-10). Mary Magdalene left a life of sin (probably prostitution - after Jesus cast seven demons out of her), and committed her life to following and helping with the daily physical needs of Jesus and His disciples (Luke 7:36-50 & 8:1-3).

But what about the things that don't SEEM evil to us, must we give them up also? Yes, and here is why: **WE don't SEE the danger** and understand the REASON why God tells us to put away all of our old idols. As we mature, as we study God's word and learn more about what is BEHIND these things, we will see the spiritual danger, and understand why God says, "You shall have **no other gods besides Me** (Exodus 20:1-5)." There is a popular teaching in our world today that says, "All religions lead to the same God," but that is contrary to what God Himself says! Some New Age and occult practices or other religions may SEEM harmless to you, but not only do they NOT lead you to God, they actually **put you in danger** by exposing you to demons.

- **II Corinthians 11:13-15** "For such men are **false** apostles, **deceitful** workers, DISGUISED themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even **Satan disguises himself as an ANGEL OF LIGHT**. Therefore it is not surprising if his SERVANTS also DISGUISE themselves as servants of righteousness....."
- **I John 4:1-3** "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but TEST the SPIRITS to see whether they are from God; because **many false prophets** have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that **CONFESSES that JESUS CHRIST has come in the flesh** is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the anti-Christ, of which you have heard is coming, and now it is already in the world." (definition of "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" - Jesus is God in human form, Phil. 2:5-11, John 1:1-3 & 14)
- **I Corinthians 10:14-21** "Therefore, my beloved, FLEE from IDOLATRY.....What do I mean then? That a thing **sacrificed to idols** is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles (non-Christians) sacrifice, they sacrifice to DEMONS, and NOT to GOD; and I do not want you **to have fellowship with DEMONS.**"
- **Deut. 32:15-17** ".....Then he forsook the God who MADE him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to DEMONS not to God, to gods whom they have not known...."
- **Prov. 16:25** "There is a way that **SEEMS right** to a man, but its end is the way of death."
- **I Thessalonians 1:9-10** ".....how **you TURNED to God** from IDOLS **to serve the LIVING and TRUE God**, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He RAISED from the DEAD, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

An example of someone who gave up his former religion is Saul, who later became known as the Apostle Paul. He was highly respected among the Jews as a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, but after he committed his life to Jesus Christ, he left Judaism, along with all the respect his high position and great learning had earned him, to call himself a "bond-servant" of Jesus Christ. God greatly used Paul, and NOTHING of his earlier training as a Pharisee was WASTED, because God used Paul to write the greater part of the New Testament. Another example is Alberto Rivera, who studied to be a Jesuit priest from the age of seven years old, and who reached a high position of respect and authority in his religious order in Spain. He finally found freedom through Jesus Christ when he was around forty years old, and he left that religious system he'd spent most of his life serving. It wasn't easy - he left EVERYTHING, and they even threatened his life. But God sent him around the world, speaking to large groups of people, and used him mightily to reach many precious Roman Catholics and lead them to true faith in Jesus Christ. A high-caste Hindu priest in Nepal had such a position that **pilgrims would lie face down and worship him**. He came to know Jesus Christ through reading a Bible, and he began to tell them, "Don't worship me! If you want salvation, worship Christ!" A Hindu extremist group targeted him for death, so he escaped to India, where he conducts evangelistic outreaches and is able to reach high-caste Indians and Nepalis, that a lower caste missionary could not. Whatever it is that **you are AFRAID to give up, it can NEVER give you the JOY and PEACE** that come from KNOWING Jesus Christ and loving and serving Him with your WHOLE HEART.

- **Read Philippians 3:7-14** "But **what things were GAIN to me, these I have counted LOSS for Christ.** But indeed I also count all things LOSS in view of **the surpassing VALUE of KNOWING Christ Jesus my Lord,** for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **count them as rubbish,** that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law (keeping religious rules), but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."
- **II Corinthians 6:14-18** "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?.....Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **WE are the TEMPLE of the LIVING GOD;** just as God said, '**I will dwell in them** and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore, **COME OUT from AMONG them and be SEPARATE,**' says the Lord. 'And do NOT TOUCH what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and **you shall be My SONS and DAUGHTERS,**' says the Lord Almighty."

So, ARE you afraid to give up something for the sake of Christ, and why? Do you think that **if you ADMIT that thing is WRONG** in the Lord's sight, you will have WASTED much of your life in its pursuit? God does not WASTE anything! God can use things you have learned or experienced, but you must **turn everything over to Him** first, and let Him decide how and when to use it. Jesus is rightly called our Redeemer, because He REDEEMS and uses for His glory the experiences of our lives, in ways you could never have imagined. Whatever experiences you have been through, God can later use to allow you to help someone else in need who is going through a similar situation. If you have been through addictions, time spent in prison, a painful divorce, or emotional trauma of any kind, He may lead you to counsel or help others in the middle of or coming out of those same things. If you have been involved in a man-made religious system, or in New Age or occult activities, God may use your KNOWLEDGE of those things and your testimony to reach people for Christ who would never listen to someone who had NOT experienced what THEY have experienced. **The KEY is in SURRENDERING it ALL to Jesus.** He will take whatever we have, and like the loaves and fishes, will MULTIPLY it for His glory! (See John 6:5-13) Or maybe you think you need to hold onto these old things, because **you might be missing out on something** that Jesus doesn't have to give you? Col. 2:9-10 says that "ALL of the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus in bodily form, and that WE are COMPLETE in Him." Ephesians 1:3 says that "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has **blessed us with every (ALL) spiritual blessings** in heavenly places IN CHRIST." II Peter 1:3-4, "As His divine power has **given to us ALL things** that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature.....**" To be spiritually complete, blessed with every possible spiritual blessing, and to be invited to partake of (share in) the very nature of God - what more could you want? It's ALL in JESUS!

- **Colossians 2:8-10** "Beware lest anyone **cheat you** through **philosophy and empty DECEIT,** according to the tradition of MEN, according to the basic principles of the WORLD, and NOT according to Christ. For **in Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form;** and you are COMPLETE in HIM, who is the head of all principality and power."
- **I John 5:20** "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, **that we may KNOW HIM who is TRUE,** and we are IN Him who is TRUE, in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the TRUE GOD and ETERNAL LIFE.**"