

# Commitment: Bound with Christ & Each Other 1

## *What is it and Why is it Important?*

(Preached 8/13/23)

Please turn to *1 John 4:7*.

### **The purpose of this sermon series is:**

- To define what commitment is and why it's so important.
- To strengthen our faith by the revelation of how committed Jesus really is to us.
- To have greater thankfulness and appreciation for any committed relationships we're in.

**MY DAD COULD HAVE DONE BETTER.** For years I was resentful toward him because he didn't love me in the way I wanted and needed him to. What I really craved from dad was approval, not just for my actions but my character. The problem was that dad was a perfectionist and there are "things" which attach themselves to those who want everything just so.

I just watched an **underwater life documentary** that focused on Manta Rays, which are massive. There are these fish called remoras with suckers on top of their heads, and they attach themselves to manta rays and freeloader off them. The suckers are so effective that even if the ray gets the idea to scrape against a rock to dislodge the remora, it doesn't work!

**Thus the spirits which attach themselves to perfectionists** are 1) criticism/fault finding, 2) controlling environment & others, and 3) outbursts of anger/frustration. That was my dad! If he sent me to bush hog a field he would come by later to point out the spots I missed. My job was to brush the snow off our vehicles and when he saw the result, he would tell me I did a "mediocre" job and inform me I needed to be more thorough.

*It didn't seem to make a difference what it was, compliments and praise from him were VERY few and far between whereas criticism happened most every day.*

DELIVERED INTENSELY. What's more is that said criticisms weren't normally delivered in a patient and rational manner either, both often with intensity and anger. Every now and then my siblings and even my stepmom would respond "nobody's perfect!" to which he would reply "you can sure try to be!"

MR. BIELSKI. As a teen I joined the Addison wrestling team and my coach was the opposite. He was old enough to be my dad too, and I quickly saw him as a "father figure." He would acknowledge how hard I worked, how strong I was, and appreciated my commitment to attending practice. He always prophesied good things into my future, things like "you keep

working this hard you'll be one of my future stars!"

**As I compared my wrestling coach to Dad, I decided that Dad fell way short!** Why couldn't he be more like Mr. Bielski?

I did the same when I went to college and **my TKD instructor became my father figure**. He poured into me, taught me a lot, and was very encouraging. My resentment with dad only grew and grew as I got older, and I continued to dwell on how he didn't love me in the way I thought he should have.

Please listen to my next words carefully so you'll understand the purpose of today's sermon:  
**Dad could have and should have done better...but he was committed to me. Invested in me.**

- My wrestling coach gave me the attaboys that I wanted which built me up.
- My TKD instructor rarely raised his voice, was a great role model, and spent lots of time with me.

**But Dad was home every night.** He worked 6 days a week and I never wanted for a roof over my head, food on the table, and clothes on my back.

- When I needed a sauna suit and wrestling shoes for practice, the coach didn't buy them for me, Dad did.
- When I begged for a BB gun, a video game console, to have friends stay the night, Izod Lacoste clothing, and Nike sneakers Dad got them.
- He used to sit me on his lap in his recliner and read the children's Bible to me.
- He taught me gun safety, how to shoot a bow, and how to tie a swivel to my fishing line.
- When I wanted to join Little League and Boy Scouts, dad made sure I had what I needed and got me to practice and meetings.
- Dad taught me how to do everything on the farm from running equipment to everything Christmas Trees and firewood.
- Dad taught me business: "the employee's job is to work hard, yours is to work smart" was one of his many sayings.
- He taught me how to lead, to manage, and prioritize.
- When I rebelled and said I was leaving Addison, the tree farm, and the family to run off to college and not look back Dad still paid for my education, room, and board.
- When I came back 10 years later like the Prodigal Son and asked for a second chance at the tree farm, he welcomed me back.
- He introduced me to real estate, taught me how to buy and sell it, and gave me my first piece of land.
- My relationship with my wrestling coach lasted for the 2 years I was in wrestling.
- My relationship with my TKD instructor lasted about 10 years then we drifted apart, not because of offense but just life.

- When my old wrestling coach passes, my name won't be on his will. Same with my TKD instructor.
- But my name was on dad's will when he passed.
- It's too easy to disappoint a perfectionist and I knew I let him down many times...yet I was still his heir because he was my dad and he was committed to me for his whole life.

## **The other father figures in my life were only there for a season.**

Things change, people come and go.

## **YET DESPITE ALL THE CHANGES AND SEASONS, DAD NEVER WENT**

**ANYWHERE.** Even through periods of years where I ignored him, was angry with him, and condemned him in my heart...*he remained invested in me.*

## **This type of love is called Agapeo** and it's a verb.

**A person loving another this way is COMMITED to the one he or she loves.** Bound.

**When Boaz first sees Ruth** from a distance, he falls in love with her and I need you to listen closely. It wasn't just a rush of feelings, *but Boaz bound himself to Ruth in that moment, committed to marrying her, having kids with her, sharing everything he owned with her, and living out the rest of his days with her until death parted them.*

**He bound himself to her at this level before she even knew who he was.** His action that followed his bond was to order his employees to give her what they had harvested from his field, instead of making her do the work herself.

I believe that today's world **inspires us to desire and go after more emotional and passionate expressions of love.**

- Words of affirmation which acknowledge our efforts and character.
- The giving of special gifts which clearly show that the giver KNOWS the receiver.
- Acts of sacrificial service where the giver takes something they could have had and offers it to someone else.
- And other things which seem to see us, acknowledge us, and make us feel like we matter.
- These things are good, they're gifts from God, and they're meant to build us up.

**But I say to you that anyone can do these things for us.** Anyone can speak words that build, appear to “see” us, seem to appreciate our talents and character...yet we must ask ourselves: **what long term commitment do they really have with us? What have they invested?**

*Christ has been committed and invested in us from the very beginning and will remain so until the end.*

**SOME OTHER “GOD”, GOAL, OR DESIRE HAS NOT BEEN AND IS NOT INVESTED IN US WHATSOEVER.**

**If you’ve been married for 10 years, your spouse has been invested in you for 10 years.**

**Your attractive co-worker who builds you up, doesn’t judge, remembers your birthday, and seems to “see” you has nothing invested in you. NOTHING.**

In my view the emphasis, gratitude, and appreciation for someone whose bound themselves to us—whether God or another person—has fallen down on the proverbial totem pole.

*It’s been replaced by prioritizing someone willing to “meet our needs.”*

**The ancient Israelites would leave Yahweh** and chase after other gods because said gods would offer short term excitement, prosperity, and fulfillment of their desires. Despite these many transgressions, Yahweh remained committed to them.

**Have we done this in our marriages and relationships?** Left the person whose committed to us to be with someone who says “attaboy/attagirl”, compliments vs. criticizes, remembers that we just had surgery, and seems to appreciate our gifts and talents?

Perhaps in both cases—our relationship with Jesus and the people in our lives—**we can reflect upon, acknowledge, and be thankful for their commitment and investment in us.**

**Or we can take it for granted and dwell on what we feel they’re not giving us...leaving ourselves open to another “god” or person who seems willing to “meet our needs”?**

**[1Jo 4:7-12 ESV]** 7 Beloved, let us love [be committed to] one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves [commits themselves] has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love [commit] does not know God, because **God is love [commitment]**. 9 In this the love [commitment] of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved [committed ourselves to] God but that he loved [committed Himself] us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 **Beloved, if God so loved [committed Himself] us, we also ought to love [commit ourselves] one another.** 12 No one has ever seen God; **if we love [commit to] one another, God abides in us and his love [commitment] is perfected in us.**

*The type of love displayed here is like that of Boaz to Ruth, where he bound himself to her for life.*

**LET’S GO DEEPER INTO THAT STORY** for a moment and see why Boaz’s love for Ruth was so astounding. Boaz was a rich, God-fearing, well respected Jewish man. Ruth was a poor widow and a Moabite. The Jews and the Moabites were enemies and God had pronounced a curse on the Moabites for terrible things they did to His people. In every way, the LAST person Boaz should have invested himself in was Ruth.

Yet he did. **He married her and not only lifted the curse off her**, but brought her into covenant with God and made her a joint heir of everything he owned. She also inherited his respect and reputation. If someone had disapproved of his choice, he would have set them straight by letting them know that if they disrespected her, they did so to him. Her response to his commitment to her was to commit herself to him.

**This is the way Father and Christ feel about us.** God our Father gave us His Son. Jesus’ commitment to us is so deep and eternal that He died on the Cross for us, literally went to Hell and back, then came back from the dead for us. He scouted and cleared the way to Father for us, and will literally return soon and bring His Kingdom with Him.

Lets go back to the verses.

**Verses 7-8: God is love.** In other words, true love began when God committed to us before we even knew Who He was. God looked at us from afar and said ***“I’m going to marry her and share everything I own with her. I’ll remove her curse and make her a joint heir of my Kingdom and we’ll be together forever.”***

**God’s love began** when He bound Himself to us in His heart and chose from the beginning to stick with us forever...for better or worse, rich or poor, in sickness and in health, joy as well as sorrow.

IDK about you, but **there are times when I want more from Christ.** I'm NOT saying or implying that He's neglectful in any way, or can't fulfill my every need and want. But if I'm being transparent, there are times when I wish he were quicker to answer my prayers. I wish that I was experiencing more of His joy and love than I am right now and my flesh is tempted to believe that He's holding something back from me. He isn't, but I can deceive myself into thinking that He's ignoring me, is mad at me, disappointed, not speaking, or what have you.

**The way back to intimacy is thanks and praise.** Specifically, meditating on His amazing commitment to myself and my family. How He's been there no matter what, even when I'm the one whose angry, disappointed, and not talking to Him. I'm stunned that He hasn't erased my name from the Book of Life which is also His will where He names me as His joint heir.

**Is it possible that other “gods” may come along to tempt me by seeming to meet some “need” that I think Jesus**

**isn't?** In the present and in the end: these beings, desires, distractions, or whatever you want to call them aren't invested in me. They don't love me, don't have my best interests at heart, and won't stick around.

**My wrestling coach was a good man, and my TKD instructor was too.** No ill intentions on their part whatsoever. Yet they were only temporary father figures who came and went. My dad was there from the moment I was born until the day he died.

**So it is with Jesus.** Like Boaz with Ruth, He loved us first by BINDING His entire life and destiny to ours. By sharing everything He was and has. We're the ones who got the upgrade, not Him. We were the ones who were raised up from a low station to a high one. He forgave our past, settled our present, and guaranteed our future.

*He was there for us before we born and will continue to be even after we've drawn our last breath. As a matter of fact, He'll bring us back from the dead and we'll be together forever.*

As far as our relationships with each other, verses 11-12 tell us how it's done: ***the first and best aspect of love is commitment.*** I'll talk more about this next week, but I repeat: my dad could have done better. But he was always there and always invested. I wasted too many years being resentful and therefore distancing myself from him in my heart, when I should have taken more time to appreciate and think about his commitment to me.

**When I finally did, my heart opened up to him and we became closer than ever his last 5 years of life.**

If we feel our relationship with God is lacking, *then is it possible we're waiting and wanting Him to "meet our needs" and feel like He's falling short?*

## **MAYBE WE CAN STOP AND CONTEMPLATE HOW COMMITTED TO**

**US** He's proven Himself to be? To be thankful for that, to magnify how He's bound Himself to us?

*How about our marriages? Our relationship with our parents, if they're still here? With someone else?*

**Maybe we've spent too much time dwelling on how they fall short.** How they could and should be doing more to meet our needs, build us up, and encourage us. Make us feel loved and wanted.

**Instead, maybe we could think on the fact that they have been there for us and are invested in us?**

I'm not making excuses for the human partners in our lives, but only suggesting that we could refocus away from how they fall short—which only opens us to temptation—and instead look upon their investment in us.

**[1Jo 4:16-19 ESV]** 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love [commitment] that God has for us. God is love [commitment], and whoever abides in love [binds themselves] abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love [commitment] perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love [commitment], but perfect love [commitment] casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love [being bound to Him]. 19 We love [are willing to commit to God] because he first loved [committed Himself] us.

**Look at verse 18:** when we fully appreciate how committed Jesus is to us through everything, we'll no longer be afraid. We won't constantly wonder if He's angry with us and about to punish us for something. We won't dwell on the bad thing that happened in our past and wonder if that was Him punishing us for something. We won't be worried about what will happen on Judgment Day when we stand before Him.

**Now look at verse 19:** we can only commit ourselves back to God and to each other, when we fully appreciate how Jesus has eternally bound Himself to us. When we do, fear is cast out like a demon.