

# “OUR CALL TO COMMITMENT”

## I. New Year, New You? Nice Try.

### A. Rear View Mirrors and Windshields

1. The first of any new year is a natural time for “rear-view mirrors” and “windshields”...to look back and look ahead.

2. It’s a time when many Americans make resolutions...which most don’t keep, leading to regret and resolution and the whole cycle starts over.

3 In the January 1, 2009 New York Times, columnist Alex Williams wrote about, “New Year, New You? Nice Try.”

- 80% of all New Year Resolutions are fall of the wagon by Valentine’s Day
- Oprah Winfrey, once at 237 pounds, famously dropped down to 160 four years ago, but is on the cover of her “O” magazine now back above 200 pounds...
- Dr. Edward Miller, Dean of the medical faculty at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine reports that 70% of coronary bypass patients revert to old bad health habits (smoking, overeating, etc.) within 2 years of the surgery

### B. Our Love-Hate Relationship with Change

1. There’s an old saying:

***You can’t keep doing the same things and expect a different result!***

2. If you didn’t like “you” last year, how do you feel about “you” now? If you are not happy with “you”, you can’t keep doing the same things you’ve been doing and expect that you will like “you” NEXT year.

3. We want to BE new...better...but we instinctively realize it’s going to cost us something by way of making changes.

4. Those who want to be champions have to be willing to do things they don’t like to do and make changes in their lifestyle in order to succeed.

- Tom Landry, 1<sup>st</sup> Head Coach of the Dallas Cowboys, had 20 consecutive winning seasons; won 13 NFC titles and 2 Super Bowls. Here was his formula for success:

**“I make men do what they don’t want to do so they can become what they want to be.”**

5. To “make disciples” requires a “call for commitment”!

## II. The Kingdom-Driven Church

### A. A New Year's Examination

1. At this time of year, I not only have to look at *ME* and see if there's been good change...if I "like" me this year better than last...but I also have to look at our church and ask the same hard questions regarding my stewardship here as your Pastor.

**"As ministers, we all have to come to terms with the quality of fruit we're producing. We have to decide what level of commitment we expect from the people we're leading."**

**Bill Hybels, Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, IL**

2. In the same way I have to recommit myself to Christ, so I have to revisit my leadership and the result.

3. I have to revisit our mission statement (our goal and purpose), and weigh it on the scales of God.

**"CCC exists to help sincere seekers become devoted Disciples of Christ and His Kingdom."**

### **Mission Statement of Christ Community Church**

4. Features of the statement:

- a. The "bottom line" is transformed lives, measurable positive *change*
- b. There is no change without commitment

### B. Responsibility of Definition

1. Definition is *critical*: If I say, "That car is *hot!*" I might mean:

- a. It's been stolen
- b. It's been sitting in the sun too long
- c. It goes fast
- d. It's sexy

(How's that for a *wide* definition?)

2. So when we say our mission is to help people become "devoted disciples", we have to define the term.

### **C. What Is A “Devoted Disciple”?**

1. We know what it means to “vote”. But what does it mean to be “de-voted”? Our goal is making a radical commitment to the Lordship of Christ. This involves laying down all our “rights” and prejudices and submitting everything to God. Everything begins with a deeply felt genuine *intention* to serve the Lord.

a. We presuppose this is impossible without the *prevenient* work of the Holy Spirit, the effectual “call” of God for us to follow Christ.

b. Therefore, all on our part is an *obedient response* to the call.

2. Devoted discipleship requires a death of the “self-life”, the self-centered life.

**“I die daily...”**

**“...And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”**

**The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:31 & Galatians 5:24**

a. This is not self-hatred or self-loathing or debasement; self-love is not necessarily evil; not if it's preceded by love for God and others.

**“It's not thinking less of ourselves, it's thinking of our self less.”**

**A.W. Tozer**

3. It's a love commitment intentionally chooses to put others first.

**Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

**Matthew 22:37-40 KJV**

4. And devoted discipleship is impossible apart from the local church, which is the Body of Christ.

### **D. The Kingdom and the Church**

1. The church is the “Body of Christ”, (see 1 Corinthians 12), the primary expression of the Kingdom of God on earth.

a. In the same way Jesus' incarnation brought the Kingdom and expressed the Kingdom, so now the church is called to be the “ongoing incarnation” of Christ.

b. The term “church” in Greek is “ek klesia”, which literally means “the called-out ones”; the meaning is governmental in nature, carrying the thought of an elected “city council” that governs a city!

2. There is no commitment to Christ without a commitment to His “Body”, the church.

a. CCC membership classes set forth very clear expectations regarding the commitment of the disciple’s time, talent and “treasure” (financial support).

3. God’s call is:

- To Christ-The “Follow Me” command (invitation?)
- To Community-Our “placement” by the Spirit in a local church
- To Cultivation-A lifelong commitment to the process of spiritual growth
- To Calling-To discover our gifts and use them to serve the church and the world through our occupations or life-roles

### **III. Our Commitment to Commitment**

#### **A. CCC Distinctives**

1. We preach for total commitment because we believe that’s what Christ preached.

2. We seek to live what we preach, to “model” our message.

3. We preach to encourage, but not to sacrifice discipleship in the process.

**“I always find resistance when I’ve challenged halfhearted, cosmetic Christians to be dedicated completely to Christ...Pastors feel the response. We preach a tough message on discipleship and the reaction tells us its “32 degrees and falling”. Next week, we preach on rebuilding self-esteem and suddenly it’s 85 degrees and sunny. So what do we preach about the third week?”**

**Bill Hybels, “Preaching For Total Commitment”, Leadership Journal, 2008**

a. Pastor Hybels is famous for his “seeker-friendly” outreach to the lost, but don’t be fooled. He preaches for total commitment, even rebuking casual church attenders who don’t serve in the church as “parasites”, who “eat and run”!

4. We preach the way we do not only because it’s biblical, but we know it’s the only way to truly help you!

#### **B. Outlook For 2009**

1. Tough times usually provide a great atmosphere for revival and spiritual renewal.

2. It usually takes a certain amount of discomfort to get us ready for an obedient response to God’s call to commitment. All our regrets, in one way or another, stem from our lack of obedience to God’s call to full commitment.

3. For myself, and the leadership, our commitment is to commitment...and we’re in unity on that. We pray you feel the same!