

Commitment and Joy

One of the disadvantages of a complex, fast-paced society like ours is that we get entangled in so many different concerns that there's little time or inclination to be deeply involved in any of them. We don't delve deeply; we dabble. But dabblers accomplish very little. Dwight Moody said, "Give me a person who says This one thing I do, and not These fifty things I dabble in." Trying to do too much often keeps us from doing our best at anything. And to make matters worse, the very spirit of our age militates against the making of serious commitments. Modern people are wary of getting into anything they can't easily get out of. We like to keep our options open. So we have two distinct tendencies that, when coupled together, make for a dangerous situation: we are frantically "busy," but at the same time we don't want to get "involved." We suffer at once from a surplus of activity and a shortage of commitment. Our hectic fiddling with this, that, and the other puts us right there next to the fellow who described himself as being "deeply superficial."

It is little wonder that we "get" so little "out of" what we do. We have forgotten the wise advice of our grandparents who told us, "You get out of things what you put into them." They were telling us something that holds true for all of life's endeavors: commitment and joy are partners. When we stand at a distance from the work and the relationships that ought to be dear to us, we forfeit the fulfillment that is available to us. But when we dig in, get truly involved, and risk the vulnerability of being genuinely committed, we find that life is a storehouse of satisfaction.

Consider three examples. First, our marriages. If, like so many in our day, we eschew any real commitment and treat our marriages as "open," disposable relationships, we ought not to be surprised that they provide little in the way of deep gratification. Do we spend little time nurturing our marriages? If so, they will simply not grow into rich and rewarding relationships. Marriage will never fulfill the expectations of those who only dabble with it.

Second, our involvement in the local congregation. Do we attend only the services that are convenient, and participate only in the work that suits us? Do we criticize what "they" are doing? If so, there will not be any real sense of joy that comes from our membership in the local church. We'll receive little benefit from what God meant to be a rewarding relationship if we refuse to make a commitment to it.

Third, and most important, our devotion to the Lord Himself. Do we pray irregularly, study the Scriptures haphazardly, and reduce religion to grist for purely intellectual debate? Do we limit ourselves to routine, formal expressions of worship and praise? Do we fail to "love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart, with all [our] soul, and with all [our] mind" (Mt. 22:37)? If so, we will surely find spirituality to be the least interesting facet of our lives. But if, on the other hand, we have the courage to pursue God with a risk-it-all commitment, we will discover that "the joy of the Lord is [our] strength" (Neh. 8:10). God

says, “You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

It is, of course, “dangerous” to care deeply about important matters. When we put our heart into something, we put ourselves in position to be inconvenienced, disappointed, frustrated, and possibly even hurt. But if we take the easy way out and avoid serious commitments in life, we doom ourselves to an impoverished existence. Sooner or later, the person who sows sparingly will find that he also reaps sparingly.

So, my friend, care and care deeply about God. Without delay, do two things: commit yourself passionately to the worship of God, and involve yourself tirelessly in the work of God. It will cost you dearly. In fact, it will cost you everything you ever thought was “yours.” But you will be the richer for risking this great investment. Joy will be the reward for your commitment. Having risked all else for the joy of God, you’ll be able to say with Paul, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

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