

A Shallow Generation

Ezekiel 33:31 NKJV - ³¹ So they come to you as people do, they sit before you *as* My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them (***they do not put them into practice***); for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their hearts pursue their *own* gain (***greedy or unjust gain***).³² Indeed you *are* to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them (***Or do not put them into practice***).

³³ And **when** this comes to pass—**surely it will** come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them.”

I want to introduce you to a mythical church member that I am going to call Kenny.

- When we first met Kenny he was attending services at First Church, but he left because the services were too formal, everyone on the platform wore a tie.
- He and his family then wandered over to Grace Church because they had a great choir.
- But before long, we hear they are “happy” at the Christian Worship Center.
- But before long they move their membership to the Community Church because of the great Bible teaching.
- After that the youth program at New Hope catches their eye.
- Now at least for the moment, they are at the church uptown, at least until something else catching their roving eye.

Whatever happened to commitment?

Why do you suppose that there are close to 100 million church members in America, ***yet they are not making more of a moral and spiritual impact?***

- **Why is it that**, on Sunday morning, thousands of churches have more empty pews than full?
- **Why is it that** the average Sunday School in America has less than 66 in attendance and that the average worship service has 84?
- **Why is it that** only 50% of the number on any church membership roll can be expected to attend?

If Christians really believe in a real heaven and a real Hell, how can we be so silent?

- The answer to all of these questions is tragically simple!

God's people have made a decision about Jesus....but have never made a commitment to Him.

- We are living in a generation of shallowness.
- *Our text tells us* that the people had no deep affection for God
- They had a shallowness of sentimental hearing.

There is of course a **difference** between a decision and a commitment.

- Perhaps this cannot be seen any clearer than it is in the failure rate of marriages in America.
- According to statistics at least 50% of all marriages will end in divorce.

Why do you suppose that is happening?

It is because these couples made a decision but did not make a commitment.

Every person who married made a decision!

They stood before a preacher and made promises and recited vows.

They made a decision, they kissed each other and walked out together to live but not necessarily "happily ever after" and not necessarily together.

So why did they divorce?

- The answer is that they made a decision, but they did not truly commit their lives to each other.
- But when a couple marries and makes a commitment to one another that is *a different story*.

They made a shallow decision to marry.

The same is true in the church -

The reason that the church is not making more of an impact in our society is that *many church members* made a decision about Christ, but have not made a commitment to Christ.

When the pilot of a giant airline is speeding down the runway, there is a certain point when staying on the ground is no longer an option.

When he crosses that line, he is committed to the air, he will take off or a disastrous crash is imminent.

At that point the pilot can no longer change his mind he is committed.

Unfortunately ***churches*** are filled ***with members*** who have ***never got off the ground***.

- ***They have been*** sitting there ***gunning their engines***, ***making noise*** but ***getting nowhere***.
- ***They have been*** ***planning on it***, ***meaning to***, ***wanting to***, ***trying to***, ***going to***, ***aiming to***, ***hoping to***.
- But the tragedy of tragedies, ***they have never*** got off the ground.

Mark 4:16-17 NIV - ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once ***receive it*** with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, ***they quickly fall away***.

A shallow generation...no roots

Luke 6:49 NIV - ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and ***does not*** put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, ***it collapsed*** and ***its destruction was complete***."

A shallow generation without a foundation...

- *"Once there was a man whose friend was in front of him leaving the church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is ready to shake hands.*
- *The Pastor grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside and said to him, "***You need to join the Army of the Lord!***"*
- *My friend replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor."*
- *The Pastor questioned, "***How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?***"*
- *He whispered back, "***I'm in the secret service.***"*

John 6:65-66 NIV - ⁶⁵ He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.” ⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

A shallow generation with the inability to receive the deeper message.

Ephesians 4:14 NKJV - ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

A shallow generation that has no deep convictions.

Commitment:

Romans 12:1-2 NIV - A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Real commitment is a highly prized commodity and those who have experienced it know how gratifying it can be to receive such loyalty.

God loves commitment

That’s why He included Ruth’s statement in your Bible.

In these two short verses **Ruth tells her mother-in-law Naomi:**

- **I’ll never leave you - I won’t turn away from you**
- **I’ll go where you go, I’ll stay where you stay**
- **AND where you die – that’s where I’ll die**

That’s the kind of commitment God admires - unqualified commitment

Proverbs 16:3 NIV - ³ Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

2 Timothy 1:14 NIV - ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed.

- The die has been cast.
- I have stepped over the line.
- The decision has been made.

I'm a disciple of His.

- **I won't look back**, let up, slow down, back away or be still.
- **My past is redeemed**, my present makes sense, my future is secure.

I'm finished and done with low living,

- sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence,

- prosperity, position, promotion, or popularity.
- **I don't have to be** right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded.

I now live by faith,

lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity....

I AM A SOLDIER IN GOD'S ARMY AND I AM NOT ABOUT TO QUIT!

Let me tell you something God hates:

- God hates **wishy-washiness**.
- God is not a fan of **contradictory ideas or mixed feelings**.
- He doesn't care for **fence-sitters**.

He isn't pleased by people who can't quite make up their minds, who are forever weighing their options, who can never settle on a course of action.

- **God isn't calling us to act rashly, without any thought to the consequences.**
- He wants people who will follow Him with joyful abandon,
- **Without regret, without looking back.**

Listen to the words of Jesus:

Luke 9:59-62 NIV - ⁵⁹ He said to another man, ***"Follow me."***

But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

⁶¹ Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

⁶² Jesus replied, ***"No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."***

Adventurer Robert Young Pelton was confronted with the price of commitment while in Afghanistan. "When I was being shelled on a front line north of Kabul, I asked a 23-year-old Taliban fighter, 'Why don't we dig trenches to escape the bombardment?'

"He looked at me and asked, 'If you didn't come here to die, why are you here?'"

That's the cost of commitment among believers. It's putting our lives on the line for others so that they turn to us and ask "why are we there?"

The Lord said to Elijah:

1 Kings 19:15-21 NIV - The Call of Elisha

'Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, **anoint . . . Elisha** son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet' So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. ***Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah.*** 'Let me kiss my father and mother good-by,' he said, "and then I will come with you.' 'Go back," Elijah replied. ***'What have I done to you?'*** So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. **Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.**"

Here we see Elisha, ***a simple farmer***, who is ***suddenly and unexpectedly*** approached by ***the famous prophet Elijah*** and ***invited to accompany him*** and ***serve him*** as his personal attendant.

When ***Elisha requests time to first go home and say good-bye to his parents***, * ***Elijah*** makes it clear that the decision to come is ***entirely Elisha's to make***.

"What have I done to you?" means, in essence, "What claim do I have on you?"
And the implied answer is "***none***".

In other words, ***Elisha is free to stay or go***.

In response, ***Elisha not only chooses to accept the call, but he slaughters his oxen and feeds them to his neighbors, burning his plowing equipment to cook the meat***.

By doing this, ***he publicly and irrevocably declares*** his intention ***to leave his former way of life*** and follow ***Elijah***.

Joy in Christ ***requires a commitment to working at the Christian lifestyle***.

- ***Salvation comes as a gift, but the joy of salvation demands disciplined action.***
- ***Most Christians I know have just enough of the Gospel to make them miserable, but not enough to make them joyful.***

They know enough about the biblical message to keep them from doing the things which the world tempts them to do;

- ***But they do not have enough of a commitment to God***
- ***To do those things through which they might experience the fullness of his joy.***

John Maxwell—in his book “Be a people person”-----states—“Until I am committed, there is a hesitancy, a chance to draw back. But the moment I definitely commit myself, then God moves also, and a whole steam of events erupt. All manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings, persons, and material assistance which I could never have dreamed would come my way begin to flow toward me—the moment I make a commitment”

CLOSE:

Revelation 3:15-16 NIV - ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

IN CLOSING, let me ask you a question:

What do you need to do to be completely devoted to Christ?

- What "boats" is God calling you to burn?
- What "escape hatches" or "exit doors" do you need to slam shut and padlock?

What tangible steps of commitment is God calling you to make today?