

4. Making Him the recipient of the first offering of every ability.

2 Corinthians 8:5 (MsgB)

*This was totally spontaneous, entirely their own idea, and caught us completely off guard. What explains it was that they had first given themselves unreservedly to God and to us. The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives. (Romans 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)*

- a. What do you first have to do before you will think of God as owning all your material possessions? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. When you acknowledge that you belong to God body and soul, what kind of changes will come in your giving?

**Friday:**

**What Keeps You From Being Committed to God?**

Mark 4:13-19 (MsgB)

*He continued, "Do you see how this story works? All my stories work this way. [14] "The farmer plants the Word. [15] Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them. [16] "And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm. [17] But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it. [18] "The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news [19] but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it.*

- a. **Disdain: An attitude of scorn; contempt; ridicule; disbelief**  
Have you allowed Satan and the world to influence you to look at God and His Word with this attitude? If so, how do you respond to the hearing of God's word? Mark 4:15
- b. **Disenchantment: A spirit of disillusionment; disappointment; dissatisfaction; bitterness**  
Instead of allowing God's Word to assist you to walk through hard times, have you allowed hard and difficult times to shape a false impression of God and His Word? Mark 4:16-17
- c. **Distraction: Satan generates events, emotions, though patterns and such things that interrupt, divert, and disturb your ability to allow the Word of God to deliver the promises, help, and encouragement. You certainly live in a "fast lane" society. The culture tries to convince you that if you do not do all the things that everyone else does, and have all the things that everyone else has, then you are a failure and missing out on the "good life". Are you allowing yourself to become a victim of these circumstances resulting in the strangling of God's Word, rendering it ineffective in your life? Mark 4:18-19**

## **FELLOWSHIP NOTES**

*Reaching People for Christ  
and  
Helping believers grow to be like Him*

## **Betting on a BETTER LIFE** *...through commitment*

Taking risks with the possibility of monetary gain prompts many to say, "Why not? It might as well be me as someone else!" Even when the odds are stacked a million to one, many are pulled to place a bet knowing there is only a glimmer of hope in reaping any reward.

Everyone wants to make life easier, but what people don't realize is that Americans have easier lives than most of the people in the rest of the world. The masses are so tuned to obtaining things and finding pleasure, they have forgotten that the things of the heart (inside) are the things that really count.

Believing in and following Christ's plan for your life allows you to focus on the important tasks of this life. This is God's way to give you a "Better Life". Hebrews 11:10 (MsgB)

*God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.*

The "Better Life" God has planned for you is not hard to find. God did not hide it nor did He place it at the end of some complicated trail. Jeremiah 29:11-13 (MsgB)

*I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. [12] "When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen. [13] "When you come looking for me, you'll find me. "Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else,*

You only have to stop placing your life on the "roulette wheel" of the worldly things and take a chance on God. Allow God to prove Himself when you place your life in His care and trust His promises to be true. The word that best describes this process is "Commitment". We shy away from "commitment" when it involves God because we are not sure we want to gamble on Him keeping His word. Yet we "gamble" on the things of this world even when there are no promises of a return.

## **Monday:**

### **The Committed Truth**

Your life is built around commitments. Each of which results in the shaping and molding of your life. God is always present and waiting to partner with you once you are ready to take a risk on Him.

**2 Chronicles 16:9** (MsgB)

*God is always on the alert, constantly on the lookout for people who are totally committed to him. You were foolish to go for human help when you could have had God's help. Now you're in trouble—one round of war after another."*

**(2 Corinthians 8:10; Hebrews 13:16; Philemon 1:6)**

#### **1. Your commitments matter because they demonstrate your values.**

**Titus 3:8** (MsgB)

*You can count on this. I want you to put your foot down. Take a firm stand on these matters so that those who have put their trust in God will concentrate on the essentials that are good for everyone.*

- a. Are the things to which you have made commitments leading others to concentrate on the important things of life? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What commitments do you need to change in order to be a better influence on others for Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **2. Your commitments matter because they dictate your future.**

**1 Chronicles 28:8** (MsgB)

*"And now, in this public place, all Israel looking on and God listening in, as God's people, obey and study every last one of the commandments of your God so that you can make the most of living in this good land and pass it on intact to your children, insuring a good future.*

- a. Where will your current commitments lead you over the next few years? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Do any of your present commitments steer your future closer to God? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Tuesday:**

#### **3. Your commitments matter because they define your life.**

**Matthew 6:21** (MsgB)

*It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.*

- a. The things that you treasure (value) will be the focus of your commitments. How do others define your life based on what they observe as the most important things in your life? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What kind of redirecting of your value system do you need to do so that the "definition" of your life would be more in line with what God wants it to be? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4. Your commitments matter because they determine your**

**Christlikeness. Colossians 3:10** (Living)

*You are living a brand new kind of life that is continually learning more and more of what is right, and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you. [11] In this new life one's nationality or race or education or social position is unimportant; such things mean nothing. Whether a person has Christ is what matters, and he is equally available to all.*

- a. Are the things to which you are committed contributing to you continually growing to be more like Christ in your behavior and choices? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What changes in your commitments would help speed up the process of becoming more like Christ in your new life? \_\_\_\_\_

**Jesus has described the kind of commitment that you need to make toward God. Identify "commitments" you currently have that are not focused on the right things. Luke 14:25-27** (MsgB)

*One day when large groups of people were walking along with him, Jesus turned and told them, [26] "Anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters—yes, even one's own self!—can't be my disciple. [27] Anyone who won't shoulder his own cross and follow behind me can't be my disciple.*

**What does Jesus say about those who refuse to change the incorrect commitments they have identified? Luke 14:33** (MsgB)

*"Simply put, if you're not willing to take what is dearest to you, whether plans or people, and kiss it good-bye, you can't be my disciple.*

## **Wednesday:**

### **A Commitment that Puts Jesus First Means:**

#### **1. Making Him the first thoughts of every day. Psalm 5:3** (NIV)

*In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.*

- a. Do you seek God's help as you start each day? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. How will this regular communication at the beginning of each day shape your commitments? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **2. Making Him the first priority in every decision. Proverbs 3:6** (MsgB)

*Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.*

- a. From where are you currently seeking guidance for decisions? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. How will seeking guidance from one who knows all things (God) increase the quality of your decision making? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Thursday:**

#### **3. Making Him the recipient of the first portion of every blessing.**

**Proverbs 3:9** (MsgB)

*Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best.*

- a. If you "honor God" with "everything" by giving generously and cheerfully, how does He promise to respond to you?

**2 Corinthians 9:8** (Living)

*God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more so that there will not only be enough for your own needs but plenty left over to give joyfully to others.*

- b. Do you worship God through giving in proportion to how God has blessed you? \_\_\_\_\_