

Week 4
Committed
Joshua 24

So far we have talked about Discipleship as following Jesus, as a growing process and last week we looked at how God resources us. This week I want us to look about our commitment to the process.

We utilise the term – we commit ourselves to Jesus as part of the conversion or becoming a Christian process so in many ways in our thought processes it is a past event, we have done the commitment thing. The reality is the very concept of the word is an on going attempt to be focused on Jesus.

The dictionary explains it this way:

commitment

noun

1. 1.

the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.

Interesting, I thought that commitment was a verb. I asked others and they assumed so also BUT the dictionary says it's a noun.

Notice the description.

It is the **state** of being dedicated to a cause or activity. So, it is in fact a commitment to do stuff. (Does that mean it is a commitment to participate in a verb??) Now, it makes sense to me. In the Christian discipleship concept it is the commitment to do what is necessary to continue the discipleship process.

So we first have to ask: – As a Christian, what are we committed to?

I want to look at a passage from Joshua this morning.
Joshua 24

Ok we will go through it a bit. Now there isn't time to go through it verse by verse so we will pick some things out. Feel free to go through it with a bit more of a fine tooth comb at home if you like.

Jos 24:1 Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God.

Well, here it is that the message is for the whole bang lot of them. And they are all called together. All the tribes and all the leaders. Why does it say all the tribes then specify the leaders too. Well, the assumption is that it called all the army back from patrol or diplomatic political stuff as well.

Everyone is involved here.

Jos 24:2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'

The big thing here is that Joshua says "Thus says the Lord" This is a message from God. Remember Joshua had taken over from Moses, some probably still questioned his leadership, here he says I am speaking for God – He is also saying – these are God's words not mine. You can doubt my leadership but this is God stuff.

Verses 3-11 are a bit of a reminder that God has done things for these people – a history lesson and a reminder!!

Notice v 13

Jos 24:13 I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant.'

God cared so much for them that He gave them stuff already prepared. A free housing, land and food package. That's pretty cool. (Now I am not sure that we can take this as an example of what is going to happen for us today!!)

Now, after this we start talking about this commitment thingy.

Jos 24:14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

It is as if God d is saying thorough Joshua "Because I have looked after you – now you do your bit of the bargain".

What is that part that had to be played?
Serve Him sincerely and be faithful to Him.
Pretty good deal.

Notice v 15

Jos 24:15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

If you don't want to do that, do what you want but the deals off. It is pretty much spelt out isn't it.
Then there is this but

But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua is saying – Your call but I have made my decision.
I'm with God.

He people react to this and their reaction is logical.

Jos 24:16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods,

It is kind of as if they are saying "We'd be stupid not to agree to this." Yep.

They even recognise what God has done for them. V17- 18

Jos 24:17 for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed.

Jos 24:18 And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God."

So they say we are in. Or in their words "We will serve the Lord. OK all is good.

But Joshua points out to them some consequences. `

Jos 24:19 But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

Jos 24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

Here we see that if we break our agreement God will deal with it. Notice it says God will "Do you harm" . This God that did all those miraculous things will do some miraculous stuff as punishment if we do wrong. Ok question here: Does God still work this way? Will He do us harm if we do the wrong thing? Na He'll forgive us. OK true but if God is the same yesterday today and forever..... There is a precedent of punishment if we choose to go against Him. Sobering thought process.

The people then again express their commitment.

Jos 24:21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD."

We will serve God – we said we will and we will.

Then Joshua says something interesting.

Jos 24:22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

You are witnesses. You are your own witnesses, this is your word, you have chosen to be God's people.

Yep they agree.

Is that where we are at? Have we chosen this process to be God's people?

Then listen up a bit more.

Jos 24:23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel."

Interesting. They have committed but obviously they still have some hang over from before. Joshua says, get rid of the bad stuff. Now this verse wouldn't be included if it wasn't important would it. They obviously had foreign Gods or idols with them. Even though they new the Law, Moses gave them that, but they still had them. Saying a commitment is one thing, doing it is another.

Where do we fit into this? Are there things we need to deal with, get rid of maybe? Think about it, and think about it deeply because of what the consequences could be.

Notice the people's reaction.

Jos 24:24 And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

OK, commitment made.

But the story goes on.

Jos 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that

day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. Covenant made, agreement made, Mm.

Made it official, so official that it was signed and sealed. Look.

Jos 24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

Wrote it down, put a memorial stone in place to remind them.

Jos 24:27 And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

Notice, the stone was a witness against them if they did the wrong thing. But also a reminder every time they saw it.

Jos 24:28 So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.

So, we are going to do some of that. We are going to have a sign in and we are going to put a stone in the grass outside the window. **A covenant renewal and A commitment stone.**

After church, instead of going out the door, first come to the front and sign the covenant sheet. (we are used to signing in and out now)

You may think " I don't need to do that, my commitment was made years ago." Well the people of Israel had been God's people for forty years wandering around in the desert – still God's people, and they had to hear what God told Joshua, so be part of this new signing of the covenant. So sign on the continuing commitment to Jesus page. We will put it up on the wall, people on Tuesday will do the same thing. Then – have a look at the stone and every time you drive past you will see it and remember you are committed to God's purposes.