

# Obstacles to Commitment

**Introduction.** Have you ever heard of gamophobia? I hadn't until I started prepping this sermon. The word means an irrational or disproportionate fear of commitment in a romantic relationship, especially a fear of marriage. It can be caused by a mixture of genetic influences, family background, and past experiences. The condition can negatively affect a person's life and may lead to loneliness or isolation.

The fact of fearing commitment is not unlike some Christians who want to keep Christ at a distance with little involvement, few demands, and a limited relationship.

There are a lot of obstacles in this world to real commitment. It may be in the area of personal relationships, business relationships, or in our spiritual life. Part of the problem is expressed by Elton Trueblood when he wrote, "In our modern world, our real danger comes not from irreligion, but from mild religion."

Mild religion equals a lack of commitment. I've baptized people before who realize the need to be saved, but then after the baptism is over, we've never seen them again. They want to commit to Christ, but just barely.

What are some of the barriers that impede our progress? That limit our spiritual usefulness? And that hinders a total commitment to Christ? Some are self-imposed as we are imprisoned by our own irresponsibility. Others are a result of the relentless pursuit of the Devil to conform us our culture. We're going to concentrate on and try to defeat four barriers that interfere with our progress as God's children.

## ***I. Pleasures: The Attraction of the World***

- A. Hedonism is the ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life.
- B. The pleasure-driven person says, "My goal in life is to have fun." When this value takes precedent over everything else, it'll become a barrier to spiritual commitment (Proverbs 21:17; Ecclesiastes 2:1).
- C. The Bible warns about those who become "lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). Real people of God were lovers of God and of His communication to mankind (Psalm 16:11; 37:4; Jeremiah 15:16; Romans 15:13).

## ***II. Power: The Delights of Wealth***

- A. "Money is power" is an understood and accepted axiom in our world. Of course, this is relative. Jennifer Wong in an op-ed piece in *The Californian* correctly observed, "Different financial statuses create a particular kind of power dynamic in a relationship. Almost inevitably, it means the one with more money has more power."
- B. Wealth is a delight when it's used the way God directs (Ecclesiastes 5:19-20). This means it's there to help people, not to be used in a self-centered way (Luke 12:13-21).
- C. Jesus gave one of His most ironic statements in Luke 18:24-25, and it was about wealth! To contrast it, Paul admonished, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

### **III. Prestige: The Search for Success**

- A. “My goal in life is to impress people,” says the status-conscious person. Invariably an obsession with status, while diverting one’s attention from character, will become a barrier to spiritual commitments.
- B. We would be well advised to remember that commitment to spiritual values doesn’t appeal to many that are wise, noble, mighty, and learned according to the world’s standards (1 Corinthians 1:26).
- C. There definitely were people of status who were disciples, including the nobleman of Cana (John 4:46-53), Nicodemus (19:38-39), Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7, 12), Dionysius the Aeropagite (Acts 17:34), and those of Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22). But the gospel mainly appealed to those of humble circumstances (James 1:9-11). They were rich in faith (James 2:5).

### **IV. Possessions: The Lure of Nice Things**

- A. Google “the finer things of life” and you get 52,600,000 hits in 0.38 seconds! This includes thousands of lists of the best and most expensive creature comforts of life: Champagne, caviar, five-star hotels, Michelin-rated restaurants, vintage automobiles, and designer clothes.
- B. When possessions take priority over God’s purpose, they become an obstacle to commitment. The Bible warns us “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15-17).
- C. It’s possible to amass wealth, obtain possessions, achieve success, and enjoy certain pleasures in this life without sinning.
  - 1. When viewed through a spiritual perspective, obtained or enjoyed with a righteous motive, and used unselfishly, our material attainments and accomplishments may provide a blessing to others. And even enhance our ministry in the kingdom, like it did with Dorcas and her charitable deeds (Acts 9:36), and Aquila and Priscilla with the church that met in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19).
  - 2. However, when we fail to look long term and see these as an end within themselves they become misplaced values, offer short term gratification, and provide limited fulfillment.
- D. Jesus loved the rich young ruler after he declared that he was a good moral person. But he lacked the strength when his commitment was put to the test. It made him leave the presence of Jesus sorrowful (Mark 10:17-22). He’s another example of people who are “not far from the kingdom of God” (Mark 12:34), and likely would be in the kingdom of God were it not for their riches. How sad!

**Conclusion.** If you were inside the cockpit of an airplane just before liftoff, you would hear the copilot or captain call out, “V1,” which means the “point of no return.”

As the airplane accelerates toward the end of the runway, the pilot must decide if the plane is moving fast enough for a safe takeoff. This speed must be determined preflight based on several factors, including the air pressure, temperature, speed of the wind, and weight of the aircraft. The pilot holds the throttle as the plane approaches the V1 speed so that the takeoff can be aborted if something goes wrong. However, after V1 the plane must take off.

As Christians, we also have a V1 commitment. Once we've decided to trust and obey Jesus, we've reached the point of no return. We need to adjust our sights, apply full throttle, and take off.

Christ has called every one of us to be committed to what's bigger, better, and eternally rewarding.

I am deeply indebted to Ken Weliever and Mike Silva for the use of their material.