

Leadership Training: Commitment

“Desire is the key to motivation, but it is determination and commitment
To an unrelenting pursuit of your goal – a commitment to excellence –
That will enable you to attain the success you seek.”

Mario Andretti

“Unless commitment is made, there are only
promises and hopes; but no plans.”

Peter F. Drucker

Lesson Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson the participant will be able to accomplish the following:

1. Discuss the importance of leadership and commitment from a spiritual context.
2. Discuss the how the implications of being the *ekklesia*, the Called-out ones of the Lord Jesus, and the depth of the commitment He requires of us.
3. Understand the nature of personal sacrifice when committing your life to the Lord Jesus, and the potential suffering and persecution that is possible.
4. Explain how the birth, life, and death of the Lord Jesus is the perfect example of unselfish sacrifice for a higher calling and purpose.
5. Define commitment and why mobilizing & sustaining commitment is important.
6. Discuss at least 6 things leadership can do to sustain Bible school commitments from administrators, faculty, staff, and the student body.
7. Understand and explain the Bible school educational environment as a unique teamwork setting.
8. Explain if a partial commitment to the Lord Jesus is acceptable given the implications of the first and great commandment.

Commitment is Important!

The Scriptures speak to personal commitment in every aspect of life, from commitment to our God, our church, our neighbors, and our spiritual calling. However, the primary emphasis of the Scriptures, as it is related to personal commitment, is stated with great clarity.

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” Matthew 22:37-38

The Lord provided us in this commandment with a strong emphasis on a personal spiritual commitment to Him – not to ourselves, not to a particular cause, and not to our own desires – but by loving and serving Him with all that is within us.

Jesus “Called Out the Ones He Wanted”

“Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called out the ones he wanted to go with him.”

Mark 3:13 (NLT)

It was obvious that many more people were following after Jesus than Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew. But it is also clear that He “called the ones he wanted,” and that call was a clarion call – loud and clear. In no uncertain terms, Jesus was calling them to a greater purpose than themselves; it was not a call to business or to deal with political or social issues; instead, it was a call to be disciples of the Lord Jesus and to serve Him and His ministry. In a real sense, this calling was only a very small part of a greater plan that Jesus had, and that was to call anyone and everyone who were willing to become a part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, the word, *church*, is translated from the Greek word, *ekklesia*. It can be broken into two distinct parts – a prefix and a root word. The prefix is *ek*, meaning “out of or from.” The Greek root word is *kaleo*, meaning “to call.” The combination of the prefix and root word, *ekklesia*, means “those who are the called-out ones.” You are truly “not your own;” you have been “bought with a price,” and you, in fact, are “the ones He wanted!” (1 Corinthians 6:19, KJV)

And if your calling is by the Lord Jesus, it is the commandment of God that you be totally committed to His kingdom, purpose, and vision. In this context, none of us develop into leaders or assume leadership and teaching positions by our own choice or desire. It is by the inspiration and authority of the Holy Spirit that each of us is “a called-out one,” ordained to be His servant, follow after Him, and be totally and completely committed to Him. Personal dedication and commitment is an inherent and absolutely essential attribute of leaders and teachers.

Committed Leaders and Teachers – A Call to Sacrifice

The Lord Jesus cannot use “half-hearted or apathetic” followers. A godly leader’s first example is a dedicated life that is completely committed to serving the Lord and His people. A godly teacher’s first example is not his or her words alone, but by the example of an everyday life lived faithfully and one that reflects obedience, commitment, and service. An old adage says, “Actions speak louder than words;” and certainly leaders and teachers can find great wisdom in these words.

“Don't say things. What you are stands over you the while,
and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

In other words, please do not talk so much about spiritual commitment, just live a committed life for the Lord. But commitment can never be fully lived out without sacrifice. The Lord makes it clear that dedicated service to Him will, at times, supersede our commitment to our very life, our family, and our friendships, positions, and ambitions (Luke 14:26-27). These are some of the “hard sayings” of Jesus, but it is only the totally committed life that He can use, ordain, and anoint for His purpose and glory. If you desire to be a follower of Jesus, it can only be as a completely committed one.

You may experience more than your share of trials and persecutions as a result of your dedication to Him. Personal commitment and loyalty to the Lord may require you to endure very difficult and demanding criticism or ridicule.

“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”
John 15:20, NIV

The Apostle Paul reinforced this reality when he warned, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12, KJV). Within a committed life, there is a considerable amount of “denying one’s self, taking up crosses, endangering one’s life, and continually following after Jesus” (Luke 9:23-24, KJV). Also, remember, Jesus does not ever demand what He is unwilling to give. This portrait of a follower’s committed and dedicated life is a direct reflection of the complete self-denial, sacrifice, selflessness, and death on the cross of the Lord Jesus. He never avoided or dodged harsh criticism, ridicule, or the real threat of losing His life – all these were met head-on with determination and total commitment. He modeled commitment for all of us, not with a perfect life, but a perfect response to the realities of that life – He was born to die.

Let us never forget, each of His disciples suffered greatly for their complete faith, loyalty, and commitment to His kingdom and to His word. None would escape (nor desired to escape) suffering, persecution, rejection, and an ultimately early death. Our example is Jesus Christ, but our commitment must be our own. Can we, like the Apostle Paul, say, “For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21, KJV).

Commitment in the Bible School Setting

What is Commitment?

Definition: *Commitment is an enthusiastic dedication to your Bible school as an organization, to its vision and beliefs; and a ready willingness to get involved*

Research in the educational setting has shown that administrators, faculty, staff, and students who are committed to the Bible school and its efforts truly believe its goals and mission is critically important. As a result, they show up faithfully, they follow through with duties and responsibilities, and they do those things consistently. A great deal of effective momentum for the Bible school's vision is generated when more and more people are committed to the organization and that vision.



Why is Mobilizing & Sustaining Commitment Important?

The backbone of a Bible school is its people **and** their commitment to its goals and objectives. Commitment from all of its people (administrators, faculty, staff, and students) is what gives the Bible school its strength and ability to accomplish those goals and objectives.

Here are 4 major reasons why it is so important:

- As more people become genuinely dedicated and committed to the Bible school, their ability to effectively influence others increases as well. Commitment, coupled with enthusiasm, is highly contagious. Everyone should want to join in the excitement and the resulting success. Even those who are difficult to excite will start paying attention when the whole staff begins to carry out their duties and responsibilities with an increased level of determination, commitment, and joy.
- Truly dedicated and committed Bible school staff are very hard to discourage. They just do not give up or throw their hands in the air. They simply set the example for others who may not be as confident or experienced in dealing with difficulties and challenges. Strong staff commitment will become a reality when everyone joins together and consistently pursues the school's vision and purpose. Good things come to those who are importunate (persistent and stubbornly determined (See Luke 11:8).
- People will cooperate at a much higher level when they agree to share one common goal in fulfilling the Bible school vision. When this happens, there are great side effects: increased camaraderie, trust, and genuine caring. These side effects will strengthen the Bible school even more and sustain success for the long-term.

If leaders ignore commitment as an essential attribute of their faculty, staff, and students, commitment can still grow, but at a much slower pace than had the Bible school leaders actively fostered personal and group commitment within the organization. While commitment is an abstract concept that cannot be literally seen, it is a very real force within the Bible school, and one that you can greatly improve if you are willing to focus your attention on dramatically increasing its influence on both staff and students alike.

How to Sustain Bible School Commitment

Examine Yourself, then Others

How do you grow and sustain personal and group commitment? How do you change individual attitudes about an invisible and abstract concept, like commitment? And how can you improve on the level of commitment you now have?

First, I believe it is important to focus on yourself. What is your personal level of commitment to the Bible school? Are you truly committed, and why? It is time to do some “soul searching” and answer these difficult questions.

Question #1 – What is important to you as a leader?

Here are some possible answers to this question, but you need to take your time with the answers to ensure you understand your priorities and what you emphasize.

- The goals of the Bible school?
- Your vision for what the Bible school could be?
- The people with whom you work?
- The amount of time you have invested in the Bible school?
- Your personal role at the Bible school?
- What you have learned from the people at the Bible school?
- The satisfaction and sense of purpose you get from doing significant work?

Question #2 – What is important to those you lead?

It is true that people commit to an organization because they gain something they value as a result of their involvement. Many people recognize that when they are invited to “get involved,” the leader is not only asking for their help, but also providing an opportunity to do things like the following:

- Work on an issue that is important to them
- Benefit the community
- Meet and spend time with like-minded people
- Expand their skills
- Be team member

- Learn how to lead
- Rise to a challenge
- Meet high standards
- Accomplish something significant

Foremost as a leader, recognize you are not imposing upon people when you invite them to commit to the Bible school. Instead, you are providing them with an opportunity to receive something of value; an opportunity they highly value.

Leadership Actions to Grow Bible School Commitment

1 – Welcome people into your Bible School

Often, the only thing people really need to commit to the Bible school is to feel genuinely welcomed and appreciated. If we do not feel welcome (in spite of your honest attempts to do so), they will soon leave. As the first leader to welcome a newcomer, you should personally welcome every person who shows an interest in becoming a part of the Bible school staff or student body. Your example should then be repeated at every level of the Bible school from the President's desk to the janitorial support staff.

Be friendly and ask them questions about their spouses, children, and extended families; get to know them personally and store away one or two facts about that person for future reference. By doing so, you model, by your welcoming behavior, the exact personal commitment you would like for them to have or develop. They, in turn, have a wonderful sense of being wanted and needed, and the warm welcome encourages them to commit quickly. Your welcome also establishes the building blocks for a developing relationship with them, and provides you with an opportunity to function as a Bible school leader and to assure their commitment in the near future.

It is important for leaders to teach everyone on the Bible school staff how to properly and warmly welcome potential staff or student body members. Make such behavior an essential part of policy and practice so that it becomes a part of the school's culture. In doing so, it will second nature for all the Bible school staff and students to actively welcome any new person on campus. For special events or meetings, appoint a Welcoming Committee and select members from staff and student members with the most outgoing personalities. You can also establish a Cohort Program that will assign new people to another established staff or student member. Before long, the act of eagerly and enthusiastically welcoming new people to the Bible school will be embedded in the school's culture.

Example: Bro. Kofi stops by the Dean of Students office

Bro. Kofi decides to drop by the Dean of Students office to say hello. Bro. Danso, the Dean, takes 45 minutes getting acquainted with Bro. Kofi and listens closely as Bro. Kofi explains how he came to the Lord and became a minister. Bro. Kofi tells Bro. Danso that because he has been so welcomed to

the Bible school he would like to get involved in some way. Bro. Danso excitedly answers that the Bible school is in need of a student mentor, and asks if Bro. Kofi would be interested. After speaking with his pastor, Bro. Kofi quickly becomes an active student mentor. Years later, Bro. Kofi becomes the Dean of Students at the Bible school, and sits at the very chair and desk from which Bro. Danso had welcomed him so many years earlier.

2 – Be Clear about the Bible school Mission, Principles, and Goals

When people are being asked to commit to a Bible school, leaders should be open and clear about the school’s mission, vision, its guiding principles, and its goals. This will ensure the potential staff or student member is fully informed and can determine if they share similar or common principles and goals. It is also very important that every member of the school’s staff or student body can easily and quickly state these principles and goals. At every opportunity to speak with staff and student body members, leaders should never fail to repeat and emphasize the school’s vision, guiding principles, and goals. Also, remember to explain why these values are held and how they guide the actions and behavior of administrators, faculty, staff, and students alike. Repetition will accomplish two commitment goals: 1) staff and students will memorize the principles and goals, and 2) those school values will be adopted by every person associated with the school.

As referenced in the previous example, the Bible school was starting a Student Mentoring program. It will be important for leaders to talk about the program in detail, explain why it is being established, and list the benefits of the program for the school and its people.

3 – Model Commitment Yourself

As a leader or teacher, your personal example is the most effective tool you have to model (daily demonstrate) sincere and consistent commitment to the Bible school. Every day, your personal testimony in action will show you believe, support, and live by the vision, guiding principles, and goals of the Bible school. If your heart as well as your hands is in the vision and purpose of the Bible school, it will be demonstrated in your positive attitudes and actions. Leading is not only telling and talking, it is doing and walking. Everyone will observe how you act and how you react. They will see a committed leader who loves and serves the Bible school, and they will follow your lead.

When people realize they can always count on you, your presence, and your support, then it is likely that you will be able to count on them and their support. As was said earlier, commitment is contagious; and if you stay late to finish a task, others, when called upon, will be willing to do so, too. However, if you “burn yourself out” on too many late hours and are always unhappy or in ill temper, be assured those same people are watching and will be reluctant to eagerly follow your example.

Perhaps the best advice in this area of commitment is found in the Scriptures. It is important to be balanced and under control. By all means, do not make commitment appear as an impossible burden.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”
Philippians 4:5, KJV)

4 – Give People Work to do

People want to contribute to the overall effort of an organization. It provides them with a feeling of belonging and a sense of worth to the Bible school. Encourage any interest in becoming involved in the school's efforts; and do not wait too long before asking them to help with a project. Increased contributions encourage increased commitment. Find out what their skills and talents are and match them with the needs of the school. That should not be too difficult because there are always more projects than people to do them. Also, attempt to team up new people with experienced and committed people. This will increase the likelihood of success and build relationships throughout the school.

5 – Pick out the Right Level of Challenge for Your People

Individuals often fall into their comfort zone. They are comfortable doing what they have always done. But in order to grow, they also need to be challenged with new duties or different projects. Initially, you will want to carefully match their abilities and skills with work that they can accomplish successfully. This will build their confidence and provide the positive feedback to encourage them to stay with the school.

When you have had time to evaluate their capabilities and temperament, you can slowly give the new challenges with which to deal. Being challenged lets the person know they are doing well and are ready for more complex work. But, some will require a little push to leave their comfort zone behind and try new skills and projects they had not considered possible. For many, change is always bad; so sit down and discuss with them potential new tasks in which they might be interested. You may be very surprised by their answers. But such conversations will let them know you care about them and their development, and that you sincerely believe in them.

6 – Build a Bible School Culture in which Administrators, Faculty, Staff, and Students Appreciate and Respect Each Other

Respect and appreciation are very basic human needs. People want to be respected and appreciated in order to stay dedicated and committed to the organization. This is a very simple truth, but is often overlooked in the busy, day-to-day school activities. Building a Bible school culture of respect and appreciation will directly influence the level of commitment of its people. Doing the following can support your overall commitment efforts:

- Model appreciation and respect: Take the time to think about the people with whom you are working and openly appreciate them and their work. Although some people may be surprised when you do it, everyone likes to be appreciated. Treat everyone the same way you would have others treat you – with respect and good humor. You may be the leader, but that doesn't mean you're more important as a human being than the person who answers the phone or helps with a mailing.
- Teach leaders to notice what is being done well: Most leaders will see what is being done wrong or below standards; rather than noticing what is being done well. For example, you can open meetings by having each person talk about what they have done well since the last time you met. Having team leaders show appreciation to each other for mutual support or help can be a standard way of closing meetings.
- Maintain mutual respect even in heated discussions or differences in opinion: Conflicts can be very valuable learning experiences. But to be sure everyone learns, everyone should speak respectfully and constructively. Personal attacks are very damaging to staff morale and unity. Keep discussions limited to the issues, not individual personalities. Be quick to introduce an outside person, as a mediator, when personal conflicts arise.

7 – Listen, Listen, Listen

If you want young people, old people, immigrants, wealthy people, poor people, people of diverse races, or anyone else to be excited about your Bible school and committed to supporting your efforts, then LISTEN TO THEM. If you are older, ask a teenager or young person to share their thoughts on a particular topic with you: 1) what foods should we serve for the midday and evening meals? or 2) what topics would you like discussed in the Apostolic Doctrine course? or 3) what should be our Bible school grading scale?

The teenage or young person may be in shock because adults so rarely care about what they think. However, if you can get through the shyness or distrust, they may be happy to tell you about your meals or doctrinal topics or grading scales. But be warned: it will require you to listen to them. You will have gained nothing if you do not listen carefully.

8 – Support Leadership

The truth is everyone can be a leader in some manner or context. You should stop placing people in categories of leader, follower, etc. If you are to sustain a healthy level of commitment in your faculty, staff, and student ranks, you should see every person as a potential leader, and train them aggressively to be able to lead. When people believe they are a leader in their group, they will automatically take ownership of that group. This feeling of ownership will cause them to commit to the group, and make sure the group works well together and performs well. And that is exactly what you, as a leader, wants.

Traditional (or formal) leaders always have positions that come with titles, like – president, dean, director, manager, etc. These leaders make all the policy, procedures, operations, and personnel decision. But I suggest that you expand your definition of leadership. Let’s look at this example. The special event organizer can be viewed as a key leader; however, when a conflict arises over the planning of the special event, the person who informally takes care and resolves the conflict quickly is also a leader. Even the person who gets everyone in the room laughing, when the speaker’s energy level and influence nears zero, is performing as an effective leader. These informal leaders are as important as the formal ones in unique and special circumstances. We need every leader we have to be fully committed to cause and efforts of the Bible school. And it does not matter if they are formal or informal leaders.

Formal leaders should assist people in recognizing their leadership talents, and encouraging them to exercise that leadership more often. They may not be as polished as you would like, but invite them to speak at a staff meeting or to chair a committee meeting. Most of these informal leaders are not interested in positions or titles, but they should be taken seriously and respected for their unique leadership talent. Everyone is a contributor; everyone has a valuable point of view. A great leader makes use of all the talent in the organization.

9 – Celebrate!

Look for any excuse to celebrate! The Bible school’s anniversary, somebody’s birthday, an award ceremony, or a time of sharing after a particularly difficult schedule – any of these are worthy of celebration. Any reason that brings the Bible school staff and student body together to express their ideas and opinions, to recognize the good work of so many, or just relax and enjoy one another’s company...all of that builds great team cohesiveness, a sense of community, and an ever-increasing commitment. Celebrate!

A Few Extra Tips on Commitment

Food for thought in building Bible school commitment from administrators, faculty, staff, and students...

Remember that...

- ✓ Commitment will grow steadily, but slowly. Be patient; it will come if you cultivate it.
- ✓ Appreciate whatever level of commitment an individual makes. People vary greatly in their level of commitment, and that is okay. Some people will have more time and interest in the Bible school’s vision and goals, and a greater understanding of the value of commitment than others.

- ✓ You can always invite and encourage people to do and participate more. If they do, that is great. If they do not, appreciate them for what they can do.
- ✓ Do not make people feel guilty so they will commit more. It generally does not get the long-term results you want. People need to feel that their contribution matters, even if it is small. If they feel that they are a disappointment to their leader, they may not stick around.
- ✓ People are often yearning for meaning in their lives. When you ask people to commit to an effort, cause, or organization, you are offering them something of high value.

"Commitment requires hard work in the heat of the day; it requires faithful exertion in behalf of chosen purposes and the enhancement of chosen values."

John Gardner

Discussing Leadership & Commitment

- A. Discuss the commitment implications for leaders and teachers in the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).
- B. Discuss the meaning of *ekklesia*, and how it impacts ministerial calling and spiritual commitment.
- C. Explain how committed leaders and teachers have been called to complete and total commitment to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- D. Discuss the 4 major reasons why sustaining commitment in the Bible school setting is important.
- E. List at least 8 personal behaviors that will increase commitment in an organization.
- F. When evaluating the level of commitment in the Bible school setting, discuss with whom the assessment should begin.
- G. Discuss 5 leadership actions to increase Bible school commitment.
- H. Should Bible school leaders emphasize or de-emphasize the school's mission, principles, and goals. Why?
- I. Discuss positive leader actions that will build a Bible school culture of mutual respect and appreciation.
- J. Examine how formal leaders might integrate informal leaders into the commitment effort.

Conclusion

In Pettinger's (2012) biography of Dr. David Livingstone, the following anecdote was included:

When Dr. David Livingstone, the pioneer missionary, was working in Africa, a group of friends wrote: 'We would like to send other men to you. Have you found a good road into your area yet?' According to a member of his family, Dr. Livingstone sent this message in reply: 'If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. *I want men who will come if there is no road at all.*'

I believe there are valuable insights that can be drawn from Dr. Livingstone's response to his friends in England who wanted to send help to him IF there was a good road into his area in Africa. Obviously, Dr. Livingstone had exceptionally high standards when it came to the qualities and attributes of those supporting his explorations and missionary efforts there. Dr. Livingstone wanted men who would be totally committed to his vision and long-term objectives, and they would have to be completely unconcerned about their own personal safety or the traveling conditions in Africa or any other selfish consideration that would interfere with their dedication to Dr. Livingstone's vision and mission.

While Dr. Livingstone may not have been polite in his response, he was absolutely accurate in describing the unselfish and unqualified commitment that would be necessary to successfully accomplish what would become a very difficult and dangerous calling. In a New Testament context, it was vitally important that, when the Lord Jesus called his disciples, they responded immediately, dropping everything they were doing to follow after Him. Notice, there were no questions about how long the ministry would last, if there was any salary for their support, or if they could notify family and friends of this new and very sudden adventure. These disciples were, in fact, fully committed to the Lord Jesus, and though they often pestered Him with many questions, they were faithful, loyal, and dedicated until His arrest.

In the Bible school educational setting, it is equally important that from administrators to faculty to staff to the student body, all are completely and unwaveringly committed to the school's vision, mission, guiding principles, and long-term goals. It is difficult for the Lord to use a vessel if it is continually out of reach or absent all together. Leaders and teachers are especially challenged to instill in themselves and others a spirit of loving and serving the Lord Jesus' kingdom by preparing its students for such a lifetime of spiritual commitment.

If one were to suppose that there is some "middle ground" upon which to stand in this discussion of spiritual commitment, he or she would be making a grave error in judgment. In Matthew, Jesus reiterated and reinforced the meaning and intended effect of the Old Testament first and great commandment. Clearly, we are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. The word, all, is definitive and

comprehensive. There should be no room in our hearts, souls, or minds for any other love. And love implies dedicated service to God and committed to His word and purpose.

In these challenging days, please do not allow your commitment, love or service to the Lord Jesus to waver or hesitate or cease. We certainly cannot afford to “grow weary in well doing” at a season when He requires our service and dedication to the utmost. Recommit yourself to the cause of the kingdom of God, re-establish your consecration, duty, and loyalty by doing your very best...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. The Apostle Paul described this total commitment process in this manner:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Romans 12: 1-2

Leadership Training: Commitment

Lesson in Review

Name: _____

Nation: _____ Date: _____

1. Define, in your own words, spiritual commitment. Explain what that means to you and your relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. If you are part of the *ekklesia*, the church, then what level of commitment is required of you to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus? Have you reached that level of commitment in your own spiritual life?

3. Did Jesus model complete commitment to the cause of God? And if so, how was that commitment demonstrated?

4. What are 4 reasons that sustaining and growing commitment in the Bible school setting is important?

5. List 4 personal behaviors that will increase Bible school commitment and 4 personal behaviors that will decrease Bible school commitment.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. Is it important for Bible school leaders to be open and clear about the school's vision, its guiding principles, and its goals and objectives? Why or why not?

7. In your Bible school experience, how would you evaluate the current level of commitment of administrators, faculty, staff, and students? You can evaluate together or separately.

8. What are 3 things a Bible school leader can do to build a culture of mutual respect and appreciation among the administrators, faculty, staff, and students?

9. The Bible school setting has both formal and informal leaders. As a leader, how would you develop the informal leaders?

10. It is obviously very important to have a fully committed Bible school staff and student body. But, in your opinion, what are the indications or signs that the level of commitment in the school is falling?

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