

Do You Want to be Committed?

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I often ask couples who come to my office for counseling, "What is the most important ingredient in a marriage?" What is the single element that is most necessary to ensure that a couple will stay together forever after they say, "I do"?

To Your Spouse

As you would expect, I get many answers. The most common answer is that they must love each other. Another common answer is that security is the prime factor. I agree that these answers and the others I have heard are important and meaningful, but are any of them the key ingredient? Many marriage unions have been formed for centuries in many countries for reasons other than love. Historically, arranged marriages have been more common than marriages for love, the ideal in America. Marriages arranged for reasons other than ideal love seem to have been more successful than those based on love. Don't misunderstand me. Love, true love, is very important, but a fundamental element is more important for stable marriages.

Commitment. Simple commitment to your spouse is the single most important ingredient to an enduring marriage.

Love is an ambiguous term in English which is used for many concepts. A man can love a woman by which he might mean that he wants her, that is, he feels passion or lust for her. He might mean that he feels affection and kinship for her. He may only like her. He could mean that he has chosen to do only the best for her even to the point of sacrifice. A woman can love chocolate which could mean that she is addicted to the sweet taste of a particular dessert. A person can love art by which he means he is spellbound by the intricacies of color and shade which communicate ideas that a thousand words can't. Love is a word that is overused and used inexactly.

When considering the love between a man and a woman getting married, most people mean an ill-defined emotion or feeling with several facets. This love is not adequate to bind a couple together in fidelity for life. The weakness in basing a marriage on this feeling of love is precisely that this love is a feeling. Feelings are fickle. In one day you can feel anger, happiness, despair, and joy toward another person. Similarly your feeling of love toward your spouse varies. You don't always feel the same level of love toward your spouse, and in fact, you don't always feel love toward your spouse. What happens on a day when you aren't feeling love toward your spouse? Do you dissolve the marriage?

Let me illustrate. I am in the Air Force Reserves. I am often gone to other parts of the country or world for two weeks to two months. I remember one deployment to Denmark. Many blue eyed, very attractive, blonde women live there who are not sexually inhibited. After I had been there a couple of weeks, they became even more attractive to me. When I was around one of those women, at that moment my strong feelings were directed toward her, not my wife who was several thousand miles away. If my marriage were based on feelings, I would have had a couple of short term marriages in Denmark. I am committed to my wife. The commitment carried me when fickle feelings failed me. One of the prime reasons for the high divorce rate in America is that people often base their marriages on their feeling of love when they are courting. That feeling inevitably changes, so their marriage status changes correspondingly.

Commitment is the cement that will keep marriages together when feelings falter and problems pound away at a couple causing them to feel despair and want to give up. True love involves commitment. True love is primarily a matter of the mind, not of emotions. You choose the person to whom you want to express your emotions of love. Choice is always a matter of the mind. To whom do you choose to be committed?

To Your Community

You are a police employee. Are you committed to the police department or to your community? Let me state my personal position now. I am committed to my community, not the police department. I am loyal to the police department so long as it serves my community. I want my family, friends, and neighbors to live lives of peace in an atmosphere of justice. I want people to enjoy all the rights our constitution guarantees. My community should enjoy freedom that allows growth and progress toward a better life for all.

The police department is the single most important agency guaranteeing rights and freedoms to the community. Police employees must never forget how important they are as individuals to individual citizens. When someone in DECOR types a report, the victim may never see justice if the report is incomplete or inaccurate. When a police officer is handling a call, his actions determine how much a person enjoys his rights and freedoms at that moment, not a court convened two years later. All police employees must remember to whom they are committed.

Too often police employees in history have felt alienated from their communities and committed to their departments. A common result is that the department forgets its rightful place in the community. Officers accept "clean graft" and tolerate brutality. Instead of protecting citizens, they victimize citizens. It happened here many years ago, and it can happen again.

Always remember that you should be committed to your community and the high ideals embodied in your oath of office. Every time you deal with a citizen, remember that your actions determine if that person enjoys the freedom of America or suffers the tyranny of Iraq. A person who has his freedom protected is free indeed, and a person who is tyrannized by an American police officer is just as subjugated as an Iraqi in fear of Saddam Hussein. Freedom is freedom, and tyranny is tyranny, no matter what country or century you are in.

To Your God

The basic commitment that will keep your life on course and stable is your commitment to God through Jesus Christ. When you seem to lose control in the midst of life's crushing blows or lose sight of what is important while being dazzled with successes, your commitment to God will see you through. Because of your commitment to Him, His commitment to you will ensure that His full resources will care for you.

We police employees live in the gray, murky world between the abstract ideals of justice and practical application. We know that we need to protect the innocent, prosecute the guilty, and guarantee the rights of all. No code of criminal procedure or book of regulations will ever be able to capture every nuance and variation of real-life situations. Police officers often lose sight of what is truly important and make compromises that affect them and the citizens they

serve for years. In this gray, opaque world of application, commitment to God's eternal truth can guide you more surely than a lighthouse guides a ship around rocks in a storm.

God plainly told us that we should not bear false witness. There is no room for falsified police reports that lead to false testimony in a courtroom. Such clear guidance and commitment to clear guidance keeps an employee from making major mistakes. God has provided many other insights into eternal truths. Don't ignore, forsake, or think lightly of them. Keep your commitment.

You Are Committed

It doesn't matter if you want to be committed to something or someone. The truth is, you are committed. The real question is to whom and to what do you choose to be committed. You will either be committed to enduring and worthwhile people and goals or to inadequate people and goals. Your commitment will lead to growth and be important, or it will lead to degeneration and be meaningless.

If you are committed primarily to pleasure and yourself, then your goal and object are inadequate. If you are committed to God, your fellow man, and improving yourself, then you will have an enduring relationship with your world.