

CHAPTER 7

FUNDAMENTAL #5: I'VE MADE A FORMAL COMMITMENT. NOW WHAT?



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

Individual or Group Experience

FOCAL VERSE

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

WISE WORDS

"Commitment is an act, not a word."

Jean-Paul Sartre

Leader:

The heart of chapter seven is discipleship! We will discuss critical steps towards cultivating a lifestyle of walking in close fellowship with Christ.

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After paragraph two, read the following:

- This is a great place to talk about the difference between a **relationship** with Christ and **fellowship** with Christ. Once we commit our lives to Christ, God holds us securely in His hand and no one can snatch us out (John 10:28). We are *forever related* to God (John 1:12). No force is strong enough to take us out of His hand because God is the most powerful force in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). **So in relationship, God is the one who holds on to us from the moment of salvation (John 5:24). In fellowship, we hold on to God.** When we sin, we separate ourselves from God, and our fellowship is broken (Isaiah 59:2). Our *fellowship* with God is not as secure as our relationship with God because *we* are responsible for our fellowship, and we often sin.
- **Illustration:** Picture God with His two arms outstretched. The right arm of God represents our relationship with God, and the left arm of God represents our fellowship with God. In His right hand we see ourselves resting peacefully and securely because we know that nothing can snatch us out of His hand. **Our relationship is secure because He is holding onto us. In fellowship** we see His left hand outstretched, and we see ourselves as a child holding on to the finger of God. When we sin, we let go and our fellowship is broken. Again, our *fellowship* with God is not as secure as our *relationship* with God because we are responsible for our fellowship and oftentimes, we let go.

(Taken from "One on One with God," by Jerry and Marilyn Fine).

But first...

OPTIONAL: Assign accountability partners this week. Encourage the partners to pray for one another and hold each other accountable to the Christian principles being taught in God's Word and in this study.

HIGHLIGHTED REFERENCES

"I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." **John 10:28**

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." **John 1:12**

"All authority in heaven and on earth have been given to me."
Matthew 28:18

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned. He has crossed over from death to life." **John 5:24**

Your iniquities have separated you from your God; Isaiah 59:2

After reading the following sentence in paragraph two, pause and discuss "eternal life."

"Committing your life to Jesus Christ is just the beginning of a newly paved road that leads to eternal life in heaven that actually begins now."

John 5:24 says we have been promised **everlasting life** with Christ, but one must consider *when* this life begins. **Does eternal life begin at the point of death or decision (the day you decided to follow Christ)?**



- Most Christians likely believe that eternal life begins once you die, but Jesus offers us a different perspective that suggests we can have eternal life *now*! This is an incredibly important concept that perhaps you haven't considered, nor completely comprehend, so let's take a moment to talk about eternal life in more detail.



QUESTION: What is eternal life and how is it possible for eternal life to begin now?

- Jesus defined eternal life for us: "***And this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.***" (John 17:3). Additionally, John 5:24 says, "***I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.***"
- The word, "know," in the Greek language not only means an intellectual knowledge, but also an *intimate involvement*. So when Jesus said eternal life was *knowing God*, He was speaking of having an *intimate* and *personal* relationship with God *now*.
- When we make a decision to follow Christ, not only do we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but we also receive everlasting life. However, when we choose to have intimate fellowship with Christ on an ongoing basis, it is then that we begin to experience *abundant life* and the benefits of eternal life. It's not "pie in the sky by-and-by," but rather "steak on your plate while you wait."



- **LEADER:** Read paragraph three, then emphasize the following:
 - Whether you're a brand new believer or you committed your life to Christ years ago, the "next steps" presented in this chapter are relevant for anyone pursuing a relationship with Christ.
 - Developing an intimate relationship with God is a lifelong process that will never end. During this process, God works in our hearts, molding us more and more into the likeness of Christ.

- **Read through the five "next steps" together. Stop after each step and allow the group to discuss the text or ask questions.**
- **LEADER:** As you work through these steps, feel free to add your own insights. Be prepared to answer any questions your class members might have regarding the Bible, prayer, baptism, or differences in religious denominations.

1. READ THE BIBLE

- **OPTIONAL GROUP CHALLENGE:** Provide a writing journal to each member of the group. Challenge group members to be intentional about reading God's word 3-5 times over the next week. Encourage them to write down anything that was meaningful or stood out to them.
- **SAY:** *"In other areas of our lives, when we hear something really important, we usually write it down so we won't forget. Doesn't it make sense that when God speaks to you, you should write it down so you don't forget?"* (During the next session, ask group members if anyone would be willing to share one of their notes and why it was meaningful to them. If the group seems hesitant, begin by sharing one of your own notes. Check-in with your group during the week to provide encouragement and accountability).

2. TALK TO GOD

- **SUGGESTED GROUP CHALLENGE:** As you talk about thanksgiving, pause to have each person write down at least one thing they are thankful for. When everyone is finished, ask your group if they would be willing to share.
- After each person shares, suggest a short, group prayer. Allow each person to pray a one-sentence prayer of thanksgiving. This practice will help individuals learn to pray aloud.

3. GET BAPTIZED

- **LEADER:** If there is someone in your group who has not been baptized, but expresses an interest, encourage them to talk to a parent, church leader, or a mentor.

4. BUILD FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS

- What other "markers" of a solid Christian friendship can you think of?
- Do you have a friend who meets these markers? Are you a friend who meets these markers?

5. ATTEND A BIBLE-BELIEVING CHURCH

- ***Biblical truth MUST be preached.*** **WARNING:** Beware of the prosperity gospel. (See below).
- Many people are deceived by what's called the "prosperity gospel" or the "Word of Faith Movement." It is a false teaching that in essence says, *"If I am a faithful Christian, God promises to bless me with great health, wealth, and prosperity."* However, God never promised a life of riches, comfort, and abundant prosperity.



- The prosperity gospel teaches that *at the cross, Jesus died for our sins, sorrows, illnesses, and poverty*. This leads Christians to believe we should never struggle financially or be stricken with illness. The sickness Jesus took to the cross was our "sin sickness." **It was for our sins that he died, not our comfort.** Jesus was very clear: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
- Yes, we will have trouble, no matter how faithful we are, but we have the hope of knowing that our *"light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all"* (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Application:

- Over the next week, challenge yourself or your group to spend time in God's Word and ponder His truth. This isn't about checking a box on your to-do list, but learning to engage with the Lord on a consistent basis.

Leader:

- Chapter seven is the last of five fundamentals presented in *No Other Gods*. It's a critical chapter for both new and seasoned Christians. Take time this week to do a self-check or check-in on your group and see how they're doing.
- Commit to praying for your group members as they learn to balance their spiritual life with all the other demands placed on them, including school, sports, work, relationships, and their home life.

