



November 1998

Why is preparing to meet with God like a dive from the high board, taking off in a jetliner, signing a major financial document, or quitting your job in order to go into business? Because in each case there's a commitment, a moment when there's no turning back, a transfer of trust from one circumstance to another. Up to this point I could have changed my mind. Now, I'm committed!

Each of these examples carries some potential for enjoyment and excitement, possibility and danger. Each can also become casual and commonplace, routine and rote. If we allow our job to become boring, we're probably not doing it justice. If our commitment to the Lord is routine, we're missing something vital and important.

Why all the talk about commitment, anyway? Is control a big issue with God? Well, yes it is. You see, He tends to feel He should be treated like God.

Oh yes, I've seen that before. Domineering bosses, demanding husbands, scheming wives, spoiled-rotten-kids and political nonentities, all making their play to be treated like God. But with God it's different. He really is God. This brings us to the crux of the issue-

Who's in charge?

With God that's a very big issue. He seems more concerned about who owns the church than whether it's been painted within the last year. (Or is that *whitewashed*?) A yielded heart means so much more to him than any amount of financial or numeric growth, although He delights in these too.

As we try to plan and posture ourselves to serve God and meet needs, one thing we should ask ourselves,

Who owns TORCH?

Wait a minute, is this a silly question, or what? Not really. By any admission, a group such as this belongs both to the Lord and the local church that sponsors it. But for all practical purposes it belongs to the people who attend it, and use it, and make decisions and shape it. So again, it is as if the Lord would say to us,

Who's in charge?

When The Lord sees decisions made carefully, prayerfully, and with a lot of thought concerning what He's speaking to the church these days I'm sure it pleases him. I'm sure He's especially pleased when those whom He's blessed take time and effort to remember those whom He'd like to bless and try to reach out to them.

On the other hand, when the blessed people curl up within some little cocoon and establish their own program, He could hardly feel in charge. A page from the silk making industry comes to mind here, for it is at this point the cocoon lands in hot water, the worm goes straight to heaven, and the thread that makes up the cocoon unwinds at about 90 miles an hour onto a bobbin so it can bless other people. Have any of us been in hot water lately?

One thing the Lord is both demanding and demonstrating today is His Lordship. He is Lord of the earth, Lord of our nation, Lord of His House, Lord of each family, and Lord of each heart. He is not above taking any of those institutions and shaking them into order. It kind of establishes just who God is.

There is nothing vindictive or mean spirited in God's shaking. Rather, it's like the practiced swoosh of a miner with a gold pan. He knows just where the treasure should be and he knows how to separate it out. The gravel in the pan may be a bit breathless but the hand that holds it is sure and steady.

If all this suggests anything it would be that God can be trusted not only to take good care of our lives but also to get that control away from our worst enemy—our own fallen nature. A man left to himself is programmed to self-destruct, so it really is a life or death issue.

Have we been to the cross lately? Have we knelt at the altar and just taken time to make sure all of

our hopes, dreams, and plans were safely in God's hands, and under His control? Or have we been too busy 'serving God'?

Is that what we call a reality check? I think so. Not only that, there's nothing like that first moment on the high dive, taking a few trial bounces and knowing that the next one could send me flying like a bird through the air. I savor them highly as I climb back down the ladder knowing that I'm not ready for another belly flop from that distance! After all, once my foot leaves the board, I'm committed.

Activities

Well, first and foremost, there's the retreat on the 6-8th. It looks like total lodging will be just over \$40, and we'll need to feed ourselves on top of that. The consensus seems to be people want to eat out most of the time, so kind of plan for that. We'll probably have breakfast *at home* and eat out from there. Those still interested in coming should contact E- for registration and more details.

Since that takes care of the first weekend, Promise Keepers is being moved to the 13th. Any man needing a bit of fellowship with other men should just come on along, and get fed too!

There are lots of prayer needs this season, so don't forget the monthly meetings at the Prayer Center. We pray for the TORCH group, for scheduled events, for leaders and plans, and for any of the group members having special trouble. If you come we'll pray for some of your needs, and you pray from some other folks' needs too.

Group meeting this month will be at S-'s house. We are meeting the day after Thanksgiving, so bring some dinner leftovers and we'll call it an easy potluck. (Just be careful with the turkey-remember, keep it hot or cold, never lukewarm!) S- is still in the process of getting her roof rebuilt, and doesn't know where she'll be with it by that time, but she's adventurous and so are we.

One prayer need that comes to mind concerns E-. She's had a few lumps and bumps lately vocationally, and needs to find a good steady job within her field of training. Let's pray for a special blessing here, for E- has contributed a lot

to this group, and she's even had to consider taking a job out of the Portland area, which would be a hard move for both her and us.

Looks like that's about it. Let's remember to keep one another lifted up in prayer.

Have a great month!

GAH

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