

## Making a Commitment to Christian Maturity

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Rich Nathan  
January 16 & 17, 2016  
Risky Commitments  
Ephesians 4:17-32

I've recently been rereading an old book by Paul Johnson, titled *Intellectuals*. Despite its daunting title, what Johnson does in the book is explore the personal lives of philosophers and writers that university students are forced to study. The book is about the writers and philosophers that purport to give us advice and counsel about the way we should live. But what Johnson doesn't do is look at these famous people's philosophies. Rather he examines the writers and philosophers actual lives.

The book's not about what these people taught, but rather how they lived. Not how they advertised themselves to the public, but what they actually did in private. So he writes about the personal lives of people like: Rousseau, the 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher; Karl Marx, the father of communism; and famous authors like Norman Mailer and Ernest Hemingway. What you discover when you read Johnson's book is that all these folks who were studied and quoted and whose thoughts are held up as brilliant were, in fact, some of the most awful, mean, violent people that you could imagine.

The men are almost uniformly misogynist. In other words, they are almost uniformly cruel to women, despite many of their women's liberation philosophies. They were horrible to their wives and almost to a man, they were wife beaters. They were notoriously untruthful to their marriage vows, mean-spirited, often drunks.

To pick just one of the characters in Johnson's book, and this man certainly wasn't the worst of the lot that Johnson writes about, we could look at the personal life of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's writings were extremely popular on college campuses in the 1960's and 70's. Sartre was one of the fathers of the philosophy called Existentialism, which according to Sartre, defines a person by their actions. Sartre said that what gives your life meaning is not God or your connection to a church or connection to family. What gives your life meaning is your choice to act.

Sartre, like most of the people in this book, talked endlessly about women's liberation and the equality of the sexes. In fact, the woman that he lived with for 15 years, Simone de Beauvoir, was one of the founders of modern feminism and was herself a writer and philosopher. Yet despite all of Sartre's talk about feminism, Sartre treated Simone horribly. He was notoriously promiscuous; he slept with many of his students, many of his friends' wives. He was lewd and crude and drunk and violent.

Simone herself was fired from her teaching position for seducing underage female students. When you think about it, it's really quite extraordinary. Two great modern philosophers, both committed to women's liberation and the equality of the sexes, and both of whom wrote about the misuse of power, regularly slept with underage girls.

In just one more example, very recently, the headlines have reported the shocking behavior of Bill Cosby. He had the number one television show in America during the 1980's and was viewed by most Americans as a model father and husband. He went around the country for years lecturing young people, especially African-American young men, about behaving properly, not abusing illegal drugs, avoiding single parenting, marrying the woman you're having sex with. Now over 50 women have come forward alleging that Bill Cosby drugged them and had sex with them when they were unable to give consent.

My point is not to pour over the sordid details of individual's lives, but rather to ask this simple question today: How worthwhile is a philosophy if it doesn't lead its adherents to live better lives?

I would suggest that a decent way to measure the value of any philosophy, or for that matter, any religion is to ask: how do the followers of that philosophy or religion actually live? When they adopt the philosophy or religion, do they become better people? Would you want your children to imitate them? Are these people that are telling the rest of us how to live, are they actually themselves examples and models for the rest of us to follow?

Vineyard Columbus has a mission statement that says:

Our mission is to develop a community of disciples who experience God, love one another and partner with Christ to heal the world.

Last week, I started a series titled "Risky Commitments". I mentioned that we live in a time when people are afraid to commit to anything – a job, a marriage, even a gym membership. Today, we're going to look at this word "disciple" from our mission statement as I continue this series in a talk that I've titled, "Making a Commitment to Christian Maturity".

Let's Pray.

Ephesians 4:1 says,

Ephesians 4:1 (NIV)

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

The apostle Paul has spent three chapters laying out what you might call the Christian philosophy of life.

And now in Chapter 4, verse 1, the Apostle Paul says this,  
Ephesians 4:1 (NIV)

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

The New American Standard Bible puts it even more plainly when it says,

Ephesians 4:1 (NASB)

- 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

The Apostle Paul's point, starting with Ephesians 4, is that the Christian philosophy of life is completely different than the philosophies of life found in Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals* or what we see modeled in the lives of folks like Jean-Paul Sartre or Bill Cosby.

#### I. A different kind of philosophy

In other words, the Christian philosophy of life is not just talk or abstract ideas, the Christian philosophy of life is meant to be actually lived. Christianity is meant to be put into practice. The way the Apostle Paul structures the book of Ephesians is to move from Christian belief in Chapters 1-3 to Christian behavior in Chapter 4-6, from Christian principles in Chapters 1-3 to Christian practices in Chapters 4-6, from creed to conduct, from doctrine to deed, from the indicative (what God has done for us) to the imperative (what we should therefore do).

If you want to outline Ephesians 4 which is all about Christian behavior, Christian conduct, Christian practice, we might say that verses 1-16

The practice of Christian community

Verses 17-32

The practice of Christian maturity

It's with the second section, the practice of Christian maturity that we're going to concern ourselves with today.

Let's look at verses 17-24

Ephesians 4:17–24 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

The theme running through this section on Christian maturity is that the actual life and practice of a Christian ought to be radically different than the actual life and practices of a non-Christian. Paul is saying, "Non-Christians live like that, but you Christians, you live like this."

Paul is saying that Christian maturity is characterized by:

## II. A Different Life

The apostle Paul is drawing an absolute contrast between the Christian and the non-Christian, between having Christ and not having Christ. And the loss of this contrast, the loss of the distinctiveness of the Christian life is, perhaps, the single greatest impediment to the advance of the gospel in the world today. Contrast, of course, is not that Christians are weird in their behavior or eccentric or simply annoying. A lot of Christians believe that they are persecuted for the cause of Christ. The truth is, that some Christians are just annoying, judgmental, self-righteous, and smug. That's not the kind of contrast that the Apostle Paul was describing. He is describing a contrast of darkness and light, a contrast of having a hard heart and having a soft heart, of having mist over your mind and having the mist blown away. Of being separated from the life of God and then having the life of God.

And you know, of the many, many issues facing the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the most important, if not the most important, is the loss of Christian distinctiveness. We need to reemphasize the absolute contrast between not being a Christian and being a Christian if there is to be any hope for our friends or family coming to Christ. It is a lie

that people are most effectively reached when you are just like them – when you act like them and curse with them and gossip and are cynical like them. It is a lie that people are most effectively reached when the contrast between darkness and light is minimized and the church loses its tension with the world.

A non-Christian expects a Christian to be different and is often disappointed and will speak his disapproval that the Christian is no different. Why should I get involved in what you are offering? It didn't produce a radical change in your life. It is just another empty philosophy to be added alongside of the philosophy of Sartre or Bill Cosby or the sexual abusers in the church and in the world.

I'll tell you what put a hook in my life. All the things that Paul described as life without Christ as being, that's who I was. My conscience was dead, callused. I didn't feel shame over what I was doing. My understanding was darkened. I was separated from the life of Christ. What put a hook in me was seeing the absolute contrast between the life of Marlene, who was sharing Christ with me, and my own life. The fact that she did not give ground to my sexual advances. I have often said to her, "Marlene, I think that if you had given ground, I think that if you had dated me, I think if you didn't draw such a clear line, I wouldn't be in Christ or I would have had to wait for someone else to share the gospel with me who was living a distinctive life."

Non-Christians should feel a contrast when they are around you and you should feel that you don't quite fit into a non-Christian environment. It is difference, not sameness, which draws people to Christ.

Christians should not be an echo of the opinions or the behaviors of those around us. Christians are not just politically conservative, but with a religious veneer or politically liberal with a religious veneer. We're different. We can't be fit into any of the contemporary political boxes, handed to us from the world of partisan politics. You shouldn't be able to reliably predict where a Christian is going to end up politically. We're different because our opinions are shaped by a voice that we hear from eternity.

We're listening to someone who is above and who is beyond this present moment. We should be radically different. One of the differences between a Christian and a non-Christian shows up in the way we walk.

### III. A Different Walk

In verse 1, the Apostle Paul writes,

Ephesians 4:1 (NIV)

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

This NIV translation of Paul's original statement, which was written in Greek, misses something very distinctive here in Paul's writing. Verse one literally reads,

Ephesians 4:1 (NASB)

- 1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Likewise, in verse 17, Paul writes this

Ephesians 4:17 (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Again, literally, in the original Greek, the verb that Paul uses was not the verb live, rather it's the verb walk. So, verse 17 ought to read:

Ephesians 4:17 (NASB)

**17** So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

You know there are two places in the Bible where life is most often understood as a walk. The first is the book of Proverbs and the second are the letters of the Apostle Paul. On 32 different occasions, Paul describes life as a walk.

Why was the Apostle Paul so fond of using walking as a metaphor for life? One reason certainly is because people can be identified by the way they walk. Have you ever watched a child and said, "You know, he walks just like his father." You can back up that person's walk from a block away. It's uncanny.

Some people have very distinctive walks. John Wayne had that cowboy swagger. Michael Jackson had his moonwalk. But according to scientists, one day it may be possible to recognize anyone by the way they walk. Several universities have been working with the Defense Department to develop walk or gait recognition as a biometric tool. People's gaits are as unique as their voice patterns or fingerprints. The Defense Department is studying this with advanced surveillance systems that can identify and

track people by the way they walk. They hope to one day to use this equipment in sensitive areas like airports or around government buildings.

Writing 2000 years ago, the Apostle Paul says that Christians ought to be identified by a particular way that they walk. Christians have a signature pattern to their walk. Non-Christians have a signature pattern, an identifiable pattern, to the way they walk. So, Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1 and 17.

Ephesians 4:1 (NASB)

- 1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

Ephesians 4:17 (NASB)

- 17** So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,

There's a second reason that Paul describes life as a walk because he wants us to understand that the whole business of Christian maturity is a slow, steady progress in the same direction. Why does the Apostle Paul frequently describe life as a walk along a path or a road? He doesn't say life is like a long jump, life is like a sprint or a pole vault. Because we don't leap into Christian maturity, we become mature Christians step-by-step. I've mentioned to you before:

Folks are always coming up to pastors and saying, "Pastor, listen, I'm sinking in debt. Do you have an answer for me to pay off all my bills? I want to catapult into a solution for my debt problems. I want to pole vault into prosperity." Paul says that's not the way life works. There are these steady, boring, mundane, repeated actions – left foot, right foot – little things you do every day to change your purchasing habits; tear up your credit cards, spend a little less, earn a little more.

"Pastor, my marriage is falling apart. My wife said she wants to leave. Do you have a quick answer for this – maybe a counseling session? Do you have a sermon I can play in the car?" the Apostle Paul in Chapter 5 says that the way to have a great marriage is step-by-step. In other words, Monday you get up and you are kind to your wife or husband in the morning and evening. And Tuesday you get up and you are kind to your spouse in the morning and in the evening. And Wednesday you get up and you are kind to your spouse in the morning and in the evening.

We don't leap into maturity or mental health. Jumping exhausts you. You can't keep it up. Walking, one foot in front of the other. Becoming a mature person is the result of

little choices you make day after day. What you become whether you are a mature person or an immature person is typically not the result of great epiphany, some great spiritual revelation that you have at a conference. That is not the way you become a mature person. It is not the dramatic events. It is by putting into your life a set of simple, step by step practices. I'm going to get up tomorrow and spend time with God. And then I'm going to get up on Tuesday and spend time with God. And I'm going to get up on Wednesday and spend time with God.

Or regarding losing weight - I'm going to choose to pass on dessert on Monday. I'm going to choose to pass on dessert on Tuesday and Wednesday. And I'm going to begin walking on a treadmill step by step-by-step.

Maturity, like a good marriage, like financial health, like a healthy body cannot be acquired quickly.

Let me drill in here with a few practices that are absolutely essential for becoming a mature Christian.

#### IV. Different Practices

The first is a daily time with God.

##### A. The Practice of Daily Time with God

If you don't regularly read your Bible at home during the week, I want you to open up your bulletin. There is a Bible study guide. Why not start using that study guide tomorrow. We're still at the beginning of the year, if you want to pick up the first couple of weeks somewhere along the way, great. But start tomorrow.

Psychologists have discovered the way we form new habits.

The habit loop graphic

There are three elements in forming a habit: a cue, which is the trigger, a routine, and then a reward.

For example, Marlene and I put our dog in a cage when we leave the house. We don't want him chewing on the furniture or eating our shoes. We used to chase the dog around the house in order to catch him to drag him into his cage. He'd run under the bed and we'd be on the floor trying to drag him out while he was biting our hands. This simple three step formation of a habit actually worked to get him in his cage. Marlene got cookies as a reward. Now, I whistle for the dog, he trots to his cage and in his cage we give him a cookie.



Psychologists would tell us that we're not that different than dogs. You want to start a Bible reading habit and you don't have it? You need a cue. What the first thing you do in the morning after you use the bathroom? Maybe you make coffee or you brush your teeth. Put your Bible right next to the first thing that you do in the morning. When you get up, it's right there next to the coffee pot or your toothbrush. Then think of what you're going to give yourself as a reward. Maybe you used to read the newspaper every morning, do that after you read the Bible – that will be your reward. Or maybe you eat your favorite cereal.

It's the same thing if you want to start running. Put your running shoes right by your bed at night so they are the first thing you see in the morning. Then, after you get done running, reward yourself. If you like chocolate, give yourself a little chocolate kiss. Don't eat two pounds of chocolate.

There's a second practice that we need to become mature as Christians and that is,

#### B. The Practice of Fellowship

If you want to start going to the gym in the New Year, find a gym buddy who will go with you and commit to meet them every Monday, Wednesday and Friday and 7:30am or 5:30pm or whatever it is. It's the support of others that Weight Watchers, 50 years ago, discovered was the secret in helping people lose weight. Once a week, folks gathered for a meeting where they could cheer one another on in this long, slow walk of losing weight.

It's the support of others that Martin Luther King, Jr. – whose birthday we're celebrating this Monday – tapped into 60 years ago in leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Buses didn't desegregate in Alabama because of one heroic person or because individuals are particularly noble or brave on their own. People became noble and brave through the mutual support of others, especially others in their church.

It was the support of others that Alcoholics Anonymous tapped into 75 years ago in assisting people to break the habit of alcohol abuse. Almost no one stops drinking or drug addiction or really any addiction on their own – we need fellowship, we need other people. And it's the support of others that Jesus said was the secret to the Christian life 2,000 years ago when he said in Matthew 18:20

Matthew 18:20 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Christian maturity happens not by individuals trying harder on their own to grow, but by people supporting each other to adopt step-by-step habits of maturity.

I announced last weekend that we will be kicking off a discipleship campaign next month called the Good Life - between Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday - and we have several elements that will help you mature in your walk with Jesus like I'm talking about today – reading the Bible, praying, being in a small group community.

We've created a 6-week Good Life small group study with videos from me each week to help you go deeper into the Good Life Jesus offers.

In addition, there is a Good Life workbook with additional ways that you can grow in your spiritual life. We've also included 5 daily personal devotions for each week of the campaign. These devotions will help you to personally engage with the Bible as well as encourage in ways that you can grow in your prayer life.

Now, the only way you can get these resources is by being in a small group that is doing the Good Life series. This is because we believe that being in a small group is essential to growing spiritually. You won't be able to find these resources online or buy the workbook in the book store.

All of our small groups will be doing the Good Life study during the campaign, so if you already lead a small group, you don't need to sign up anywhere. We will be giving you more details on when you can pick up your materials in the coming weeks!

Now, if you don't already lead a small group here is what I want you to do – whether you are in a group or not – I want you to consider HOST-ing a small group during the Good Life campaign. There is no training required or special skills – all you need is to find 2 or 3 others to join you. You heard this in the video announcements, but I want to say it again. Hosting is an acronym for:

H.O.S.T.

- Have a heart for people
- Open up your home
- Serve a snack
- Turn on a video

Here's what I want you to do. If you want to HOST a new group during the Good Life campaign, you can go right now to [vineyardcolumbus.org](http://vineyardcolumbus.org), click on the Good Life logo, and sign up to HOST a small group during the Good Life campaign! I heard there were some kinks in the sign-up but we have them worked out. Or immediately after every

service at all of our campuses, you can sign up to be a HOST in the lobby. Just look for people wearing the Good Life logo.

By the way, we have a class coming up next week to help you develop some of these practices. It's our Maturity 201 class. In fact, we have five classes coming up next week. If you're not yet a member of the church, I ask you to make a commitment to come to Membership 101

Membership 101

If you are a member of the church, then go to Maturity 201.

Or if you desire to experience more of God in your life, we're offering next weekend Meeting God 301.

If you want to find your place here in Vineyard Columbus in serving, discover what God has made you for, go to Ministry 401.

If you want to reach out to your family or friends, to neighbors with the gospel more effectively, where here or perhaps internationally, go to Mission 501.

Christians live differently than the rest of the world because, according to the Apostle Paul, we have

#### V. A Different Starting Point

When we consider Christian maturity, we always need to begin with the perspective that Christian behavior is not outside in, but inside out. In other words, Christian behavior is the result of the activity of God working in the human heart, not the other way around. We all know of people who are trying to behave like Christians, but who are not, in fact, Christians. All of Paul's injunctions here regarding what a Christian should act like are based on the assumption that a person is, indeed, a Christian. That there has been a change worked in their heart, so that the life of God is in the soul of that person.

Then Paul tells us that we must no longer live as the Gentiles do in verse 17. He goes on to say that all the behavioral changes that God expects of you are the result of us coming to know Christ. Verse 20: You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely, you have heard of him and were taught of him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

Now, we never expect to get fruit from a Christmas tree. If a tree is not alive, if a tree is not planted in the ground, if there are not roots, then there won't be any fruit. Yet, very often, I have seen people right from the get-go make the mistake of insisting on

Christian behavior from people who are not Christians. They are Christmas trees. They aren't alive. They aren't rooted in Christ. They don't know Christ.

This is the great problem of many Christian schools. The Christian school insists upon Christian behavior from students who are not regenerate, who do not have God's life within them. Oh, they might have come from Christian families, they might be raised in the church, they might know how to talk the talk, but there is no sign of spiritual life within that person. A dear friend of mine, who has been a principal at a Christian school for many years, said to me only half-jokingly, "The job of Christian schools is to take kids who are by nature wolves, and make them act like sheep. We teach kids how to say 'baaaa.'"

And we parents do the same thing with our kids. We expect Christian behavior from a child who is not a Christian. And Christians do the same thing with the larger society. We are trying to get the larger society through political action, through voting and legislation, to act in accordance with a Christian standard in sexual ethics or in some other realm of life.

Friends, we are getting the cart before the horse, or we are getting the horse in the cart, or the cart on top of the horse. We've got to get these things in the right order. Christian behavior is always inside out. A change has to be worked inside of us before it will come out.

The fundamental assumption of all that Paul is saying in verses 25-32 is that he is talking to Christians, people who have the life of God in their souls, people who have the power of God, who have come into the light and were bought with a price - the price of Christ's own blood, whose lives are not their own, who understand that to live not for themselves, but for someone who died for them and rose again.

In verses 25-32, Paul writes this,

Ephesians 4:25–32 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold.

<sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander,

along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

And Paul is running through all the ways that Christianity offers a different understanding of life.

## VI. A Different Understanding of Life

We have a different starting point for our lives, God has to work inside of us, we need to be converted. We need to be changed. Then, Paul works this life out in detail. He's telling us that

### A. Christian maturity is not just abstract but is practical

That life that is in you must work itself out into the practical details of life – your speech, your anger, your work habits. Christianity is different than the philosophy found in Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals*. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if your Christian faith does not work itself out into the practical details and minutia of your life, then it is not real Christian faith no matter what you say. There are lots of people who are religious, who go to church and who can espouse a lot of Christian doctrine, quote the Bible; they know where and when to say "praise the Lord." A lot of folks who know how to talk the talk, but whose faith never works itself down to the practical details of daily life.

The faith found in the Bible is not just an abstract philosophy. It is a very practical, down to earth, call to live in a certain fashion. One of the reasons I love the Bible is because it is so down to earth and so practical. It shows us the way to live, not just the way to think or to talk, but also the way to live. It speaks to the relationship of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of employers and employees, of singles and the church, of citizens to the government, of the society to the environment and to the creation around us. It even speaks about the relationship of people to their pets. This is a very practical book.

The Bible everywhere condemns a kind of spirituality that simply remains in the abstract realm and doesn't work itself out into the practical dealings of men and women with each other and with the world around them. Just read the prophets. How often in the prophets does God say, "Get your religion always from me. Stop with all the spiritual talk and your worship and your dancing and sacrificing. Cut out the hyper-spirituality and bring your faith down to earth." It is not just the non-Christian world that most hates hypocrisy. God hates religion that is not worked out in the practical details of our lives.

The Apostle Paul in verses 25-32 as well as in Chapters 5-6, tells us that if your

Christian faith doesn't work itself out in the practical details of life, if it doesn't make you more forgiving, if it doesn't make you less angry, if it doesn't make you more generous, if it doesn't make you more humble, if it doesn't make you a better employee and a better spouse and a more respectful child, then you really need to check whether the faith you claim is real at all.

It is the practical effect of a philosophy that is always the test. Isn't this the reason that many of us shudder when we hear of a nation falling under the sway of Muslim fundamentalists? Why does this bother us so much? It is because no matter what the stated philosophy is we've seen the fruit of Islamic fundamentalism. Look at the lives of women in Afghanistan right now. Women are beaten because someone saw their ankle exposed. People are being tortured for not fasting during Ramadan.

Jesus said that you can know a tree by its fruit. The same test has to be applied to Christians, is your Christianity making you a better person? Is your Christianity affecting the practical details of your life? What you spend your money on, how you use your credit card.

Does your Christianity affect how you think about poor people? Or refugees fleeing from wars?

Does your Christianity affect what you post on Facebook? Christianity is meant to be different than the philosophies found in Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals*. Christianity which results from a personal daily, step-by-step relationship with Jesus Christ is designed to change the way we live.

I've mentioned time with God, I've mentioned fellowship but one other practice that characterizes the slow step-by-step walk of a Christian is one of the areas where the rubber meets the road in the Christian life is how we handle money. Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, once said,

"There are three conversions necessary for every human being: the conversion of the mind, the conversion of the heart, the conversion of the wallet."

- Martin Luther

How should we give? Remember the Christian life is, in the Apostle Paul's words, a walk - left foot, right foot, left foot. Wherever you are in your giving to the cause of Christ, take the next step.

If you have Never Given...BEGIN to give  
If you give Sporadically...give REGULARLY  
If you give Regularly...begin to TITHE  
If you Tithe...to give EXTRAVAGANTLY

Wherever you're at, friend, take the next step and then don't stop there. Take the next step and the next step – left foot, right foot, left foot – as a follower of Christ. That's how you grow.

How do you give?

Listen, here at Vineyard Columbus you can give in different ways. You can give by placing a check or cash in the offering bags each weekend. If you give cash and you want a deduction, just put it in an envelope and write your name and contact information on the envelope.

You can support the church by contacting your bank and having the bank deduct a certain amount from your account every month.

But the best way to give is *to give online*.

1. Go to [www.vineyardcolumbus.org](http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org)
2. Click on the "Give" button
3. Follow the directions and give online!

The reason we would like to have many of you begin to give online is that it is much less costly for us to process your giving. We don't have to handle checks, so your money goes further. And it creates stability for our church budget. Our income doesn't go up and down with the seasons, vacations, or snow storms. Would you do that? Would you sign up for giving online?

And if you signed up online last year and got a raise – will you go back and revise your regular giving upward to reflect your income.

We've added one more way for you to give here at Vineyard and that is "Text to Give". Simply text the amount that you'd like to give to 614-333-0330.

And if you're a first time user, you'll be prompted to visit a secure site where you can enter your debit card information. When you've submitted your donation you'll receive a confirmation text that shows you that you were successful. How easy is that?

If you're serious about forming giving habits in the New Year, there's nothing easier than giving online or text to give.

## Making a Commitment to Christian Maturity

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Rich Nathan

January 16 & 17, 2016

Risky Commitments

Ephesians 4:17-32

- I. A Different kind of philosophy
- II. A Different life
- III. A Different walk
- IV. Different Practices
  - A. The Practice of Daily Time with God
  - B. The Practice of Fellowship
- V. A Different Starting Point
- VI. A Different Understanding of Life
  - A. Christian maturity is not just abstract but is practical
  - B. Christian maturity is not just compartmentalized but is total
  - C. Christian maturity is not just moral but is relational