

com mit ment

Series



Note: At the end of each study, you will see the following box:

Faith • Hope • Love

This is to remind us that as we pray for each other to grow in spiritual maturity, we should pray that we will grow in these ways:

- **Faith**: That we will learn to trust God in every situation and in all things.
- **Hope**: That we will grow to set our hearts on the treasure that we have in Jesus.
- **Love**: That we will grow in self-giving love - that puts others before ourselves.

COMMITMENT SERIES 2021

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Commitment

/kə'mɪtm(ə)nt/ the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.

People are committed to lots of things in life today. Being ‘overloaded’ with various commitments is not an uncommon problem for us as we face the busyness of life and work and relationships. Depending on our stage of life, we dedicate ourselves to different things like study, family, to our work or growing our business. We’re committed to our lifestyle, our relationships, our homes, our holidays, our fitness and much more! These commitments pull us in many different directions, stretching us, draining us and challenging us as we seek to live God-honouring lives.

But what commitments does God call us to as Christians? What does it look like for us to be dedicated to God’s cause in the world? How might my life be challenged if I were to consider God’s priorities over and above those mentioned in the paragraph above? What does the Bible say about what Christians are to commit themselves to?

In this short series we’ll be looking at four of the commitments that God calls us to as his people. I hope and pray that, as we look to re-gather together in person in the coming months, this series might help reset our hearts, re-shape our culture, our commitment and our convictions as we dedicate our lives first and foremost to God’s purposes in the world for us and in community together as St Faith’s Church.

God bless,
Ben Molyneux

#1 - Committed to glorifying God

Life has once again been 'abnormal' in 2021 due to COVID. How do you think this has impacted people's priorities in life? How has it impacted your priorities? What has it made you realise about your priorities?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-6

1. In 1 Peter 4:7 Peter declares that the 'end of all things is near'. Discuss together the wider context of the situation that Peter's first readers find themselves in. (cf 1 Pet 1:1-2, 6)
2. How do some of the people interpret God's action in their difficult times? (cf. 2 Pet 3:3-5)
3. Peter explains that the difficulties they're experiencing are so that the 'genuineness of their faith' may result in God's praise, glory and honour (1 Pet 1:7). How might your difficulties result in God's glory? How has another Christian's faith in hardship encouraged you?

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11

4. Considering 'the end of all things is near,' go through these verses and discuss together the list of actions that Peter gives, what each means and what it looks like in practice. Use the table below to help your discussion.

Action	What does it mean?	Practical example
Verse 7		
Verse 8		
Verse 9		
Verse 10		
Verse 11		

5. How do the actions outlined in the table above help us to be committed to glorifying God in our lives?

- Discuss together some of the implications of getting these wrong.

⇒ *Spend time praying for one another as you seek to put some of these actions into practice in your lives in the week ahead.*

⇒ *What opportunities do you have to share the 'genuineness of your faith' with others who don't yet believe, so that God may glorified? Think through what you are finding hard? How does your faith in Jesus help you?*

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#2 - Committed to bearing fruit

What goals did you have in 2021 that were impacted by COVID? How did you need to adapt?

What do you think 'Christian goals' look like? How were these impacted by COVID?

Read John 15:1-17

1. Brainstorm together the 'vine metaphor' together – what stands out to you? What is helpful? What questions does it raise?
2. What does Jesus teach us about God's goals for his people? What does this look like? (cf. v2,12-13,16)
3. *No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine (v4).* Share together what you think it means to 'remain in Jesus'. How does the vine metaphor help?
4. What is the result of a life that produces fruit? (cf. v8) Think of some examples where you have seen evidence of this. How did those people bring glory to God and show themselves to be his disciples?
5. Jesus speaks of God as the *gardener* who prunes fruit bearing branches so that they might be even more fruitful (v2). Discuss God's role in this by his Spirit. Think also about the role of God's people in this. Share some examples together.

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul writes to teach them that because of the gospel, they are no longer slaves to the law, but are saved by faith in Christ alone and so they have freedom in Christ.

Read Galatians 5:13-26

6. The Apostle Paul contrasts a life which indulges the flesh versus a life lived by the Spirit.

- Discuss together Paul's critique of a life which indulges the flesh. Paul calls the acts of the flesh 'obvious' (v19-21). Discuss in light of Paul's warning at the end of verse 21.

- Contrast that with Paul's description of a life lived by the Spirit (v13, 16, 18, 22-26).

7. Paul's contrast between flesh and Spirit is stark and clear and yet that is not always our experience in the Christian life. Why do you think that is and how do verses 24-25 speak into this?

Spend some time reflecting and sharing how you could grow in your commitment to bearing fruit for God in your life.

⇒ *As one who belongs to Christ Jesus, are there areas of your life that reflect Paul's description of a life indulging the flesh more than a life lived by the Spirit. Spend time repenting and confessing them.*

⇒ *Pick two aspects of the fruit of the Spirit that you will commit to pray about and work at. Write down practical things that you will do to work in this. Share them together.*

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#3 – Committed to gospel-centred generosity

What is the most generous thing someone has ever done for you? How did it make you feel? What did it teach you – about yourself and those who were generous towards you?

Do you see generous financial partnership with your local church as something a Christian should be committed to? What shapes your views one way or another?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-12

1. How does Paul describe the brothers and sisters in Macedonia to his readers? In your own words how would you describe their generosity?
2. What is Paul's purpose in telling the Corinthians this? (cf. v7-8).
3. What lies behind Paul's statements that Jesus was rich and then became poor?
4. What do you think it might look like to 'excel in the grace of giving' (v7)? How does this challenge prevailing culture?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

5. What principles of giving does Paul set out here?
6. How can someone who is not a particularly *cheerful giver* become one?

7. What truth is Paul wanting to convey with his farming metaphor? How have you found this to be true in your own experience?

8. What are some of the results of generous giving which Paul sets out here? (cf. v12-15)

⇒ *From what we have looked at in this study, how does it challenge your commitment to gospel-centred generosity?*

⇒ *How have you seen gospel-centred generosity like this result in 'many expressions of thanks to God' in a local church setting like St Faith's?*

Additional Note:

In the passages we have referred to in this study, the Apostle Paul was facing a tricky problem which many Christian leaders face. The Corinthians were falling behind in their giving (though it could have been other areas of Christian commitment) and those with spiritual leadership were responsible for encouraging a greater response from the believers.

So let me broach this issue with those who are members of our community at St Faith's. Firstly, for those who are partnering with us financially, thank you for your commitment in this way and your desire to support the gospel work of your church. Your example is an encouragement and blessing.

Secondly, let me urge you to excel in the ongoing grace of your giving, continuing in it and all the more as you are able. As this study goes to print we are behind in where we budgeted our giving would be. If this were to continue, we would need to look at reducing the days worked by our ministry team. Instead, we want to drive forward in our mission and vision – not shrinking back or decreasing, but increasing our impact as we continue to preach the gospel all the more, seeing people trust in Jesus for the first time. Please prayerfully consider what it looks like for you to excel in the grace of giving.

Thirdly, Christian generosity should never be driven by guilt or other legalistic requirement – not *under compulsion*, as the Apostle Paul puts it. Rather, God's grace to us and his generosity in Christ is our motive – that we may reflect something of God's generous heart in our giving.

Having said these things, I encourage you to give generously to the work of your local church, St Faith's Narrabeen. Visit www.stfaiths.church/give to find out more about how you can partner with us financially, or contact our church office (9971 1048 or office@stfaiths.org.au).

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#4 – Committed to building up God’s Church

How has COVID impacted the way that the church has operated over the last couple of years? Do you think that this has impacted its growth?

What do you think have been the pros and cons of having a church livestream? How has it impacted people’s view of church – positive or negative?

Discuss together what you think might be some of the issues for church that might come as we return from COVID restrictions?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

1. How does the Apostle Paul describe the church?
2. How are God’s people called to relate to the body in verses 11-16?
 - V11-13
 - V14-16
3. Who is doing the building work (v12) and what is the goal of this (v12 & 15-16)? How might this challenge the views of some people? Discuss together.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

4. What does Paul want us to think about the different roles in the body? How does this challenge people’s view of church?
5. What do these interactions within the body look like in our church context at St Faith’s:

- Relationally:

- Materially:

- Spiritually:

⇒ *Coming back to the introduction questions, how might Paul's teaching challenge us in our commitment to growing in and building up God's church?*

⇒ *How does Paul's metaphor of the body resonate with you? How does it challenge your frustrations with church or people at church?*

⇒ *Think of two or three practical ways in which you will be committed to building up God's church moving forward at St Faith's? Share together and pray for one another.*

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