



Winter 2004/2005 *Go! Online* Bible Study

## Extreme Commitment

### Materials:

- *Go! Online* Download Video: *Xtreme Team*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *Go! Online* Group Activity for “Extreme Commitment”
- Copies of Winter 2004/2005 *Go!* magazine for each student (unless they’ve already been distributed)

### Group Activity:

As a way of jumping into this study, hand a copy of the Group Activity to each of your students. Ask them to take a couple of minutes to circle True or False for each of the questions.

After everyone has completed the activity, explain the following in your own words.

**You might have noticed that the answer to every one of the questions is “False.” Today, we’re going to talk about extreme commitment to Christ. Real Christianity is far more than a casual relationship with God that we try out. It’s not supposed to be something that we try to make work *for us*. The church isn’t meant to be just another club or organization we belong to for friendship or to feel better about ourselves.**

We’ve heard a lot over the last few years about extreme sports, extreme makeovers, even extreme pizza. It’s kind of played out now, but the idea of something extreme is that it’s not halfhearted; it’s not safe; it’s not easy. It’s a costly commitment of our time, energy or safety for something big.

The first guy to do a flip (on purpose) on a motorcycle didn’t do it casually. He worked at it and committed himself to give his all to make it happen. When someone does one of those extreme house makeovers on television, they don’t just start knocking down walls and finish when they get around to it. They focus all their energies on it for as long as they’ve got.

Today, we’re going to see that our walk with Christ was never supposed to be safe, easy or casual. God wants believers to make an extreme commitment of their whole lives to him. Let’s walk through those True/False questions to find out what the Bible says about each statement.



## **1. Being a Christian is a great way to get ahead in life; I can serve God and still try to make all my own dreams come true.**

Ask someone to read Romans 12:1 out loud, then ask, “What do you think it means to be a ‘living sacrifice’? Allow for some brief discussion.

To Jewish readers of the day, this would have been a very vivid picture. They had all seen animal sacrifices killed on the altar. They’d seen the blood, smelled the burning flesh, and heard the cries of the animals before they died. None of those sacrifices volunteered for the job.

So this idea—that because of all God has done for us, we would willingly give up our whole lives to Him (and keep giving ourselves to Him)—would have been radical. Clearly, the point of Christianity isn’t to make my own dreams come true if I’m sacrificing myself to God. The point is to volunteer to participate in making His plans come true.

## **2. God wants us to give 75 percent of our lives to Him.**

Now ask someone to read Matthew 16:24-25 to the group.

These sound like harsh words to our ears, but Jesus made it perfectly clear that He wasn’t looking for any casual followers. He wasn’t looking for anyone who would ask, “What’s the minimum I have to do to walk on your path?”

In fact, Jesus said His followers had to lose their lives before they even started after Him. Being His disciple costs everything—100 percent of our lives.

## **3. God is worthy of some of our praise.**

This one isn’t even hard, is it? We could look at hundreds of verses, but let’s read Psalm 103:1: “My soul, praise the LORD, and all that is within me, praise His holy name” (HCSB).

David knew that God was worth praising with everything he had in him. All his emotion. All his commitment. All his understanding.



How much of ourselves do we use to praise God for his creation, power, love and forgiveness? Not only in organized worship in church, but in our personal conversation with God, how much of ourselves do we give to worshipping Him for who He is?

If you want to increase the level of your personal praise and worship, you might spend some time reading through the Psalms to see how David did it. He’s a great example of all-or-nothing worship.

#### **4. It's enough for a Christian to pray once a day.**

This is false, but don't get me wrong. Praying once a day is better than not praying at all. But remember, God is asking you for an extreme commitment. He wants a no-limits relationship with you.

That's why Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray constantly" (HCSB). The idea is that our conversation with the Creator doesn't ever need to stop. It doesn't need to be limited to a few minutes of requests and some mumbled thanks before meals. We can have a running dialogue with Him in our heads all day long about everything we face.

What kinds of things can we talk to him about? Ask your group for contributions. Their answers should include giving praise, thanking Him for good things, asking for help for people they come into contact with, asking for wisdom when problems come up, praying for unbelievers, etc.

#### **5. The best way to grow in our relationship with God is to spend just five minutes every day reading the Bible.**

Again, five minutes of devotion in the morning is better than nothing. I'm not saying anyone should stop that if that's all you think you can do. But the Bible sets a much harder challenge for people who really want to give God everything.

Ask someone to read Psalm 119:11, then ask, "Why did David hide God's Word in his heart? How does memorizing God's Word keep you from sin?"

Listen to what God said to Joshua just before he took over as the leader of Israel: "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8, NIV).

Now we have three pieces. First, we read the Bible. Then David talked about memorizing it so he could access the Word from his own heart and mind. Now God tells Joshua to meditate on it day and night. To meditate means to look at something repeatedly from every angle.

God's standard for committed believers, then, is to know God's Word inside out, to soak their minds in it, to make understanding it part of every day of every week of every year of their lives.



## **6. God really wants us to be a third less sinful than unbelievers.**

Obviously, this statement is a joke. God's expectation is way more extreme than just reducing the sin in our lives. He wants us to kill it. Dead. Listen to Colossians 3:5: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (NIV).

The list goes on from there, but we get the idea. God doesn't want us to have a casual attitude toward our sin. He wants us to attack it, to kill it, to get rid of it. In Psalm 119:104, David said he hated every wrong path. And Paul told believers to hate anything evil (Romans 12:9).

For Christians, sin is the enemy.

## **7. God wants us to depend on Him to meet some of our needs and for us to take care of other stuff on our own.**

This one almost sounds right. It's like that nonexistent Bible verse people love to quote, "God helps those who help themselves."

But what is faith? Isn't it trusting God to lead us, guide us, meet our needs, take care of us? And how much does God want us to trust Him? Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths" (HCSB).

Obviously, extreme faith in God doesn't mean we don't do anything. We still take action that makes sense. But we're 100 percent dependent on Him for the results, for taking care of us, for accomplishing His will in the world.

## **8. Serving God is one of several good ways to spend our lives.**

Not even close. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 when He said to Peter, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Luke 4:8, HCSB).

It doesn't get much more extreme than "only." Ask your group, "Who or what are some other things we're tempted to serve besides God?"

## **9. The church's job is to reach half the world with the Good News about Jesus.**

Again with the obvious. What did Jesus say to his followers right before He disappeared into the sky after His resurrection? Ask someone to read Acts 1:8.

God tasked us with reaching the whole world with the truth about Jesus. His will is for everyone to hear that message. How are we contributing to that mission? Are we extreme enough in focusing on this aspect of our relationship with God?



## **10. Good missionaries are people looking to make a full-time income for part-time work instead of getting a real job.**

Hmmm. Not so much. Paul, one of the first missionaries, lived one of the hardest, most sacrificial lives ever. [Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-26 to the group.]

### **Video:**

Working as a missionary may be the most extreme commitment anyone could make for God in this life. Let's meet a real person who has made that extreme commitment. His name is Jeremy Taliaferro, and he's a member of the Xtreme Team, a group of young, single missionaries who take the truth about Jesus to the far corners of the world. Listen to how extreme this guy is in his commitment to living for Jesus.

Play the video for your group. It's about 3 minutes long.

### **Conclusion:**

This is your chance to challenge your group to get more extreme in their commitment to God and following Jesus. It's also an opportunity to ask them to think about whether God is calling them to the extreme commitment of missions work.

Say something like the following in your own words:

**Have you been playing things too safe in your relationship with God? Have you been too casual about praising Him, talking to Him, studying His Word or dealing with your sin? Maybe it's time for you to start taking some risks. What would it cost you to live an extreme commitment to God? Time? Energy? Popularity? Money? Your personal dreams? Is God worth the cost?**

**Let's take a minute to pray together silently and ask God to help us see how He wants us to live in ways that are less safe and more extreme in our commitment to Him.**

Wait for a few minutes while they pray silently, then close that prayer by asking out loud for God to show you the same things in your own life.

Now say something like, "Maybe God is asking some of you to think about making the extreme commitment of getting involved in missions for one trip, for a summer, for a year or two, or for the long-term. Are you open to living your life that far out on the edge?"

Close your time together in a final prayer, asking God to help all of you to not be afraid to answer God's call to take His truth to the world.

As they leave, make sure each of your students has a copy of the Winter 2004/2005 issue of *Go!* magazine. Let them know they can meet another member of the IBM Xtreme Team in an article called “*Go!* Extreme” on page 22.



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