

Service

Our service to God begins with our practice of self control. Solomon wrote, *"like a city whose walls are breached is a person who lacks self control."* Pr 25:28

Self control protects us from our impulses and temptations of the world which consume the time and resources we should invest in loving God.

Self control is forgoing instant gratification for a higher cause by asking three helpful questions.

*What are the long term consequences?
Is there a higher good for which I could use
this resource?*

Will this action reflect my love of God?

Witness

This road of discipleship is not easy. We live in a culture which offers many diverse roads to riches and affirmation for self-focus.

Jesus requires much, *"Don't look for shortcuts to God. The way to life, to God, is vigorous and requires total attention. Don't be impressed with charisma; be people of character. Who you are, what you do with your time and money, is the main thing, not what you say."* Mt 7:13f

Our witness to God is demonstrated by our commitments and actions.

Commitment is the little choices we make every day that determine who we are.



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Our Commitment As United Methodists

As United Methodists there are specific commitments we share. Among these is our pledge to support the church with:

- our prayers
- our presence
- our gifts
- our service
- our witness

These five areas of commitment are the way we organize our lives to transform good intentions into the joyful result of lives changed.

Prayer

Our focus on belief must be turned into actions. Jesus is direct in preparing and sending disciples in ministry.

Ask, it will be given; seek, you will find; knock, the door will be opened. Mt 7:7-8

Asking, seeking, knocking require action. We are expected to act on our faith.

At the same time, imperative in Jesus' teaching is his example of conversation with God as a center point of daily life. Prayer visibly precedes each movement in Jesus' ministry.

Prayer leads to action. Prayer reflects on actions taken. This dance between prayer and action keeps us grounded in God.

Presence

Jesus often asks a difficult question.

"What do you think? A man had two sons. He came to the first, saying, 'Son, go work in my vineyard.' This son answered, 'I don't want to,' but afterward changed his mind, and went.

The father came to the second, saying the same thing. This son cheerfully answered, 'I will go,' but he did not.

Which of the two did the will of his father?

They said to him, 'The first.' Mt 21:28-31

This parable is about the difference between saying and doing.

What do you think?

Gifts

Though many Christians think we are saved by our belief in Jesus, if we listen to Him we hear a different message. Each time Jesus talked about persons being estranged from God, "put outside in the darkness with gnashing of teeth," it was due to lack of action, not lack of belief.

What Jesus expects from disciples are actions to combat hoarding, animosity, failing to invest in the kingdom, exclusion of the poor and indifference to suffering.

When Jesus talked about those not included in the kingdom he was talking about those who failed this test of action.

Commitment is following through on what you said you would do after the feeling you had when you said it wears off.

