



Pastor's Perspective — Why I'm Not a Committed Christian (And Why That's a Good Thing)

By Ron D. Lindholm, Senior Pastor

The title is not original with me, but I wish it were. I've used it here to grab your attention as it did mine when I first read it online in a *Discipleship Journal* article with the same title by Bob Butler.

In the article, Butler recalls reading about a conversation between a noted American pastor and a Romanian colleague who had survived years of grievous persecution under Communism. When asked by the American for his perspective on contemporary American Christianity, this Romanian pastor replied: "The key word in American Christianity is *commitment*." But as Butler goes on to note, this Romanian pastor did not view *commitment* in a positive light, rather as a cheap substitute for the older and more biblical Christian teaching of *surrender*. Here's how this Romanian pastor explained the difference:

When you make a commitment, you are still in control, no matter how noble the thing you commit to. One can commit to pray, to study the Bible, to give his money, or to commit to

2010 Bible Memory Challenge

Our verse for December is Galatians 4:4-5: *But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

automobile payments, or to lose weight. Whatever he chooses to do, he *commits* to. But *surrender* is different. If someone holds a gun and asks you to lift your hands in the air as a token of surrender, you don't tell that person what you are committed to. You simply surrender and do as you are told... Americans love commitment because they are still in control. But the key word is *surrender*. We are to be slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like Butler, an American pastor, I can't even begin to count the number of times I've called on people (called on you) to *commit* their lives to the Lord in this way or that, or how many times I've made such commitments myself only to be frustrated at the end of the day by failure to keep them. In his article, Butler does a wonderful job of unfolding this matter of a surrendered life. He begins by telling us that "*surrender* concedes that in the battle of the wills, God has already won." Imagine what we would become if that were true in us? He ends by reminding us that it's only in losing our lives that we find them.

If you want to read Butler's article, you can find it easily online. If you do, my promise is that it will be worth your while. When you're done, I think you'll agree that none of us who know the Savior should any longer be *committed* Christians, but rather those whose lives are characterized instead by *surrender*.

Christmas Celebrations

Please invite unsaved friends, neighbors and coworkers to our regular worship services and special celebrations this Christmas, praying the Lord will use the Christ-centered message of this season to draw many people to Himself. The following special gatherings are planned:

Christmas Choirs: We will celebrate our Savior's birth in music during the evening service on Sunday,

December 19. Our adult ensemble, under the direction of Pastor Odom, will minister in song. We are also pleased this year to have a children's choir led by Mary Ann Monk.

Christmas Eve: Join us at 6:00 PM for a candlelight service as we worship our Lord with songs, hymns and Scripture reading.



Sharing Christ this Christmas

Thank you to all who participated in the **Operation Christmas Child** project this year! Fellowship contributed 58 shoeboxes filled with Christmas presents and a gospel booklet for needy children overseas. Please pray that many of these children and their families will be won to Christ through this demonstration of His love for them.



Christmas gives believers a great opportunity to speak with others about the salvation we have in Jesus Christ. To help you share your faith Fellowship is providing copies of **outreach books** for you to give to those who do not yet know Jesus. Please take several copies from the church foyer and share them with others this Christmas season.

New Year's Eve Fellowship

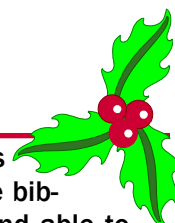
Our church family is encouraged to participate in a Progressive Dinner on New Year's Eve beginning at 6:00 PM. Please sign up in the church foyer and also indicate if you would be willing to host a group in your home. This will be a great time of encouraging each other in the Lord as we reflect on His goodness in 2010 and anticipate His work in our lives in the coming year.



Preparing for the New Year

The December Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 8 at 7:30 PM to approve a church budget for 2011. The Finance Committee and Pastors and Deacons have prepared a proposed budget that acknowledges the need to be fiscally responsible in difficult economic times, while seeking to provide for the needs of our church and its ministries.

This year the Clearing Committee was unable to identify any men who meet the biblical qualifications and are also willing and able to serve in the office of deacon. Therefore, our Deacon body will remain the same for 2011. Please pray for the Lord to provide additional men to serve in this important office in the coming years.



Remembering Our Missionaries

One way we show our love for our missionary families is by giving generously to Fellowship's annual Christmas missionary offering. This offering is received throughout the month of December for the purpose of providing each family a gift equal to their monthly support provided by our church.



This year our goal is \$4,450. Please plan to participate in this expression of gratitude for the sacrificial service of our missionaries. As you do please also pray for the Lord's provision for the coming year, as a majority of our missionaries face significant shortfalls in financial support.

Christmas Gatherings

An **ESL Christmas Party** will be held on Thursday, December 16 from 8:00 to 9:00 PM in Fellowship Hall. The entire church family is invited to participate. Our students will learn about the Christmas story during their class time, and you will have the privilege of talking with them further about the special meaning that Christmas has for those of us who understand the reason for the season.



All of our families are invited to the **White Elephant Gift Exchange** on Friday, December 17 at 7:30 PM in Fellowship Hall. Please bring a wrapped gift (\$2 or less) and a snack to share. Please invite a friend to join us for this time of fellowship and fun.

Our **Awana Christmas Party** will be held at the church on Saturday, December 18 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The children and their families will enjoy playing games and sharing gifts, and a gospel message will be presented. Please pray this event will open doors for even greater ministry in the lives of our Awana families.

Money Matters

Thanksgiving Offering: We are thankful for the generous Thanksgiving Offering of \$4,283. This offering, and our budgeted contributions, should make it possible to reach our goal of building a \$30,000 emergency reserve in the Building Fund.

Regular Giving: While an improvement over September and October, General Fund giving continued to lag behind the budgeted need in November. Please pray for a strong finish to the year in December.

November Giving Per Week (General Fund)	\$5,057
Weekly Need	\$5,290
Year-to-Date General Fund Giving	\$251,727
Year-to-Date General Fund Need	\$253,931
Year-to-Date Building Fund Giving	\$7,329



Dec. 8	December Annual Meeting (7:30 PM)
Dec. 10-11	Men's Retreat
Dec. 14	Nursing Home Ministry (2:00 PM)
Dec. 16	ESL Christmas Party (8:00 PM)
Dec. 17	White Elephant Gift Exchange (7:30 PM)
Dec. 18	Awana Christmas Party (11:00 AM)
Dec. 19	Christmas Choirs (6:00 PM)
Dec. 24	Candlelight Service (6:00 PM)
Dec. 31	Church-wide Progressive Dinner (6:00 PM)