

# THE COMPANY OF THE COMMITTED

Ps. Mike Onen – 21 August 2016

Modern Family Series

Sermon Notes



QOD: What are some of the reasons Ugandans for either showing up late or not attending a meeting? May be this video can help (Watch) <https://youtu.be/v1XeYz39Aog>

Sample answers in the order of the Most frequently used phrase..

- Traffic
- My phone died
- I changed phones so I don't have your #
- Something came up????
- There was a network issue
- Blackout and Floods
- Not feeling well
- My reminder didn't go off
- I thought the meeting is tomorrow
- I am on the other side of town

Many of these reasons are actually legit and represent the many challenges we all face today when it comes to keeping our commitments.

**Illustration: The Location Lie:** Have you ever been in a taxi maybe in the city centre when the person next to you gets a call. And says, “You’re in Ntinda. I am just here in Kamocha, wait for me there.” What bugs me is not that the person is lying. I get bothered by the fact that the person is lying in public, and no one in the taxi seems to have an issue. Perhaps it’s because many of us in the taxi know the feeling of not being able to keep that commitment.

**Our Realities:** Our realities make it difficult for us to keep commitments. We are living demands increasingly mobile lifestyles. Our time seems to disappear faster than we can control it. Between traffic, the career building project at work, the MBA, extended family, and friends, taking kids to school [swimming, parents’ day, blankets and wine, quiz nights etc] it is so hard to keep commitments.

When someone asks, “Hey, why don’t you attend Life Group?” What??? I do not have the time! I cannot possibly commit to anything else. I am overloaded and overwhelmed!

**Commitment Phobia:** In addition to this, there seems to be an internal drive to leave our options open. Sometimes it is for convenience. I don't want to commit to go visit, so that if it rains I can stay indoors. The other reason people don't commit is because you want to leave the space open for a better deal.

**Illustration:** When I'm invited to my childhood friend's party in Seeta, I keep the options open. When my friend's-friend's bash in Kololo comes through, then I will go to that. After all it is nearer my office. It's hard to commit to a responsibility to do some research for an issue in my business, because I don't know if there is some deal or hustle that may take up my time and give me immediate cash. It is just not convenient to engage here.

These are logical reasons. But the net result is a growing phenomenon called **Relational Poverty**.

**Relational Poverty:** This fast lifestyle, and commitment phobia has contributed to what sociologists are calling **Relational Poverty**. Relational poverty involves, among other things “a lack of supportive relationships, leading to loneliness and a shortage of people to provide practical care and support”<sup>1</sup>

We can have people all around. We can be very connected via social media and yet, inwardly, longing for more intimacy and more depth of community. It seems the more financial blessings, the more material blessings people have, the more they are losing the blessings of relationships. Many of us are longing for something more. There's a gnawing sense on the inside that something's not quite right. And deep down, we believe there must be something more relationally than what we're actually experiencing. In fact, I would argue that the reason is because many of us are impoverished in a way that we don't recognize.

**Series Intro:** This month's series is Modern Family. We are learning together what it means to be a thriving part of God's family. Today we ask ourselves, with the kind of realities we have, and with the constant need for convenience, how can we overcome relational poverty and build healthy relationships around us?

### **Is it possible to be committed to a group of people in our generation?**

We look at the group around one of the greatest leaders in the Christian faith tradition. We consider the group around the Apostle Paul. His influence cannot be overstated even though he did not lead a mega-church, or become the bishop of a region. He started churches in about 30 cities, all over Middle East and southern Europe. He also wrote half of the New Testament and mentored some of the most significant leaders in the early church. By any standards Paul was a great leader. What we note, is that he always had a community around him. Let's look at a part of Paul's inner circle and see what we can learn about commitment. **Read Colossians 4:7-18**

*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings. Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.*

**Group Photo:** Colossians 4:7-18 is the part that few people take the time to read and it's easy to assume that this is the dull part of the book. What you have here at the close of Colossians is a group

photograph. It expresses the very deep-down satisfaction in the life of Paul that he is able to accomplish his ministry only because of the commitment of his friends who stuck by him.

**Commitment:** *The quality of being dedicated to a cause, to pledge or bind oneself to something, to resolve to stay for the long haul.*

These people had one thing in common “They were Committed” and each had all the reasons not to be faithful when its convenient. What are some of the challenges that this people faced that could have given them an easy way out from committing to the group. I see several challenges, which are in common to us today. Those things that keep us from being faithful and committed to our Lifegroups. Lifegroups are small groups here at Mavuno which meet weekly to live life together, share challenges, apply what they are learning, keep each other accountable and influence the world together.

## **1.COMMITTED DESPITE THE DISTRACTIONS**

I think the reason many of us struggle to attend LG is because we are distracted by other things that keep us from being faithful. There are so many things that compete for our attention. It becomes hard to be committed to our LG. Sports entertainment, school, betting, and social media.

In the scripture we read, some of Paul’s friends had every reason to walk away but choose to be committed and belong to this small group.

There were many things that would have distracted someone following Paul. But he had people who were committed despite the distractions of new cultures, poor transport, riots, different religions, language barriers and so on. With such distraction it was easy to start something and not complete it. What we need are people who are committed despite the distractions.

**Demas**, Demas on the other hand got distracted. He is our fly in the tea. If we are looking at a LG photograph, this is the guy who was looking elsewhere when the shot was taken, or the guy who keeps blinking when the shot is taken. Demas had a great start. He is with Paul in the first imprisonment and Paul even calls him a fellow worker. Well, by the time Paul was imprisoned in Rome, Demas bailed! Look at 2 Tim 4:10 “*Demas has left me, in love with this present world.*” Somewhere along the line, Demas thought, “This Christian group is not all that it is cracked up to be.” And he thought about having a better life and left. He was probably a very able man who realised he could earn much money and possess a beautiful house in wonderful surroundings by taking up once again the goals and opportunities of Thessalonian commerce.

**Community happens when Commitment wins over convenience.**

## **2.COMMITTED IN THE MIDST OF DRAMA**

Our own personal drama or group dynamics have been a major issue that push us to be commitment-phobic in our groups. We are real people with real issues and these issues can come in the way of faithfulness to the group. Personal drama can affect commitment to the group.

**Illustration:** Sometimes personal drama can get in the way. Imagine if you joined an LG and you found your ex- there. What does commitment look like? Or you found your boss who fired you. Such drama can lead to inconsistent LG attendance.

People had historical issues in Paul's time as well. How did Paul's group react to this?

**Mark** He abandoned Paul during ministry in Pamphylia being somewhat soft and unreliable. He recoiled from the threat of persecution and ill treatment. His desertion was so serious that Paul would not have him back on his next missionary journey. Mark's desertion caused serious conflict between Barnabas and Paul. It was so severe that they went their separate ways. Afterwards I believe Paul, Barnabas, and even Mark matured enough to see their shared commitment. It took humility on all sides. Here we see Paul speaking about Mark as a "comfort" to him.

He put aside historical 'beefs' to build a strong commitment. He was willing to pay the price and was willing to walk away from the opinions of people and take a stand to be committed to each other no matter what it was going to cost. **Community happens when Commitment wins over convenience.**

### **3.COMMITTED IN TIMES OF DISCOMFORT**

Sometimes we don't attend our LGs because of the discomfort we experience with the people, or in the process. The discomfort could be triggered by challenges people are going through and honestly you feel overwhelmed and cause lots of tension.

**Illustration:** On any given day there are multiple things that stand in the way of attending. School, spouse, family, work, extra hours in the office, fatigue, traffic, and the weather. This week I got rained on, splashed on, dirtied, while headed to a commitment. Why should I stay committed? Sometimes stuff happens in life that makes you ask the question, "is it that serious?" And perhaps too often the answer is "its never that serious," and we default on our commitment.

In the course of their life they faced many discomforts that could have been overwhelming and made them give up. *2 Cor 11:24*

*24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.*

Paul's life wasn't comfortable. How did the people around him respond?

**Aristarchus** was a leader from Thessalonica who chose to spend time with Paul in prison. He chose to make Paul's lifestyle his lifestyle. Aristarchus was with Paul when there were hard things happening to them. In Acts 19, Paul had gone to Ephesus. After they preached effectively people started rejecting the idols they were worshipping. The people of Ephesus decided to riot and protest Paul's presence in the city. "Paul must go." In the commotion the crowd arrested Aristarchus. The city authority had to intervene.

Aristarchus was committed even with the discomfort. He was with Paul on their way to Rome by ship when a storm broke out and caused them to drift at sea for two weeks. The ship ran out of food, they had to throw out the cargo. At some point they had to hold the ship together by running ropes under it so that it doesn't fall apart. The ship hit a sandbar, the back of the ship broke off, and the crew and prisoners had to swim or float on pieces of the ship to get to the ground. Now that is commitment in the face of discomfort.

### **Community happens when Commitment wins over convenience.**

One thing behind Paul's success is that there was a group of faithfully committed men. You need to surround yourself with faithful people to succeed.

It's not brilliance that will help you impact the world, it's commitment! The things that will help your group succeed is each person committing to be faithful to play their part.

With the rest of society not living up to their word, marriages breaking, churches being ineffective and even politicians in this day and age, not being faithful to their campaign pledges, can you stand and be counted?

Imagine with me a world where people learnt from Paul's friends about commitment. A place where

- Workers gave their best to their work
- Politicians fulfilled their promises
- Married spouses stayed committed, and not distracted
- Friends stuck with each other
- LG members were all committed
- Associates in ministry showed up on time

I pray that you Mavuno church would be different. That your example of faithfulness would be evident in your homes, work places, in your service in church and Life Group and in the community at large. The commendation we should all aspire to is that one from the Lord, **"Well done my Good and faithful servant, you have been faithful with a few things..."**

### **Pray:**

- Personal confession and prayer for forgiveness - where we have let down people, and not been committed
- Anyone who feels they need to raise their commitment levels to their friends, spouse or colleagues on a work project
- LG members who need to stay committed to the group
- Bless all those in Lifegroup to have the fruit of faithfulness.