

Why Is Commitment So Difficult?

By Byron and Carla Weathersbee

You've found the perfect person to marry. All your dreams seem to be coming true... But are you struggling with that final commitment?

Fear of commitment has become a familiar lament in the dating world. Boy meets fantastic girl and girl feels the same about boy. Both believe they've finally found the person of their dreams, the one they'd like to marry. So what's the problem? That word "commitment" seems to be raising some concerns. Why is commitment so difficult to commit to?

Of course in the general sense, we see people commit to things every day. They commit to their jobs, to a sports team, to helping their local charity, and tons of time to their favorite hobby like hunting or fishing. Understandably, those situations are fairly easy to gain our commitment.

When it comes to more intimate relationships, we tend to struggle more with commitment. Probably the main reason we fail to readily commit is that at our core, we are often quite selfish. We enjoy focusing on ourselves rather than on the needs and wants of other people.

Beyond selfishness there may be other considerations that make us hesitate to commit; like past relationship hurts, uncertainty about giving up the positives of the single life, fear of sharing your innermost self, and lack of confidence that you have what it takes to promise "until death do us part."

Sacrifice...gain or loss?

At first glance, the idea of sacrifice can elicit some fear about what you might be losing. Paradoxically, though, some types of loss can bring tremendous gain. And while forfeiting something you consider valuable for something even more valuable can seem quite reasonable, it's not always easy to take the final step.

If you find yourself at a commitment cross road, you will need to take some time to ask yourself a few serious questions. Do you have concerns and uncertainties that are placing some strong roadblocks in your way? What exactly is keeping you from taking that next step?

Roadblocks aren't always a bad thing. They can force us to slow down and take notice of something important; they can keep us out of harm's way. There are many reasons that roadblocks appear in our lives. If certain questions keep running through your mind about committing to your potential mate, take the time to address these concerns head on. Don't simply maneuver around the detour without accessing the problem.

Feelings Are Signals

In order to take the next step into marriage, you will need to openly and honestly evaluate both you and your partner's values and level of commitment. Perhaps you are just experiencing some temporary fear about taking that final step into full adult responsibility, or perhaps you've seen some signs in your partner that are cause for concern.

While we're not to allow feelings to run our lives, they do have their place and shouldn't be ignored. For example, if you suddenly become aware that you are struggling mightily with the idea of giving up your regular night out with the boys once you are married, you need to pay attention. Don't allow the fact that you *shouldn't* feel that way push those thoughts aside. The point is...you do feel that way.

Commitment or Covenant...Is There a Difference?

Perhaps you feel you've navigated those major roadblocks, resolved any doubts, and are now on your way to making that final commitment. You find that you are growing more fluent in each other's "love languages" and really identify with all the wonderful traditions of being in love. But what happens when one of you doesn't get their way?

That's when the difference between a commitment and a covenant makes its way to center stage. A commitment is a contract, a man-made agreement between two parties. A covenant, on the other hand, is not only legally binding, but is also spiritually binding. A contract is written on paper, whereas a covenant is written on the heart, and the witness to that covenant is God Himself.

Marriage is much more than two people receiving a license to live together; marriage is an earthly picture of the divine relationship between God's bride, His church, and God Himself, who "remembers his covenant forever, the word He commanded, for a thousand generations" (1 Chronicles 16:15 & Psalm 105:8).

When we become less focused on ourselves, and our lives become more characterized by sacrificial love, we won't struggle so much with the idea of commitment. After all, that was God's original intent when He created us; that we would mirror His love for us in our marriage relationship.

Byron and Carla Weathersbee co-founded Legacy Family Ministries (www.legacyfamily.org) in 1995 to prepare pre-engaged and engaged couples for marriage. In their new book *Before Forever*, available at www.theleadingedgepublishing.com, the authors offer inspirational and practical advice for making perhaps the most important decision of your life. The Weathersbees have counseled hundreds of couples over the years with incredible results!

