

*If we are to grow up in all aspects into Jesus, we need to be fitted in or joined so that we can be held together by other members of our church; this calls for commitment firstly to Christ, then to one another. Commitment means, according to the New Oxford Concise Dictionary, an engagement that restricts freedom of action. This sounds rather painful yet if we have to die in order to live, it follows that if we are to enjoy real freedom, then restriction has to be right for the believer. Jesus is our only perfect example.*

### ***Ephesians 4 verse 14-16***

*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

### ***Exodus 13 verse 17-18***

*Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." 18 Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.*

*God led His people out of captivity; we too were held by satan in captivity until Jesus set us free from sin and death.*

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### **Ephesians 3 verse 1-3**

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles -  
2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to  
me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have  
already written briefly.*

We have become like Paul, prisoners of Christ and yet as we abide in the Word we have real freedom. God knew, as he led His people, the right way to take them, He knew also that, if they faced warfare, they might change their minds and run wild. So He led them in martial array, in order, not disorder for their own good and even today, despite all our past experiences good or bad, He has made provision for His people to be led in divine order. He has set us free to be placed in the family of God for our good and for our protection. It is with this sense of Godly fear that we dare to make clear our understanding of what our commitment to Jesus and His church means.

### **Jeremiah 23 verse 1-4**

*"Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD. 2 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD. 3 "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. 4 I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD.*

The promise in the Word to us, His people is that He will gather His sheep and raise up a shepherd to feed them. None shall be missing, praise God.

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As part of the body of Christ in Stevenage we see commitment as the fruit of each members walk with Jesus; we are members of His household of faith, His family. If you join a family you might expect the following:

- a) You were clear that you wanted to be part of it and that God was directing you.
- b) You could accept the leadership of the family. This would include its direction and its discipline even though you may not always agree to everything all the time.
- c) The family leadership would accept you as part of the family and take responsibility for your growth and general welfare.
- d) You would want to be involved in the activities of the family and participate as a member of it.
- e) You would want to share in the joys and sorrows of the family as well as its needs, both practical and financial.
- f) You would want to share your concerns with the family as the family would share its concerns with you. It would be normal for the members of the family to talk to one another.

When God instructed His people through Moses with regard to the building of the tabernacle (***Exodus 25***), we see how much attention God places on detail. He is a God of order, nothing is left to chance, all things have their place in the Kingdom of God. We are all servants of the Most High God, the whole universe shows how it submits to His authority; sun, moon, stars, the whole of creation is the servant of the King. The structure of the church, made up of men and women chosen and appointed to lead by example is there to serve Him and is never to be an end in itself. The whole purpose of the ***Ephesians 4*** ministries, people given to the church, is to equip more saints to serve, etc.

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We believe that what is set out in these pages goes some way towards achieving the kind of people that God wants in His church and each member of the body as they commit themselves to these principles out of their hearts it enables God to build His church. The principles in themselves are inadequate and need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be effective. Applying knowledge without the Spirit's bidding will only lead to legalism. We know that what He has been doing with us over the past months is something quite precious and we need to keep our eyes on the Lord if we are to keep satan, the destroyer at bay, or even better, send him packing. We would also like to stress that commitment to this fellowship does not deny our unity with the rest of the body of Christ, either in this area or beyond our locality. It is essential that the body discerns itself in spite of its different appearance and function; nevertheless we believe that the following points are fundamental to serving Him effectively.

1. That you should acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and with His help seek to live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
2. That we should be baptised in water according to the Word of God.
3. That we would receive the Holy Spirit baptism and all that He has for His people supernaturally.
4. That You know a definite sense of God having joined us, not just as personal friends, but to the whole fellowship including its life and structure.
5. That You would accept the leadership as God's appointment and would be willing to be accountable to it and to be directed by it in spiritual and moral matters, also in relation to fellowship life.

Please note that we clearly recognise the part of your personal conscience in this, but believe that when we know God's connection, an independent status is the rare exception rather than the regular rule.

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## **Commitment to Our Local Church Fellowship – Undated. Unsure when shared with SCF\***

As we are looking for a submissive attitude, not a fellowship of yes people, we would expect you to share any concerns that you may have.

6. That you be willing to participate in and support the fellowship life in terms of meetings and activities, etc. not just with your presence but with real commitment to worship Jesus.

7. That you would be involved in regular and spontaneous giving bearing in mind that scripture teaches both.

8. That you bring unresolved disagreements to judgment before the leaders of the fellowship at once; this would avoid any build up of resentment, bitterness or confusion and will establish truth and love to one another.

What has been written is, in broad terms what every member of the fellowship should be able to respond to. The commitment is to Jesus and His church, not to a denomination or man. Leaders have a commitment to those in their charge and you can expect the following from leadership. Please bear in mind that not every leader is gifted in every area, neither can we all be responsible for every individual.

Our commitment therefore in broad terms is as follows:

**A.** That we accept willingly the charge of those placed in our care and recognise that we are accountable to God for the welfare both practical and spiritual of each person in our care.

**B.** That we are to develop maturity of character and gift by our own example, encouragement, teaching and loving correction.

**C.** That we are to bring conclusions to unresolved issues and seek to maintain harmony without favour.

**D.** That we should keep ourselves and the fellowship alive to the vision and objectives given to us by the Lord.

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**E.** That we will seek to keep abreast of what God is doing and saying outside of our fellowship and will bring in ministry as we feel necessary to maintain links and contacts with other streams.

**F.** That we will recognise and maintain a God – given uniqueness by being sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

**G.** That we are committed to producing leaders not dependents as the fellowship must expand and grow in both numbers and maturity.

Commitments both ways should lead to a greater service to the Lord and through Him to one another.