

# 9

## Hallmarks of Long-term Faithfulness

*Membership open to all at a great cost.*

Phil Myers, PhD

### A Challenge

There are thousands of godly believers just like you who started their journey with a decision. Some were even in their youth. They aren't garden variety Christians. Some may have been nurtured in godly homes by parents who never faltered in their resolve to please God. Others had families who had no interest in pleasing God at all. But I want you to know there are untold numbers of saints who have never experienced long-term secret sins like David, sordid lives like Augustine, or blasphemous anger like Saul/Paul before he came to faith in Christ.

The numbers are probably in the hundreds of thousands [*maybe millions*] who never became mired in ungodliness like Solomon. They didn't sulk like Elijah, get drunk like Noah, quit like Mark, doubt like Thomas, deceive like Jacob, or flee like Jonah. But if they did, they didn't stay there. They are rock-ribbed saints. They have spiritual concrete in their backbones. They have been forgiven for much. They have learned to love Jesus much.

They are men and women like Daniel, Joseph, Micaiah, the Apostle John, Polycarp, Moody, Sir Isaac Newton, Jonathan Edwards, and many more. Their lives were ramrod straight. They couldn't be bought. They couldn't be broken. Their best friends could testify as to their faithfulness to God. They've never lapsed in their resolve.

I want to encourage growing believers everywhere that the life of a Christian doesn't have to be the life of a turkey. We're all eagles and we were made to soar! No, you're not weird if you have learned to live a holy life. It is possible to live a life of pretty much continual victory. You, too, will become a quick and repentant confessor of your sin.

Examining the lives of these vibrant but gentle people will heap enormous guilt on the head of believers who have been slogging along in a half-victorious life accommodating secret sins and half-truths. Sorry, but the Bible calls compromise a sinful life. My deep concern is not to condemn sloppy Christianity but to encourage your decision to follow hard after the Savior.

I know a small army of friends who have a passionate hunger for God. They have been driven "to know Christ and make Him known." Their lives don't make good copy for best sellers. They never struggled with sin-gone-to-seed. Yes, they might be able to look at some times when they weren't growing very much, but those who know them best know that they love the Lord very much, and their commitment to serve Him has not wavered.

All of us like to hear how God dramatically changed a sinner's life. Many Christian consumers want to read about the human drama of struggles, sin, victory over sin, and bursts of anger with God smoothed over after deep, sincere repentance. The bookshelves are filled with rescued-from-the-dump stories about Christians that have ruined their lives by sinful living then lived with multiple scar wounds, of course. There are shouts of victory when these prodigals return.

But I'm here to say that long-term faithfulness has marked many people in our churches. Exuberance with Christ is a choice. Lots of believers have never logged time deep in sin. No matter where you've camped out in the past, you can start today and live the rest of your life totally devoted to Him.

Christian writers today are so intent on making saints look "human" that they forget that Aquila and Priscilla didn't have any hotline to heaven except the one that is available to us today. As far as we know, Nehemiah lived above reproach all his days. Timothy only had the Old Testament and a godly Mom to encourage him and look how he turned out. The God who rebuked old down-in-the-dumps Elijah was delighted with Paul's joyful response to prison life. Elijah had turned his attention inward when the heat was turned up but Paul turned his focus toward those who needed him when he underwent the very same life-threatening situation. And yes, the exuberant folks go through the common grind of hard circumstances like regular people.

"tis the set of the sails and not the gales. . .

'tis the set of the soul that determines the goal, and not the calm or the strife."

*[Edgar A. Guest]*

We empathize with Elijah and David in their moaning despair, but although their reaction was quite human and understandable, it was not always a God-honoring response. And how kind God was to bring comfort to His servants.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard missionaries described as not being super-saints. They're reported as being just ordinary Christians with problems like everyone else. That's like saying Olympic champions are just like second-string athletes. After all both have two arms and two legs like everyone else. It is true that missionaries are faced with the same temptations, health issues, and disappointments as anyone else; but their response to circumstances is to "count it all joy!"

Well, I'm going on record to say that most missionaries, and pastors, and a lot of other saints are NOT just ordinary people. They have steel in their souls. And I know hundreds and hundreds of high caliber saints. They are a different breed than the average church member. Most run on high octane and have a hunger for God that eclipses many of the pew-sitters. The missionaries that I know are on a different plane. Most are highly driven, godly, sincere, humble, cheerful, non-vindictive people who sense God is using them to reach the world. No way they are just ordinary people. They stand head and shoulders above the crowd because of a rare commitment to the God they serve.

Allow me to let you in on nine secrets of guys like Daniel, Paul, Joseph, Isaiah, Stephen, Moses, Joshua as well as multitudes of people whose lives never made it into notoriety. I've read a lot of biographies of believers who follow in Daniel's footsteps. Come! Join their ranks.

## **# 1 - FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM**

The most outstanding characteristic is to see ourselves as servants of a very good Friend, Father, Savior, and King. But don't think of Him primarily as your boss, judge, creator, conflict-resolver, instructor, or corrector. Truly He is all of those, but He is a confidant, a comforter, a companion, and a helper. Think of Him as your coach. Someone who is on our side, who stands behind us and urges us to live our very best for Him.

He knows our hearts are bent on serving Him and making Him look good. He knows that down deep in our souls there is a firm resolve to be all that He designed us to be.

Perhaps this is the point to say that all of us who follow hard after Jesus also have a profound sense that we are wicked to the core and can do no good of ourselves. We don't think of ourselves as good people. We've been saved by grace alone. We know Jesus only died for ungodly people, bad people like you and me.

- We trust in Jesus as the One Who loves us.
- We understand that our good deeds could not pay for our sin.
- We know that only faith in Him gives eternal life.
- We know that we have eternal life because God promised that "whoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
- We believed Him as our Savior and are going to heaven when we die.

*Daniel-like* people can look back on decisions they have made and know that through all of their shortcomings, sins, failures and blunders, they have had a great hunger for Him. They haven't struggled through years trying to earn the right to become servants in the royal palace of the great God and King of kings. They just walked in, knelt down at His feet, and volunteered.

Do you and I have a tight relationship with our very best friend? Let's work hard at keeping communication lines open with Him through much "conversational prayer" throughout the day. I married a girl who learned to talk regularly to the Lord throughout the day while she was a pretty small child. Sadly, I didn't develop that habit until I was out of college.

All of us have come to realize our own deep, deep sinfulness. Each week my friend Bob introduces himself the same way. "My name is Bob, I'm an alcoholic. I've been sober for 7 years. I'm glad I'm here at AA tonight. It's been a good week."

And very much like Bob, I should belong to MMA [*Mean Men Anonymous*]. "My name is Phil. I am a mean man. Several doctors have checked my DNA and concluded that my natural bent is vindictiveness. By God's grace I've been practicing kindness for many years, and by God's grace my mean streak is temporarily under control. I'm glad I'm at MMA, tonight. It's been a good week."

Ramp up your resolve to fall in love with Jesus.

## **# 2 - LEARN TO TRUST HIM**

I think I speak for most other modern-day *Daniels*, in saying that a second quality firmly imbedded in their lives is faith. They're somewhat simple people who have taken God at His word and just believed that He really would give them all the privileges that He describes. They can come boldly into His presence and they do it often. They are forgiven from all sin.

I'll give you some examples, the negative one first. A friend of mine lost her first baby through miscarriage. Her happiness turned to grief. The anticipated moment of joy had been crushed. But she allowed her great sadness to decay into bitterness. Her personal desires became more important than a godly response toward the One who loved her more than human words can begin to describe.

Paul Meier has written a book entitled Happiness is a Choice. The converse is true. "Bitterness is a choice." My friend sinned against God in her attitude. Her faith in God failed. Her commitment to God was determined by what she thought was best for her. She was willing to accept the "good" things from her Heavenly Father, but when He decided to snatch that precious little one away, my friend lost God's perspective on the events in her life. Some of you might be thinking that I come down awfully hard on my friend. Well, maybe I do, but it was by her own admission that she said she sinned against God.

Another friend had a different response at her first of several miscarriages. Oh, yes, there was sadness and grief, and it hurt like fury. There was great confusion as to why her Heavenly Father took that little one away. There was disappointment, but no bitterness, no anger, no resentment toward God, no self-pity, just a deep emotional drain. And her great loss occurred, of all days, on Mother's Day. Her husband responded the same. She had learned that she could trust God even when it was hard. God knew what He was doing. And God saw He could trust her, too.

True, the Lord eventually blessed her with other children, but that couple had already learned to accept both "good" and "bad" from the hand of the Lord. They knew that "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" [Job 1.21].

The wife of one of my Bible college students in Indonesia also lost her first child just 19 days after birth. Her husband was in my class, and so the class period began with a prayer for comfort. Though I hadn't met her yet, I sent a simple note of comfort to her. I didn't know how she was taking the loss, but I could tell her that we had lost a child also. I told her that I felt at least some of her pain. She was comforted knowing that we had also lost a child. Rejoicing but sad. A life like *Daniel's* is a life driven by faith in a loving Father.

I had a college professor that liked to speak of recumbent faith. He described it as falling backwards into someone's arms. It was like curling up in God's embrace, of sitting in His great lap, of reclining on His chest.

This kind of faith has even carried friends of mine through bankruptcy, loss of a mate, or chronic pain. Faith in the goodness of God has sustained them through slander by their friends as well as enemies. It has comforted some of them through no-fault divorces, church feuds, tragedies beyond belief, sickness, and even prosperity. Sometimes good fortune can sink a believer into a feeling of self-sufficiency which eventually devastates them. Recumbent faith can carry the day when wealth and good times can't corrupt them.

Resolve to trust Him more often.

### **# 3 - DANIELS SEEK TO BE BLAMELESS and are quick at confessing**

One of the nice things about travelling in the circles that I do is that I meet an awful lot of world-class Christians. When the Apostle Paul was writing the requirements that God had laid down for elders he started the list with the qualification of blameless, above reproach.

I know a lot of blameless pastors, deacons, and elders. They are my friends. I've rubbed shoulders with them for years. I had a Dad like that, my brother and brother-in-law are like that. Students of mine are scattered all around the globe with testimonies that are not sinless, but blameless. These are guys whose private lives are no different than their public reputations. They have been true to the Lord and faithful to his Word since their youth. They were virgins when they were married and have been 100% faithful to their wives ever since. They have been untainted by money and fame. They have refused to compromise their doctrine. They have sought the lost with a passion. They have been loving fathers as well as sons—and of course, faithful mothers and daughters abound by the basket load.

Their breed is not dead, though it is not the majority. They are truly first-class Christians. Perhaps, heaven-class Christians would be a more accurate term. They have their heads on straight, their focus is set in stone, their resolve is clear and keen.

Perhaps you are already one of these deeply committed saints! Praise the Lord.

They are sinful men but they stand tall among the riff-raff of Christianity. They are joined by an even larger crowd of women whose lives and reputations are blameless. There are college students as well as teens and I even know children who can stand shoulder to shoulder with saints like Enoch, Calvin, Hudson Taylor, Abraham, Spurgeon, Billy Graham, and a small hoard of others throughout the centuries.

No one can point a finger of blame at these friends of mine. No one can tell of a persistent sin in their lives. There are no closets with dark secrets. There are no witnesses that can accuse them, not even their enemies can. Blameless lives are not lived in public, they are lived in private. Blameless people know things about themselves that they dare not tell a living soul but still harbor no sins.

Resolve to live a holy, blameless life.

## # 4 - BE FAITHFUL OVER THE LONG HAUL

Nobody has this whole spiritual life down to a science. None of the *Daniels* I know are living without disappointments, and they never will. But they will be among the group of people on the front row when the Lord steps off His throne to hand out the rewards for faithfulness one by one. The Father has already told us what Jesus' words are going to be. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord."

Daniel will be there, Paul, Silas, Archippus, David Brainerd, Epaphroditus, Timothy, Moody, Adoniram Judson, and George Whitfield. It doesn't take any kind of special ability to be faithful. Not brains, not education, not charm, not personality, not culture, or business acumen, or position, or fame. But it requires a super-sized dose of faithfulness.

Wimps don't get this reward, nor part-time Christians. The faithful-only-when-under-observation folks will get to come to the celebration, but they will only get to watch as the rewards are being given out. As Jesus Himself shakes the hand of each member of the "Faithful Unto the End Club" and gives them their WD stickers [Well Done], and looks deep into their eyes. There will be that deep-seated contentment among the *Daniels* that they have lived their lives the way God meant them to be lived. For myself, I'm waiting for a great big man-hug from my Savior.

This club isn't exclusive. Anyone can join. The requirements are stiff - "present your bodies as a living sacrifice" [*Romans 12:1,2*]. The Old Testament saints from Hebrews 11 as well as many no-name heroes still alive today stand on equal footing. They're constantly looking for new members. . .but membership fees are pretty high

**—all it takes is all you've got! 100%.**

Sometimes the picture of faithfulness is skewed by the idea of tribulation and distress. Yes, many believers learn faithfulness under duress, but for 100 who are faithful when the times are tough, there may only be one or two who learn that same consistent trustworthiness in the midst of affluence and prosperity. Abraham was a rich cattle rancher and faithful to God. Job, too, Joseph, and Barnabas. Money didn't taint them.

Fame and position has its way of destroying faithfulness. Pastors and evangelists sometimes have to write news releases about themselves for the newspapers. When they start believing all those press reports and forget to look in the mirror, they start to deny that they have need of daily cleansing from a faithful God. They forget to stay faithful to the One who put them into those positions of authority in the first place.

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.  
James 3.1 [*NASB*]

Leadership certainly affords men and women of God a tremendous opportunity to become a blessing to many people. With opportunity, however, comes much greater responsibility. Through the years I have gotten to know hundreds of pastors and church leaders. I am happy to report to you that there are precious few bad apples in the barrel.

I also know many "preachers' kids," and "MKs" [*Missionary Kids*]. They turn out just fine. It's true that they know their fathers' faults better than anyone else in the congregation does, but they know that their fathers are men of God. They hear their fathers' sermons in church and then watch them around the house. They know that their fathers want to please God with all their hearts. The advice they hear their Dads give from the pulpit is no different than his life around the home.

Let me add just a little note that the reputation about preachers' kids includes a lot of kids whose fathers are not even saved. If you were to call 100 pastors in your city, and ask them to explain how to get to heaven, the answer you would hear most often would be wrong. They would tell you Satan's counterfeit. Pastors would most often say, "Just love God and live a good life." That is the antithesis of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

My point is that an awful lot of preachers don't know Christ as Savior and so "preachers' kids" from those homes give a bad rap to children of godly, saved preachers.

Resolve to be faithful so that God can count on you. Consciously live by the power of the Spirit.

## **#5 - DEVELOP GODLY HABITS**

Rituals are good for the soul. In this day when the church emphasizes grace and we revel in anti-legalism, we run the risk of neglecting some of the habits that need to be developed through rock-ribbed tenacity. It is a matter of sheer will power and determination that will keep a Christian going year after year without burning out.

I'm talking of habits like:

- reading as well as studying the entire Bible faithfully and letting it examine your heart.  
*2 chapters a day will get you through the Bible 30x before you die.*  
*Read the New Testament 4 times and then read the Old Testament once.*
- being faithful by interceding for others.
- taking opportunities to witness to all the lost neighbors on your street
- making other opportunities to seek the lost in your communities.
- attending church services faithfully.
- praying often that God will send missionaries out of your own church into the fields that are white for harvest.

Some habits have to be scheduled into daily or weekly plans. Daniel was a high government official and obviously hadn't been asked by his boss, Darius, to set aside three sessions of prayer each day so that he could become a better administrator. But he did. He was faithful in prayer even knowing it might cost him his job, and it almost cost him his life.

Family worship will not become part of our family traditions unless we take advantage of moments that the average Christian family simply squanders. Whether those minutes are around the breakfast table before everyone runs off for a busy day, or in the family room at the end of the day, *Daniel-class* believers are committed to helping their kids walk with God. Worshipping as a family is a perennial habit of those who get the Well Done stamp on their foreheads.

There are other habits that multiplied thousands have inculcated in their lives: excellence in secular jobs, faithfulness in finances, diligence in helping the poor, feeding the homeless, visiting those in jail, planning generosity, using the words "I'm sorry," keeping speed laws *[and tax laws]*, pushing away from the table when they've had enough, saying "No" to seconds on dessert, as well as saying "Thank you." Many have a concomitant resolve to stay fit. *[My wife made me promise before I was married that I would never get fat.]*

Some of these habits come easy to us and others take a rugged determination and are marked by only limited success. Paul described his struggle with commitment by saying, he hadn't gotten there yet, but he would "press on toward the goal for the prize of the high call of God in Christ Jesus" *[Philippians 4:14]*.

Resolve to start some of those rituals.

## **# 6 - MAKE HIM THE FOCUS OF YOUR LIFE**

Every once in a while I reminded my kids that all the "Christian things" we do might become just Christian idolatry unless we remember that we're not in a religious club, but we are related by blood to the God of the universe. "It's HE!" I said. "Kids, it's Jesus that we worship!"

Christianity isn't just a very good system of rules that will make the world a better place. We're not trying to get others to join our religion. We're trying to introduce others to our friend and savior, Jesus Christ the King of Glory. Lots of other religious systems have nice ideas about morality and kindness. They believe that honesty is better than lying. Kindness is better than hatred. Peace is better than war. But we have a person, at the very heart of ours. Without a living and breathing Jesus, who has real human hemoglobin in his veins we have NOTHING!

*Daniels* don't pray to a picture. They don't struggle some "God-concept" alive in their minds. But they cling to a person. They have a friend. Not a buddy kind of friend, but a deep and lasting friendship with the most holy, loving, powerful man who ever put on sandals.

*Daniel* walked each day with his God.

Resolve to focus on Jesus.

## **# 7 - HAVE A SENSE OF EXPECTANCY OF HIS DIVINE APPROVAL**

One of President Johnson's cabinet members was asked why he came out of retirement to work so hard at a government position. He said, "President Johnson put his hand on my shoulder and asked if I would take the position - and you just don't say 'No' to the President of the United States."

Nor should you and I. We need to be able to say, "Yes," to the God of the universe.

It is an awesome responsibility to serve as an appointee for the King of all the kings who have lived on the earth. He has all power. He has all wisdom. He has all the resources He needs at His disposal. He is completely unstoppable. Yet, He has chosen to work only with willing volunteers. The Lord God has empowered every believer with a special grace [*Gr. charis*] and a divinely appointed task. Sometimes we call these "spiritual gifts." He wants to give you a job you'll love in your local church.

He never forces us to use those talents for Him. He persuades us. And He lets us work at whatever level of commitment we choose. Sloppy work is certainly a disappointment to Him, and slipshod Christianity surely makes Him look bad to the unbelievers, but He rarely kills a Christian for failing to fulfill his or her role. Earthly presidents and kings and bosses get rid of bad employees. Though we are still His children, God is sad to see lazy, unproductive, non-committed employees on His payroll.

Those who have lived close to the heart of God know all assignments are from Him and they take them very seriously. Mrs. Robillard was in her 80's and worked 3 part-time jobs to earn money so she could provide scholarships for some of my Bible college students. My retired brother still works part-time just so that he has more money to give to missionaries.

The millionaire founder and CEO of Armour Star Meat Company, was asked what he did for a living. Mr. Armour said, "I'm a full-time witness for Jesus Christ. I pack pork on the side." John Wanamaker was Postmaster General of the United States in Washington D.C., but he had made it clear to President Harrison that he would only take this cabinet position if were able to return to Philadelphia by train every weekend to teach his men's Sunday School class.

All saints who go years on end without faltering in their resolve to honor God with their lives have a deep and abiding commitment to the task He has placed before them. Many of the prophets in the Bible never received appreciation from other believers. The apostles all persevered for decades through stressful situations without burning out. It isn't the workload. It is the focus.

Cutting-edge Christians are not necessarily workaholics who labor under guilt-ridden consciences. They simply do the thing God has laid on their hearts to the best of their ability with the time that they have. They realize that they can do all these things through Christ's strength. I heard John Walvoord say that every Christian should be able to say at the end of every day, "I couldn't have gotten through this day without divine help."

*Daniels* who teach Sunday School classes consider themselves as shepherds to a mini-flock. It is a divine responsibility. *Daniels* who serve as committee members try their best to fulfill their job and to accomplish the purpose of the group. Singers practice diligently and do their utmost to glorify the Father rather than to get personal glory. They pray for the people to whom they minister.

These men and women found their spiritual niche in their local churches and put themselves to work. Some served on committees. Others brought friends to church by the droves. Others taught, sang, counseled, helped, drove the VBS bus, or gave exorbitantly whether rich or poor. Not all of them knew the name of their spiritual gift, but they all served.

*Daniel*-type preachers prepare their sermons with the personal needs of their people close to their hearts. They refuse to get into the "too-busy-syndrome" of the earth-bound pastors who want to look good to other Christians by means of all of their busy-ness. Busy? Yes, but they hardly ever get "too busy." At least not in long stretches. I just read of a "too busy" preacher who crashed.

Those who habitually log much time close to the heart of Jesus have great joy in knowing, not hoping, that they have pleased the Savior. They feel the smile of God's approval on their lives. They take great satisfaction in making God look good to others. And they can always seem to find time to nurture relationships with wives, or husbands, and their kids as well as a knot of godly friends.

One hundred percent effort is all that is needed. The outward results may appear only half as good as what others can churn out, but that isn't what counts. It's like the little boy in the song who played his toy drum for Jesus.

Expect God's approval for your involvement in the work of the Lord.

## **# 8 - STAND IN AWE**

Another quality that imprints their lives is an enormous sense of awe at what the God of the universe can do through puny men and women like us. True, we get used to it after a while - the idea of being a divine weapon in the powerful hand of an Almighty God - but the awe never leaves. We spend each day in the presence of the King of Glory, yet never tire of His majesty, never take Him for granted, never become sated with His smile upon our efforts, never lose sight of the tragedy which will come to those without Christ. Come. Join the ranks of the faithful.

We're aware that our help is somehow wanted and, can I say, needed by the Lord. He is not condescending to us by letting us do menial tasks that have no eternal significance. Yes, somehow we do make a difference in the great scheme of things. Moses moved the hand of God through mediation for the people of Israel. The disciples snatched many thousands of souls from the jaws of hell by their preaching. The Reformers turned the tide through their unwavering stand upon the Word of God. The first century Christians "turned the world upside down!"

There are times when we feel like \$2 discount store tools and know that the Lord of Glory should be using some of those \$20 tools. We feel so inadequate.

Sometimes we are scared stiff by the weight on our shoulders if we should fail. After all, people's lives are at stake. But then we remember the words of Jesus. "Here, put your head in the yoke with Me. I'll pull. My yoke is easy, My burden is quite light. You'll find that it is actually restful and refreshing to work for Me." [Obviously, my paraphrase.] He says, "Work as hard as you can and I'll let you mount up on the wings of eagles. You'll be able to run a ministry marathon through your whole life and not get tired of it."



No matter how comfortable we feel in the presence of this holy Being, we are struck dumb by Him. He is incomparable. He is God.

The best part of this club is that membership never closes. There is no exclusiveness. People are joining every day. Some began as children, others got things turned around as teenagers or adults.

Some of you have just realized that you have already joined. All I've done was just describe the passion of your heart. Praise the Lord, may your tribe increase! Others of you crave to become one of the Spirit-driven crowd. It is a personal decision. I urge you to make that decision soon.

Stand in awe of God's willingness to use you.

### **# 9 - MAKE A COMMITMENT - the once-for-all-time kind.**

The last hallmark of long-term victory is a moment in time when "Daniels" can look back on a rock solid promise that sealed their commitment to God. But there are some very strong words that the Scriptures use to describe a man who vacillates from a vow to God.

When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow!  
It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Eccl 5:4,5 [NASB]

On a page in my Bible I have signed a vow I made to God. It is dated March 9, 1961. I was a Junior in high school when I made that commitment. Many *Daniels* can look back on a day in our lives when we signed a paper, or stood up in church, or went forward in a youth meeting, or threw a stick into a campfire: we made a solemn vow to God that we would serve Him with all our hearts all our days.

The word "always" has a permanency to it that cannot be modified. At a point in their lives they traded in their calcium backbones for steel spinal columns, and made a fierce once-for-all-time commitment. They vowed that they would never break their pact with God. They wanted to be His servants forever. Kids can even make that kind of decision. It has been known for a long time that something like 75% of all missionaries made a commitment to reach the world before they reached the age of 12.

One of the comforting things about standing before an Almighty God and asking Him to confirm a promise is that God never forgets. "Gutless wonders" have been around since the world began. Christians who have renounced their commitments to God are as common as weeds.

Come! Join the ranks of the radical faithful.

Making a vow before God is like stepping into a metal tub and asking Him to pour concrete around our feet. We can never walk away from that vow. Daniel was a teenager, perhaps about age seventeen when he faced one of the vice presidents of Iran and asked him for permission to eat a vegetarian diet rather than ruin his health with the wine and royal pastries of the king's table. Later gutsy little Daniel was thrown into a jail with hungry 400 pound lions rather than renounce a vow he had made as a high school kid. That's commitment.

Part of that covenant is a moral compact with our bodies. Determine to be sexually pure to your future mate [or your present mate]. Dame seduction may knock at your door often the same way she visits everybody else, but we can choose to honor our promise to our mate. Pressure doesn't have to waffle our promise.

The committed traveling businessmen among us sleep in motel rooms that offer the same TV slime and filth we've all had in our roadway lodging. Yet, they refuse to yield. We can make the same kinds of decisions.

I ask you to kneel down as soon as you are willing to make that vow and give yourself wholeheartedly to serve Him for the rest of your life.

Of course, there is that caution.

*When you make a vow to God do not be late in paying it for He takes no delight in fools.  
Pay what you vow!  
It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.  
Ecclesiastes 5:4,5*

*"I beseech ye therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice."  
Romans 12:1,2*

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.  
Philippians 4:13*

Below is a copy of that commitment card I signed in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.  
Let me encourage you to get alone with the Lord and pour out your heart to Him.  
He will take you at your word and He will hold you to your promise.

<p>Dear Lord Jesus,</p> <p><b>ALL</b> that I am,  <b>ALL</b> that I have,  <b>ALL</b> that I ever will be,  <b>ALL</b> that I ever will have  I give unto Thee, absolutely, unconditionally, now and forever.  Now, Lord Jesus, hold me to it!</p> <p>signed _____</p> <p>witnessed _____ date _____</p>
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Glue this in your Bible until you are ready to sign it.