True Commitment

In addition to the traditional concept of true commitment that means you are willing to die for what you think is right, make equal space for the womanly concept of commitment that means you are willing to live for what you believe.

--June Jordan (1936-2002) was an African-American poet, activist, teacher, and essayist.

"Many people don't focus enough on execution. If you make a commitment to get something done, you need to follow through on that commitment."

--Kenneth Chenault, CEO and Chairman of American Express from 2001 until 2018. He is the third African American CEO of a Fortune 500 company.

"You can only become accomplished at something you love. Don’t make money your goal. Instead pursue the things you love doing and then do them so well that people can’t take their eyes off you."

– Maya Angelou (African-American author and poet).

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that people have reached in life as by the obstacles which they have overcome while trying to succeed.” (degenderized)

– Booker T. Washington

“We all have dreams. In order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort.”

- Jesse Owens, world record-setting Olympic athlete
Instead of looking at the past, I put myself ahead twenty years and try to look at what I need to do now in order to get there then.
– Diana Ross

I used to want the words 'She tried' on my tombstone. Now I want 'She did it.'
– Katherine Dunham, African American dancer, choreographer, author, educator, and social activist.

If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.
– Martin Luther King, Jr.

"To say that one waits a lifetime for one’s soulmate to come around is a paradox. People eventually get sick of waiting, take a chance on someone, and by the art of commitment become soulmates, which takes a lifetime to perfect."
– Criss Jami

If I made a commitment, I stood by that commitment - and tried to make it real. Because when you become leaders, the most important thing you have is your word, your trust. That's where respect comes from.
– Michelle Obama

Too many church-goers have a commitment of convenience. They’ll stay faithful as long as it’s safe and doesn’t involve risk, rejection, or criticism. Instead of standing alone in the face of challenge or temptation, they check to see which way their friends are going.
– Charles Stanley

What makes us Americans is our shared commitment to an ideal - that all of us are created equal, and all of us have the chance to make of our lives what we will.
– Barack Obama
We live in a cynical world where commitment is often times obscured by day to day life. Many believe that our goals are a commitment to ourselves. People make goals for themselves in order to strive for greatness, but someone once told me that unwritten goals are merely dreams. We can dream all we like; but without commitment to do the things we set for ourselves, nothing can be achieved. When we see a future that will enhance our lives we strive to make that future happen; but with the tyranny of the urgent we are oppressed, and our vision is clouded. There is a time for focus on the now, but we must never lose sight of the attainable future that is there.  
-- author unknown

Commitments are powerful because they influence how you think, how you sound, and how you act. Unlike a half-hearted hope or ‘best shot,’ making a commitment means that you try harder, you look for solutions when faced with obstacles, you don’t consider quitting as an option, and you don’t look back.

In addition, a meaningful commitment gives you a script for how to handle things when times get tough. And make no mistake, everyone feels like quitting at one time or another. Unfortunately most people quit when they feel like quitting, which is why they seldom succeed at anything.

After working with thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs over my career, I’ve learned that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of success is the perseverance of commitment. Whether it’s a relationship or marriage, job or career venture, fitness or health, or a personal improvement goal, the temptation to give up will arise. The key is to anticipate it and make yourself a promise that the feeling of wanting to quit will not overpower your commitment.

-- Todd Smith

One of the most important lessons I’ve learned as a success coach is that becoming successful at anything requires three critical elements.

First is having a goal. Goals provide us with a target and a direction. This helps us determine which information to pay attention to what to ignore. It also helps us determine which actions are needed to get us where we want to be. You'll find that much of the stress and indecision in your life is due to the lack of a clear direction.

Second is motivation. Whatever goal we set must be exciting and believable to us. When we set a goal that is exciting to us and we believe that it’s attainable, we become extremely motivated to take action toward the desired result.
Third and perhaps most important is commitment. There will be many obstacles on the path to accomplishing a worthwhile goal. When those obstacles appear it's really easy to lose the belief and thus the motivation to continue on the same path. Without these three things the success we're looking for will elude us no matter how many books we read or how much money we spend on courses.

-- John Locke (a modern-day John Locke ... not the historical Locke)

The Importance of Commitment (excerpt from Commencement address at a women's college in Saudi Arabia):

Today, I want to talk about three kinds of commitment that have served me well in my life: a commitment to optimism, a commitment to kindness, and a commitment to community.

Let me begin with a commitment to optimism. A few months after my college graduation, my doctor diagnosed me with Hodgkin's lymphoma. I literally felt like the walls were closing in on me... Then he said, “But if it's caught in the early stages, you have a good chance to live a normal life.” As soon as he said there was a chance, I knew I was going to live. I just knew it. I recovered and one of the lessons I learned was that being optimistic is a powerful tool, it can crack open any door. And when combined with persistence — if you keep pushing and pushing — you can open that door.

The second type of commitment I’d like to talk about is a commitment to kindness. You know, some people will tell you that nice guys finish last. And honestly, I don’t know whom they’re talking about. My bosses have been nice guys; President Obama is a nice guy. At times you will be tempted to put yourself first. Sometimes you’ll worry that if you don’t, you won’t succeed, you’ll fall behind. At these moments, you’ll have a choice to make. And I hope you choose to do something for someone else without expecting anything in return. In my view, that’s the meaning of unconditional love.

And that brings me to the third type of commitment: a commitment to community. You are now entering the society of women scholars. Whether it’s your fellow women graduates, your faculty, or graduates from other universities, we all share the same planet and we are responsible for their well-being too. One of my favorite quotes is by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.” Commit to supporting and advocating for women everywhere.

-- Kristina M. Johnson, Founder and CEO, Enduring Hydro; Former Under Secretary of Energy, U.S. Department of Energy
“There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when circumstance permit. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.” – Art Turock

“At times it seems as if arranging to have no commitment of any kind to anyone would be a special freedom. But in fact the whole idea works in reverse. The most deadly commitment of all is to be committed only to one's self. Some come to realize this only after they are in the nursing home.” — John D. MacDonald

“Falling in love was simple; one had only to yield. Digesting another person, however, and sustaining love, was bloody work, and not a soft job.” — Hanif Kureishi

“The relationship between commitment and doubt is by no means an antagonistic one. Commitment is healthiest when it is not without doubt, but in spite of doubt.” – Rollo May

Tess's Poem
Because I am simply ready
Because of passion and a sense of hope, not
Because of fear or a sense of pride
I am convinced that in this moment I will be able to hold
My convictions
I've felt many things in life, and I know this is not
Uncertainty!
I am brave.
"How strong is the tide?"
"How deep is the water?"
"How vast is the sea?"
It seems these things do not matter.
I am standing on the beach, I can feel the ocean on the wind, and I think
I am ready to swim.
I am only one  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something.  
And because I cannot do everything  
I will not refuse to do the something than I can do.  
-- Edward Everett Hale

My heart is moved by all I cannot save:  
So much has been destroyed  
I have to cast my lot with those who, age after age,  
Perversely, with no extraordinary power,  
Reconstitute the world.  
-- Adrienne Rich

People say, what is the sense of our small effort.  
They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.  
A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions.  
Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that.  
No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless.  
There’s too much work to do.  
-- Dorothy Day

Just as long as I have breath,  
I must answer “Yes” to life;  
Though with pain I made my way,  
Still with hope I meet each day.  
If they ask what I did well,  
Tell them I said “Yes” to life.  
-- Alicia S. Carpenter
“If you can't do it, don't pledge to do it. Don't be a liar; say only what you can do. It's better for you to have a "single sentence" manifesto about your life which is fulfilled than to have 25 chapters' theories about your visions that remain undone!”
— Israelmore Ayivor

“Sometimes your pledges become your problems.”
— Amit Kalantri

The heights by great ones reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight; but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night"
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

“You cannot plow a field by simply turning it over in your mind”
— Unknown

The most effective way to do it, is to do it.
— Amelia Earhart

It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.
— Confucius

You can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up.
— George L. Bell
Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone.
– Pablo Picasso

Calling
I begin to understand calling more fully.
It has little to do with ministry itself,
Everything to do with the Sacred.
It is not about serving a particular denomination
Or even congregation
But being in the world who
I was created to be--
like standing on the stage of the Universe
and saying Yes! to God alone and not
A particular mountain range or river.

After that, what possibly can go wrong?
– Nancy Shaffer

For Endurance (adapted)
-- Ann Bamford Adams
I feel like I’ve hit the wall.
The thought of churning out one more crisp memo,
finessing one more relationship,
orchestrating one more initiative,
even returning one more phone call,
makes my blood feel like sludge in my veins.

I don’t even have the energy to dream of being
on a deserted island,
because the thought of making plane reservations
and boarding the dogs just makes me feel more weary.

How did Jesus do it? How did he keep going?
How did he look into all those expectant eyes,
and not want to run away, back to the quarry,
back to being a stone mason who finished at sundown?
How did he get filled up when he was past empty?

And what about me? Do I dare to compare my trivial pressures with the burdens of the Son of God?
Ah, but Mark knew the answer:
after the crowds were fed, Jesus sent the disciples ahead in the boat,
“and went up to the mountain to pray.”

And I say: Let me go with you. Just for this minute let me set aside every burden, and feel myself in prayer.
Let me remember that I am not alone and do not carry my burdens alone.

May I be reminded that even though I am reluctant to pick those burdens up again, that mystery at the heart of things will help me lift my load and carry it down the mountain into that needy, indifferent crush of humanity, sustaining and strengthening me to carry on my work in the world.

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This Making of a Whole Self
-- Nancy Schaffer
This making of a whole self takes such a very long time: pieces are not sequential nor our supplies. We work here, then there, hold up tattered fabric to the light. Sew past dark, intent, Use all our thread.

Sleeves may come before length; buttons, before a rounded neck. We sew at what most needs us, and as it asks, sew again.

The self is not one thing, once made, unaltered. Not midnight task alone, not
after other work. It’s everything we come
upon, make ours: all this fitting of
what-once-was and has-become.

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Question for reflection:

What is some thing, some goal, or some way of being, that you are or were committed to ... and what challenges came/have come with this commitment?