

*"My soul waits for you;
I count on your word."
Ps 130*

Commitment and enthusiasm are two concepts that are, unfortunately, often confused.

Commitment is that quality of life that depends more on the ability to wait for something to come to fulfilment – through good days and through bad- than it does on being able to sustain an emotional extreme for it over a long period of time. **Enthusiasm** is excitement fed by satisfaction.

The tangle of the two ideas, however, is exactly what leads so many people to fall off in the middle of a project. When the work ceases to feel good, when praying for peace gets nowhere, when marriage counselling fails to reinvigorate the marriage, when the projects and the plans and the hopes worse than fail, they fizzle, that's when the commitment really starts. When enthusiasm wanes, and romantic love dies and moral apathy – a debilitating loss of purpose and energy- sets in, that is the point at which we are asked to give as much as we get. That's when what we thought was an adventure turns into a commitment. Sometimes a long, hard, demanding one that tempts us to despair. As if God will ever abandon the good. As if waiting for God's good time were a waste of our time. As if God's Word of love will ever fail us in the end. Once upon a time, the dove said to the cloud, "How many snowflakes does it take to break a branch?" "I have no idea," the cloud replied. "I simply keep on snowing until it does." "Mmmmm," the little dove mused. "I wonder how many voices it will take before peace comes?"



Commitment is the quality of human nature that tells us not to count days or months or years, conversations or efforts or rejections, but simply to go on going on until “all things are in the fullness of time,” until everything is ready, until all hearts are in waiting for the Word of God in this situation to be fulfilled.

When we feel most discouraged,
most fatigued, most alone is
precisely the time we must not quit.

A Zen monk in Japan wanted to publish the holy books, which at that time were available only in Chinese. The books were to be printed with wood blocks in an edition of seven thousand copies, a tremendous undertaking.

The monk began by travelling and collecting donations for this purpose. A few sympathizers would give him hundred pieces of gold, but most of the time he received only small coins. After ten years, the monk had enough money to begin his task.

But then there was a terrible flood in the area and famine followed. So the monk took the funds he had collected for the books and spent them to save others from starving. Then he began his work of collecting again.

Fifteen years later an epidemic spread over the country. To help his people, the monk again gave away what he had collected.

For a third time he started his work, and after twenty years his wish was fulfilled- the books were printed. The printing blocks which produced the first edition of the holy books can be seen today at a monastery in Kyoto.

The Japanese, however, tell their children that the monk really made three sets of holy books. And, they explain with great pride, the first two invisible sets surpass even the third.

(from 25 Windows into the Soul Joan Chittister 90-94)