

Married for Life: True Stories of Marital Commitment by Chris Garner

Commitment is not the most popular word in today's *culture of me*. The culture teaches that "I" am the most important person in the world. "I deserve a break, to have it *my way*, a new car, a new body, a new and better wife or husband;" it is not hard to imagine where all of this leads. Self reigns and everything else must bow to it. The problem is that God calls this idolatry. The Bible teaches people to die to self and live a life committed to God. Commitment may not be a popular concept, but seeing it lived out in life is rewarding and fulfilling.

You have heard the quote; "Behind every great man stands a great woman." There are many stories of women committed to their husbands and supporting their great achievements. Ruth Graham's support of Billy Graham and his evangelistic ministry illustrate the importance of a wife to a ministry even when she is not directly involved. Committed women have taken care of the home front while their men have won wars and achieved greatness in ministry, government, business and sports. But what about the tough times? Does that commitment continue when the times are tough? For women, the answer usually is yes; they stick with their husband when he is maimed, crippled or incapacitated. Yet an increasing number of people, both women and men now leave the relationship rather than endure hardship. The following stories of men who remained totally committed to their wives are significant because many men would not have remained so committed.

Trusted, godly friends counseled Columbia College and seminary president Robertson McQuilkin to institutionalize his wife of forty-two years for the *sake of his ministry*. The time had come to make a choice between his ministry in Christian education and the ministry of caring for his wife. Alzheimer's disease robs a person of everything; one's mind and body, and Muriel's once vibrant mind would eventually even forget who she was. The decision was not hard to make, he had vowed to love her "in sickness and in health ... until death do us part." Caring for his wife was not a duty to be endured, but a ministry that blessed him and provoked people around the world to renew vows and examine their definition of commitment.

In his book, *In Defense of Marriage*, Art Carey relates the story of the decline of his grandmother and the commitment of his grandfather to his dearly loved wife. As his grandmother deteriorated physically and mentally, her husband of sixty years remained at her side caring for her needs rather than putting her in a convalescent home and allowing others to care for her. Some time after her death, Art asked his grandfather if there wasn't a part of him that was relieved of the burden of caring for his wife twenty-four hours a day. His grandfather answered; "Artie, with all her incapacities and all that that involved, I'd give anything to see her there now. God, what I wouldn't give."

Chris Spielman put his football career on hold to care for his wife Stephanie and their two children while she fought breast cancer. At thirty-four years old, this star football player sacrificed his career to put his wife and family first. Chris demonstrates marital commitment, denying his own dreams and ambitions to be available to his wife in her time of need.

Do you have a shallow, worldly commitment to marriage that will look for an exit when your needs are not met? Or do you have a true life-long commitment that will bear any and all problems that may come your way? Robertson McQuilken, Edward Lynch and Chris Spielman demonstrate a godly love and commitment even when their wives were not able to give back. Both husbands and wives today need to have that kind of commitment.