



That's commitment!

I've been asked several times over the last few days why I'm not participating in the "Ride the Rockies". I could say "I didn't win the ticket lottery", and ease out of it that way. But the truth is that I'm conflicted about my commitments. Those who can take a week off from many responsibilities for this epic ride (the most difficult, it's reported, in its 25 year history) are indeed blessed by either much leisure time, or by an incredible support system, or both. I am NOT blessed with much leisure time; I DO have, however, an incredible support system, one to which I'm very committed. And I choose not to impose on it very often. (I did, however, impose on it in 2005 when I rode from San Francisco to Los Angeles in the AIDS Life Cycle 4 -- my ride of a lifetime!)

So, as I mentioned at the outset, I'm conflicted about my commitments. And I imagine that the riders pictured in the [Denver Post](#) were wondering about THEIR commitment to the ride on that first day when hit with a monumental hail storm, and then, in recent days with strong winds coupled with massive climbs. Yet, by all reports, riders are sticking to it, if necessary making use of SAG wagons (that's either "support and gear" or "stop and go") when their legs give out, in order to get to the next stopping point. They are committed to the experience, to enduring, to the goal of completing the journey.

How DO we deal with conflicting commitments? I remember reading in one of Stephen Covey's books (I think it was *First Things First*) that when faced with two compelling alternatives, the person(s) you turn down are more likely to understand when they know that your rejection is grounded in a STRONG "Yes" to the alternative. Saying "I just don't feel like it" won't get us much sympathy. So, for me to say that I'm not doing "Ride the Rockies" because of my commitment to my family (which is true) is a heck of a lot more compelling than "I couldn't get in shape" (lack of commitment), or "I couldn't find the time" (lack of commitment), or "I lost the lottery" (a double lie: I didn't enter so I couldn't lose!).

A question about something like "Ride the Rockies", however, is one thing. A question about a larger moral/ethical commitment is something else. Faced with a conflict between speaking up about injustice (when it may be unpopular to do so) or giving witness to values based on religious belief (which may be equally unpopular, if not just uncomfortable) may end up coming out like "I just don't believe it's right". It may be true, but where's the big "YES" to that ultimate commitment that may help the other person(s) understand who we really are?

It was popular some years ago to ask "Well, you can talk the talk, but can you walk the walk?" I have begun to wonder how much I simply "walk the walk", but, by not "talking the talk", avoid showing where my commitments are grounded, e.g., "As a disciple of Jesus, I . . ." or equally, "As a Buddhist, I . . ." or "In submission to Allah, I . . .". I wonder what kinds of interesting conversations I've missed?

Blessings,

Gary