

CHAPTER 5WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

(WHO ME? YES YOU!)

A Definition

A responsibility is an obligation or duty which someone has and which should be carried out. A responsible person is one who is able to meet his obligations and duties; one who is reliable and dependable and faithful to do what he is supposed to do. Responsibility is that ability to respond in the right way to life's obligations and demands; it is a proper response to a given situation according to one's capacity and capabilities. For example, a student is responsible to come to class and to be on time, to pay close attention to all that is said in class, to follow the teacher's instructions, to work hard at all assignments and to study and diligently prepare for every examination or quiz, according to the mind and mental capabilities which God has given to him.

If a person only has one hand, then he can only use that one hand, and certainly he would not be responsible to do what a two-handed person could do. Not every person has a mathematical mind, but God expects every math student to do the very best with the mind he has been given. It is possible for a responsible non-mathematical-minded person to perform much better in class than an irresponsible mathematical-minded person. Why is this so?

Responsibility is something that every person carries, and because of this, every person deserves to receive either credit (praise) or blame for his/her behavior. Suppose Tim drives through a green light at a safe speed and Tom's car smashes into him. Is Tim to blame? _____ Is Tim responsible for the accident? _____ Suppose Tim drives through a red light and Tom's car smashes into him. Is Tim to blame? _____ Is Tim responsible for the accident? _____

If Mr. Jones knows that the swimming area is shark-infested and fails to warn the swimmers, then who is to blame if a swimmer is attacked? _____ If Mr. Jones warns them and they go swimming anyway, who is to blame if one of the swimmers loses a leg? _____ Mr. Jones has a responsibility to warn; the swimmers have a responsibility to heed the warning.

The man described in Numbers 35:16 is a killer. The man described in Numbers 35:22-23 is also a killer. Which man is the most responsible and which man should be blamed the most? _____

Did Pilate want to be responsible for the death of Christ (Matthew 27:24)? _____ Did the Jews want to be responsible for the death of Christ (Matthew 27:25)? _____ (continued on the next page)

Were they both responsible for the death of Christ? _____ Who was most responsible (John 19:11)? _____

Who Is Responsible?

The Bible teaches that rulers are responsible. According to Genesis 9:1-6 God has given men the right and obligation to establish government to keep law and order, to protect life and to exercise capital punishment whenever this is necessary. Which verse teaches the need for capital punishment? _____ According to Romans 13:4, rulers are ministers of God and are responsible to execute W _____ upon evildoers.

The Bible teaches that judges are responsible. According to Deuteronomy 25:1, judges are responsible to "J _____ the righteous (the innocent), and _____ (punish) the wicked." The judge who punishes an evil person and who acquits a guilty person is to be BLAMED. Every judge must someday give an account before the GREAT JUDGE! According to Psalm 82:1, God is going to judge the judges (in this verse the word "gods" refers to human judges who are supposed to be representing God in the right way by exercising justice).

The Bible teaches that teachers are responsible. We learn in James 3:1 that people should not be overly eager to become masters or TEACHERS because they shall receive the greater JUDGMENT! It is one thing to believe something that is false; it is something else to influence the minds of others and teach falsehood to them. Who is more responsible--the person who reads a dirty book or magazine or the person who sells them? _____ Who is more responsible--the person who uses drugs or the person who pushes and sells drugs? _____ The person who has the greatest influence for evil (or for good) is the person who is the most responsible.

The Bible teaches that pastors are responsible. Before Paul told Pastor Timothy to preach the _____ (2 Timothy 4:2) he first told him that God shall J _____ (2 Timothy 2:1) the living and the dead, and this would include pastors! Every pastor is accountable before God for what he teaches or fails to teach. Did the Apostle Paul meet his responsibility to proclaim God's truth (Acts 20:26-27)? _____ Most believers are responsible to watch their own soul; the pastor is responsible to watch not only his own soul but also the souls of his flock. He is one who "must give _____" (Hebrews 13:17).

The Bible teaches that parents are responsible. In chapter 1 we studied the parents' responsibilities to provide, protect, discipline, train, instruct and set a good example.

The Bible teaches that children are responsible. We already studied the two major responsibilities and duties of children (page 4).

Parents are responsible to be parents and children are responsible to be children. Every person is responsible whether he likes it or not. Everyone is responsible and accountable before God. The Bible clearly says, "so then _____ of us shall give _____ of _____ (not your friends or your parents, but YOURSELF) to _____" (Romans 14:12--this verse is speaking of believers who shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, but if believers are accountable before God, certainly unbelievers are as well). Every person must live with the results of decisions which he made or which he failed to make.

Someone might say, "I do not want to be responsible and I just do not want to be involved!" This is like the person who says, "I see no need to vote because I just do not want to be involved." It is foolish to say this because this person is involved whether he realizes it or not! The person who gets elected into office will do things that will affect this person's life for better or for worse! Whether we like it or not, we all are involved with life and life's duties and obligations. We cannot push such things away and pretend that they do not pertain to our life.

Degrees of Responsibility

Though we are all responsible before God and man, there are degrees of responsibility. Not everyone is equally responsible. You would not expect a 5 year old girl to care for her ill mother as much as you would expect a 15 year old girl to do this! The President of all 50 states is more responsible than the Governor of one state because God has given him more power. The parent is more responsible than the child because God has given the parent more wisdom and more years of experience. The teacher is more responsible than the student because he (or she) has more knowledge and a wider influence. The Pastor is more responsible than the believer in the pew because God has given him a special gift of being able to teach and shepherd the flock. The degrees of responsibility are determined by the principle given by Jesus in Luke 12:48: "For unto whomsoever _____ is _____, of him shall be _____ required." The ones who are most responsible are the ones who have been given the most.

Thought and Discussion Questions:

What are some of the things God has given to you? Do these gifts carry with them certain responsibilities? What are they?

Excuses For Not Being Responsible

Here are some typical excuses that people sometimes give to try to get out from under responsibility:

1) "I'm too young! When I'm older I'll be ready to face up to these responsibilities!"

2) "I'm too dumb! I failed to meet my responsibilities because I didn't know better." Question: Is ignorance an excuse? Are we responsible to find out what our responsibilities are?

3) "I'm too lazy! Fulfilling my obligations and carrying out my duties requires too much effort and too much work!"

4) "I have a habit of procrastinating. Perhaps I'll be more responsible later when I feel like it!" Question: Should we fulfill our obligations whether we feel like it or not?

5) "My friends are not responsible. They rarely study and they do not take school seriously, so why should I?"

6) "My parents are not responsible. They do not do their part, so why should I be required to do my part?"

CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER EXCUSES?

TRUE or FALSE: The irresponsibility of parents allows the young person to also be irresponsible. If the parents are not responsible, then the young person is not responsible to be responsible!"

Ezekiel Chapter 18

The Lord has given this important chapter in His Word to teach us about who really is responsible! Who should I blame for the way I live and behave? Should I blame my father? Should I blame my grandfather? my mother?

Consider carefully this chapter (Ezekiel 18). Verses 5-9 describe MAN #1. Verses 10-13 describe MAN #2. Verses 14-17 describe MAN #3. Did MAN #1 live responsibly before God and man? _____ Does his responsible behavior guarantee that his son (MAN #2) will also live responsibly? _____ Does the irresponsible living of MAN #2 give his son (MAN #3) an excuse to also be irresponsible? _____

When a person sins, who is responsible (Ezekiel 18:20)?

_____ Who is responsible to stand before the JUDGE? "I will _____ you...every one according to his ways" (Ezekiel 18:30). The Grandfather is responsible to do right; the Father is responsible to do right and the son is responsible to do right. Are YOU responsible to do right regardless of what anyone else does? _____

Blessings for Being Responsible

Consider Luke 16:10-12 and Luke 19:12-27. Those who are faithful and responsible over what God has given to them will be given more. Meeting my present responsibilities will lead to even more and greater responsibilities. This is true even in this life. Some men have started off working as janitors of a company. As they faithfully do their work the time comes when they are able to move up the ladder and assume a position working on a machine. As they tackle this new responsibility in the right way the day eventually comes when they are promoted as a foreman. Some even work their way up to being the company president. These are people who meet their responsibilities and are thus given more and more responsibilities.

Often the same is true with athletes. We usually see only the "finished product" as the Marathon runner crosses the finish line. How did he get to be a victor? It took years of hard work, sweat, discipline, and responsible training. Responsibility leads to achievement. Often what we put into something is what we get out (compare Galatians 6:7).

Curses Caused By Being Irresponsible

Those who fail to be responsible will pay for it, not only in the life to come, but even in this life. What a man sows, that he shall reap! Here are some examples of irresponsibility in daily life:

1) A girl is attacked in broad daylight and many people hear her screams but no one wants to get involved. The result: a dead girl. Even without getting involved personally, someone could have at least picked up the phone and called for help! The Bible mentions two men who did not want to get involved (Luke 10:30-32)!

2) Two cars are involved in a serious accident. No one stops to help the victims. No one wants to get involved or to accept the responsibility. The result: some receive medical attention TOO LATE. We are reminded of the age-old question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).

3) A woman neglects her health and fails to get medical check-ups. Cancer detected early can often be removed without too much difficulty. Her cancer is discovered too late. Result: another cancer victim.

4) A young man never has his brakes checked because he does not see the importance of properly maintaining his car. One day his breaks fail on the highway. Result: serious injury.

5) A student fails to study and prepare for the final exam. Result: D+ (Should he blame the teacher?)

Young people should learn responsibility as soon as possible. Consider such a thing as taking care of one's room and clothes. There will come a day when you will be on your own and Mom will no longer be around to take care of such things. Then what shall you do with that pile of laundry?

Irresponsible young people have dreams and desires which are never fulfilled. They are frustrated and ready to give up. Everything seems hopeless and they are unable to cope with things. They are like a derailed train. The passengers may have dreams of getting to their destination and they may strongly desire this, but it will never happen as long as the train is off track.

The rails of responsibility will enable us to make progress and move forward as we rightly handle the realities of life. For example, a student may desire to make the honor roll. As long as the student fails to be responsible by paying attention in class and by faithfully completing assignments, his dream will never be fulfilled. As soon as he decides to get serious about his school obligations, he will begin to hit the books hard and he will be making progress towards his goal. Even if he misses the honor roll, he will be satisfied by the obvious progress that has been made.

Spiritual Responsibilities

Every man has a responsibility before the living God. Suppose everyone around you does not want to be saved and grow in the Lord. Whose fault is it if you do not do these things? Whose fault is it if you are heading in the wrong direction? Whose fault is it if you are following the crowd instead of following the Lord? Whose fault is it if you are not obeying God's Word? Who is to blame? Who is responsible to hear and obey God's Word?

When we turn to the Lord and seek to trust Him and live responsibly, He backs us up all the way. Just think of an intern (student doctor) learning how to operate on a patient. His responsibility is great because a human life is at stake! Should he get all nervous and fearful? No, he can relax completely! Standing over his shoulder is the Head Physician who has performed thousands of operations. The young intern can always ask for help and check with him about any problem he faces. The older doctor will even take over if this is necessary.

Likewise, there is an invisible Hand right there to back up and help the child of God. God is right there to fix things and to prevent things from going wrong. We must simply do our part and learn to commit it all to Him!

ARE YOU THANKFUL THAT GOD ALWAYS ACTS IN A RESPONSIBLE WAY?