



Responsibility

RESPONSIBILITY: EQUIPPED AND WILLING

WOODROW KROLL AND DON HAWKINS

(Jeremiah 1:8-10)



The British naval hero Lord Nelson took his responsibilities very seriously. His last words were, "Thank God, I have done my duty." While that is an admirable goal, fulfilling our responsibilities is not always easy. Sometimes the tasks ahead of us seem so overwhelming that we look for excuses rather than face the possibility of failure. Jeremiah's excuse was his youthfulness (Jer. 1:6); Moses' excuse was his lack of eloquence (Ex. 4:10); Isaiah's excuse was a sense of unworthiness (Is. 6:5).

God does not call people to tasks that they can accomplish on their own, however. His ultimate purpose behind every responsibility is to teach people to find in Him the resources to fulfill their duty. When God calls people to a work, He also equips them to perform their responsibility adequately (2 Tim. 3:17). Accepting a responsibility does not guarantee someone that they will become famous; most of God's servants faithfully minister in the background. Yet with His help, people are able to do all things sufficiently. As God gave Jeremiah the duty to proclaim His message, He also equipped Jeremiah to fulfill that responsibility. In the same way, God equips believers today.

GOD'S PRESENCE

First, God equips people with His presence (Jer. 1:8). During his ministry, Jeremiah found himself in many difficult circumstances. But through it all, God's presence sustained and preserved the prophet. That same presence is with us today as we face our own responsibilities. God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). There is no place or situation to which God calls us that His presence will not follow to equip us for responsibility.

In 1858, Scottish missionary John G. Paton and his wife sailed for the New

Hebrides (now called Vanuatu). Three months after they arrived on the island of Tanna, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, "Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows. But for Jesus, and [His] fellowship—I [would] have gone mad and died." Any responsibility can be achieved when it is undergirded with the comfort of divine presence.

God's presence, as well, gives people the strength and courage to accomplish their responsibilities in spite of obstacles. A French sergeant in World War I found one of his raw recruits huddled in a fox-hole paralyzed with fear. "Come, son," he said, "let's go out together and do great things for France"—and they went. God says to you and me, "Come, let us go together and meet your responsibilities."

GOD'S WORD

Second, God equips people with His Word (Jer. 1:9). Before Jeremiah accepted his responsibility, God placed His words in the young man's mouth. So, as this prophet fulfilled those responsibilities, he continu-

ally spe
knew th
ficient
respons

Not
power
may spe
the "wi
3:17) th
"the w
While
niques
the Bib
will ma

Dr
said, th
format
is a bo
on, an
When
the tas
becom

GOD'S

Finally
ises (2
to wor
compl
Follow
warni
down
God's
was s
respo

Go
today
are 7
these
monu
draw
cious
you;
will s
will t
hand

To Lea
See al

ally spoke forth God's Word. Jeremiah knew that only God-given words were sufficient to empower him to meet God-given responsibilities.

Nothing we have to say carries the power that God's Word does. Though we may speak with great human wisdom, it is the "wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17) that changes people's lives and turns "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). While we may master persuasive techniques to accomplish our responsibilities, the Bible says that it is God's words that will make a difference (Is. 55:11).

Dwight L. Moody was right when he said, "The Bible wasn't given for our information but for our transformation." It is a book we need to read, study, meditate on, and apply to meet our responsibilities. When we need to know how to accomplish the tasks at hand, it is God's Word that becomes a lamp (Ps. 119:105).

GOD'S PROMISES

Finally, God equips people with His promises (Jer. 1:10). Before Jeremiah even went to work, God promised that *He* would accomplish great things through Jeremiah. Follow Jeremiah's ministry though his first warnings of imminent danger to the final downfall of Jerusalem and it is evident that God kept His promise. God's faithfulness was key to Jeremiah's ability to fulfill his responsibility.

God is equally faithful to His promises today. Someone has determined that there are 7,487 promises in the Bible. Many of these apply to us. When we are faced with monumental responsibilities, we must draw strength and courage from such precious promises as "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Is. 41:10), or "Behold, I am the

LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jer. 32:27).

It is little wonder that the great missionary and founder of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor, said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God." We can accept the most challenging responsibilities because we know that God will never fail to bring to pass every word He has spoken.

When tempted to hide behind excuses, step out in faith instead. Be assured that God has equipped us with His presence, His Word, and His promises so that we can adequately meet every responsibility He gives us.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of responsibility include:

- > Ezekiel 3:16-21
- > Matthew 28:18-20
- > John 20:21
- > Galatians 6:1-10
- > Ephesians 4:1-6
- > Hebrews 3:7-15
- > 1 Peter 3:15

Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on responsibility at Matthew 25:14-30 on page 1272. See also the personality profile of Esther on page 633.

who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour^a in which the Son of Man is coming.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

¹⁴For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

²⁰So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' ²¹His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' ²²He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you

delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' ²³His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

²⁴Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

²⁶But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.'

²⁹For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE SON OF MAN WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS

³¹When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy^a angels with Him, then He

^{25:13} ^aNU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

^{25:31} ^aNU-Text omits holy.

KEY PASSAGE

A TALENT FOR INVESTING

(25:14-30)



Responsibility

Jesus told the parable of the talents to teach people about their personal responsibility to be good stewards of His resources. In this parable, a man traveled to a far country and entrusted his servants with investing his money in his absence. One servant received five talents, and after wise investment, earned his master another five. The second servant also doubled his master's money. A third servant, however, hid his one talent, knowing that the master would just come back and claim any earnings for himself.

God gives people diverse gifts and talents along with the responsibility to invest these resources in His kingdom for His glory. The wise and productive use of our God-given talents yields fruit, joy, and glory for God.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about responsibility on pages 962, 963. See also the personality profile of Esther on page 633.

graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

⁵⁴So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, ^a and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

JESUS BURIED IN JOSEPH'S TOMB

⁵⁷Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. ⁵⁹When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

PILATE SETS A GUARD

⁶²On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, ⁶³saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' ⁶⁴Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night ^a and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So

the last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

HE IS RISEN

28 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, ^a and sat on it. ³His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

⁵But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

THE WOMEN WORSHIP THE RISEN LORD

⁹And as they went to tell His disciples, ^a behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do

27:56 ^aNU-Text reads *Joseph*. **27:64** ^aNU-Text omits *by night*. **28:2** ^aNU-Text omits *from the door*. **28:9** ^aNU-Text omits the first clause of this verse



SOUL NOTE

Committed to the Commission (28:19, 20) Jesus left His followers with an awesome responsibility: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." We should take this responsibility seriously. His plan included telling people the Good News about Christ and then baptizing new believers. It also includes teaching them how to grow in their faith and building them up in their personal walk with God. Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. God loves to share His message of hope through His people. We can do this because Jesus goes with us always.

Topic: Responsibility

his house, red. ¹³When his friends, his wise man, "If Mordecai fall, is prevail against him."

with him, the ned to bring her had pre-

MORDECAI

at to dine with second day, at again said to Queen Esther? that is your rem? It shall be

ed and said, "If O king, and if be given me at at my request. ple and I, to be be annihilated. a female slaves, e, although the e for the king's

red and said to and where is he, his heart to do

ersary and ene-

ore the king and

wrath from the o the palace gar- e Queen Esther,

he read a time saved the ing Ahasuerus, matter how t of selfish ive is that

pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. ⁸When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?"

As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. ⁹Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman."

Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"

¹⁰So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.

ESTHER SAVES THE JEWS

8 On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. ²So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, ⁵and said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. ⁶For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

⁷Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews. ⁸You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Respon- sibility

ESTHER: THE BUCK STOPS HERE

(ESTHER 8:1-3)

Responsibility is a weighty word. To take responsibility for something involves work, commitment, problem solving, and taking the heat if something goes wrong. The phrase, "The buck stops here," means that a person must bear the weight of decisions made and take responsibility for them. The responsible person must not "pass the buck" to someone else.

Esther found herself in a position to handle a great responsibility. Her people, the Jews, were to be exterminated at the command of the king—her husband. The king did not know that Esther was a Jew, nor did he know the intrigue behind Haman's suggestion to kill all the Jews. Queen Esther knew that she was the one who should take on the responsibility of saving her people. Her cousin Mordecai perceived that God had chosen this brave young woman and placed her in that position "for such a time as this" (Esth. 4:14). And Esther rose to the occasion.

Some people run from responsibility, not wanting to take the risks or the blame. They don't want to have the buck stop with them. But when believers are doing God's work and trusting Him with the process and the outcome, they can bear that responsibility, knowing that God will see them through.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about responsibility on pages 962, 963. See also the key passage note at Matthew 25:14-30 on page 1272.

tinues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, *and not unless* she has been the wife of one man, ¹⁰well reported for

good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.

¹¹But refuse *the* younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹²having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³And besides they learn *to be* idle,

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Life Transitions

TIMOTHY: LOTS OF CHANGES

(1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16)

Timothy had experienced many changes throughout his young life. When he received this letter from Paul, he was already the pastor of the large church that Paul had planted in Ephesus. Yet Timothy was still a young man, for Paul encouraged him by writing, "Let no one despise your youth." So it seems Timothy had come a long way in a short time.

Timothy had been born of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and had received religious training through his mother and grandmother. When the great apostle Paul made his way to Lystra, he met this young man who appeared to have great potential. Because Timothy "was well spoken of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2), Paul invited him to join his second missionary journey.

Timothy seems to have been somewhat timid, for Paul often encouraged him in these letters. With a man like Paul behind him, Timothy could hardly help but grow into a strong leader. Paul entrusted him with several important missions, some of which consisted of traveling in Paul's place when he was imprisoned or detained for some reason.

Life is filled with change. We grow; we develop; we mature. Some people go through many changes before becoming Christians. Others are fortunate enough to come to the Lord at a young age and experience their changes with Him. Hopefully, the changes we experience help us grow and mature as Timothy did. When we are open to God's will, we never know what surprises He may have for us.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about life transitions on pages 540, 541. See also the key passage note at Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 on page 854.

SOUL NOTE



Unwrapped Gifts (4:14, 15) Paul encouraged Timothy to "not neglect the gift" that God had given him. God gives spiritual gifts to all believers. These gifts include teaching, hospitality, giving, or showing mercy (others are listed in Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Each person is responsible for discovering and using their own gifts for God's kingdom. The variety of gifts is needed in order for the church to function at its best. Not everyone has every gift, so the church needs all believers to be using responsibly the gifts God has chosen to give them. The church is in operating mode when all of its gifts are! **Topic: Responsibility**