

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

Ten Values for God's People

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Responsibility is the ability to respond. It is free will...one of the greatest gifts that God has given us. If we didn't have free will, then we would be robots. But God created us in His image with the freedom to choose God or not, the freedom to obey God or not, the freedom to love God or not. Our God-given response-abilities shape our character. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Brandeis said: "Responsibility is the great developer." Personal responsibility is first among the values God has for His People. Look at the first command in **Exodus 20:3** "**YOU SHALL have no other gods before me.**" What are the first two words? "You shall"...meaning personal responsibility. All of the values God has for us are built upon our God-given personal responsibility.

The acceptance of personal responsibility has become rare in our culture where we accuse and excuse. We want to accuse other people, "it's all their fault" - and we want to excuse ourselves, "it's not my fault." Why do we accuse and excuse? Primarily because of 3 common mindsets...

The rights mentality basically goes: "I have my rights! That is all I'm interested in." John Leo wrote in *U.S. News and World Report*:

Today American politics is awash in 'rights' talk. We have criminal rights, computer rights, animal rights, children's rights, victim's rights, abortion rights, housing rights, privacy rights, you name it... Our culture has reached the point where the obsession with individual rights is making it hard for us to think socially. Along with our Bill of Rights, what we need is a Bill of Responsibilities.

We already have one...it's called the Ten Commandments.

The victim mentality basically goes: "None of my problems are my fault. They are your fault." We blame...spelled "b-lame". When you blame others for your unhappiness, you are being lame.

The entitlement mentality basically goes: "I deserve it." The world owes me a living. Baby boomers (all 76 million of us) grew up provided for by their parents and then by the government.

Counter to these go **The Christian mentality**: "**God loves me - and wants me to receive that love and to love Him back, daily and eternally.**" The choices I make show God - and God's place in my life. Other reasons to accept responsibility. . .

God is watching me. Hebrews 4:13 *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.* God sees it all and God is going to judge us one day and evaluate our lives on how we lived. Life is a test. "What did you do with what I gave you?" Daniel Webster said, "The most important idea I ever thought was the day I realized that I am personally and individually accountable to God for how I lived."

Others are affected by my life. 1 Corinthians 10:24 *Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.* When somebody in your family has a problem it's not their problem; it's the family's problem. It influences everybody in the family. The choices we make influence our friends and our neighborhoods and our church and, to some degree, our society. We are all inter connected.

God rewards those who choose Him and His way of love. Matthew 25:23 *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness!"* Why should God give you more of anything if you're not responsible with what you've got right now?

The Book of Proverbs addresses how to live a "wise" or responsible life.

1. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY BY CONTROLLING YOUR REACTIONS. Proverbs 29:11 *A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.* We can't control tragedies that happen but we can control our response. Responsibility is when you can handle stress without stressing out. A key to responsibility is learning to control emotional reactions. **Romans 12: 21** *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.* Let God settle the score...He has better resources than you do to do it.

2. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY BY GUARDING YOUR MIND. Proverbs 15:14 *The discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of a fool feeds on folly.* Garbage in, garbage out, folks. I know true believers who consume trash TV, trash movies, and trash magazines...then they say it doesn't phase them. Who are they kidding? Scientists have shown you never forget things you see. They can stimulate parts of the brain and it all comes back in living color. It's all stored in the hard drive of your brain. Let me relieve you of a little false guilt...you are not responsible for every stray thought you have...that is called temptation. You are responsible for what you choose to focus on. The eye-gate and the ear-gate. God is going to hold us accountable for what we think about and what we allow into our minds.

3. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY BY ADMITTING YOUR MISTAKES. Proverbs 28:13 *He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.* God always gives more chances if we confess and leave behind our sin. Typically we try to accuse and excuse. The fact is: we've all blown it. We've all been irresponsible. The Bible calls it sin. But God doesn't want us going around with a heavy guilt trip about our irresponsibility. God wants us to have help and hope. God can even bring good out of the stupid decisions that we make in life if we will let Him. But it takes a Savior who can forgive sin, clear the conscience, and break the cycle. Here's the good news (**Romans 3:23**, Living Bible) *All of us have fallen short* (that's a no-brainer since I don't hold up to my own standards, much less God's and neither do you)...**yet now God declares us 'not guilty' if we trust in Jesus Christ who freely takes away our sins.**

4. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY BY BEING WISE STEWARDS. Proverbs 21:20 *In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.* Our treasure, our time, and our talents - we will give an account of our stewardship of all God has entrusted us with. In Japan they save 25% average of their personal income, in Europe, 15%, in America, 5%. Why? Instant gratification. Buy now, pay later. The average American puts \$1300 on his credit card for every \$1000 he makes. What's wrong with this picture? Only the government can get away with deficit spending. God says it's foolish. Regardless of how little you make, you need to learn to live on a margin. Live on less so you can put away some to save. God says that is being responsible.

That is just a start. I challenge you to **study Proverbs** on how the "wise" (or responsible) person is to live (note the opposites for the "fool"). As Christians or "Christ-ones", we accept responsibility for what we do with all that God has given to us. We have "**no god but God.**" This is the first commandment. Jesus goes beyond the letter of the Law to the spirit of the Law when he quotes **Deuteronomy 6:5** "**Love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**" **This is the first and greatest commandment.**" Accepting God's place in our world and how we are to live because of who God is and who we are through Him. Christians, accept your responsibility.