



## The Local Church (V)

("Responsibilities Of The Individual To The Local Church")

by Vernon Teagarden

We have learned that members of a local congregation have responsibilities to one another as well as to the Lord. Regarding those in Thessalonica who had become Christians, the apostle Paul wrote that they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). Thayer indicates that the word "serve" means "to obey one's commands and render to him the services due." Some Christians have only a vague idea of what is involved in "serving" God. We shall find it impossible to serve God acceptably until we learn what is involved in the concept of "responsibility." Of course, by "responsibility" we mean that which includes our obligations and duties. So, let us begin to take a look at the responsibilities of the individual Christian to the local church by taking a look at: (1) Of what does responsibility consist; (2) How one can know what his duties to the local congregation are; (3) The need for personal discipline in accepting responsibility.

## OF WHAT DOES RESPONSIBILITY CONSIST?

The Bible teaches that responsibility is in direct proportion to ability and opportunity. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus taught the parable of the talents. Take note of the fact that the master traveling into a far country gave unto his servants "talents" according to each one's "ability." When the lord of those servants returned from his journey each servant was brought before him to give an account of what he did with what had been given him. Two servants used their ability and increased their master's goods while one failed to use his ability and did nothing with the talent given him. The one who failed to use his ability, and therefore meet his responsibility, was punished.

In Galatians 6:10, the apostle Paul taught the Galatians, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those of the household of faith." In Philippians 4:10, Paul said, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." In view of these things, we may say that ability plus opportunity equals responsibility.

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## The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

35 Walnut Court

Mogadore, OH 44260

Phone: 330.628.7432

## SERVICES:

### Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

### Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

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We depend on God for both ability and opportunity (2 Cor. 3:5, 6; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). Having been provided ability and opportunity we have the duty to do what we can (Col. 4:17; 2 Tim. 4:5; Gal. 6:10). In fact, the greater our ability and opportunities, the greater our responsibilities will be. Many will be lost because they, like the one talent man of Matthew 25, failed to use their ability and opportunities in carrying out the Lord's will.

## HOW CAN ONE KNOW WHAT ABILITIES HE HAS?

The simplest answer to this question is through prayer, study of the scriptures, serious thought and meditation, and asking other wiser and older Christians for advice. In congregations where there are elders ask them about what abilities you may have. One needs to seek answers to such questions as: (1) In what way am I especially blessed by the Lord? (2) What advantages have I that perhaps others may not enjoy? (3) What is there about my particular situation that can be turned to good advantage in the local congregation? (4) What do I possess that can be used in the work of the church? For example, time, money, car, phone, and Bible knowledge, to list a few. (5) From what things do I derive satisfaction? One of the greatest sources of energy is pride in what one is doing. (6) What things do I enjoy doing? This does not mean that one is not obligated to fulfill responsibilities regarding things not enjoyed. (7) What things come naturally for me? (8) What things might I learn to do?

## HOW CAN ONE KNOW WHAT OPPORTUNITIES HE HAS?

Again, prayer, study of the scriptures, serious thought and meditation, and seeking the advice of older, wiser Christians are essential in finding answers to this question. Again, in congregations where there are elders overseeing the work, seek their advice concerning

what needs to be done and what you can do to help. In addition, seek answers to such questions as: (1) What things need to be done within the total work of the congregation? (2) What kinds of lawful (scriptural) activities can individuals engage in to contribute to the spiritual health and growth of the local church? (3) What is being done inadequately, or not at all? (4) What problems exist? (5) What are others doing that I need to help do? (6) What restrictions are placed on me by the scriptures? (7) What are other factors that might limit any opportunities?

## THE NEED FOR PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

All of us need to be constantly reminded that the local church is a sphere of activity. Although most of us will never do great things, we all can do small things in a "great way." (Cf. Mk. 12:43, 44; 14:18). We need to constantly remind ourselves of the many, many "small" things that mean so much to the work of the local church. Such things as visits, cards, phone calls, welcoming visitors, giving an encouraging word to someone, helping the sick, the needy, the bereaved, and inviting others to the services are all very important. Actually, the list of possibilities is almost endless.

Someone has said, "In any endeavor, the real question is not whether we can master the job, but whether we can master ourselves." The important concern, then, is what we do with our abilities and opportunities. One cannot waste time waiting for the

perfect conditions (Eccl. 11:3, 4). One cannot waste time comparing himself with others (2 Cor. 10:12). Instead, we must soberly evaluate our own abilities and opportunities, and make the most of them. Time is running out. We must, "work for the night is coming ..." (Jn. 9:4; 12:35).

This congregation needs every one of its members to make an honest inventory of his or her abilities and opportunities. Then make a firm decision to use these to the fullest, and then, to act on that decision. When that happens, God will receive the glory that is due him (1 Pet. 4:10, 11).

(Next, "Our Responsibility To  
Be Active In Personal  
Evangelism")

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## Time To Plant The Seed!

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God" ( Luke 8:11). Have you considered the characteristics of a seed? A seed may look dead to some but there is literally life in it. In the right conditions it will grow and even produce. The right condition for the "seed" to grow is an honest and good heart. This is the perfect environment for the word of God to thrive and blossom, manifesting itself in the abundant spiritual life of a child of God.

While the word of God may be considered a "dead" book by many, we as Christians recognize that it is the "seed" holding the power of God unto salvation. Let us all plant it!

- Jeff Haught