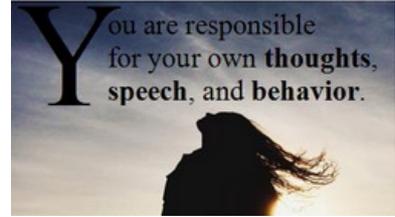


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INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARDS TO THE ASSEMBLY WE ARE OBLIGED TO FULFILL



Introduction

1. We were taught about responsibility as we were growing up, and whether we heeded those lessons will be evident to all as we live out our daily lives.
2. There are several spheres in which we may have responsibilities: at home, at school, at work, at a congregation, and as a citizen of this country. Some of the responsibilities we have may be pleasant and some unpleasant, but a mature person always fulfills the responsibilities assigned to him. An irresponsible person will likely fulfill some of his responsibilities, but perhaps in a sloppy manner or he may just fail to fulfill them altogether.
3. In this lesson we shall highlight seven responsibilities we have in regards to the assembly that we are obliged to fulfill. These are not obligations imposed upon us by man, the congregation, or tradition, but by God Himself. Our response to these responsibilities reveals much about our character and attitude toward the scriptures and the Lord Himself.

Quotes About Responsibility

(from Advice For Daily Living by David Collins)

“You cannot be truly independent unless you take responsibility for all your thoughts, speech, and behavior” (Set 6, 13).

“A responsible person takes the heat for his own mistakes, but an irresponsible man is a master at blaming others” (Set 6, 14).

“Sometimes, due to the high expectation of his peers, even an irresponsible man will bear some responsibilities, but his heart is grieved and he wishes someone else were assigned his responsibilities” (Set 7, 11).

“You may have been taught responsibility as a child, but, ultimately, being responsible is a decision you make for yourself” (Set 8, 7).

“A responsible person knows true freedom, but an irresponsible man is in bondage to the will of others” (Set 10, 5).

“A person of courage takes responsibility for his own actions, but an irresponsible man reveals his cowardness” (Set 10, 6).

“A responsible man is passionate in all that he does, but an irresponsible person lacks commitment” (Set 37, 5).

“When a responsible person makes a mistake he blames himself, but an irresponsible man is always full of excuses” (Set 38, 8).

“A responsible person will be called trustworthy, but an irresponsible person will be called lazy” (Set 39, 10).

7 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARDS TO THE ASSEMBLY WE ARE OBLIGED TO FULFILL

1. To attend services on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:18**).
2. To strive to keep the unity of the Spirit (**Ephesians 4:1-3**).
3. To worship God in sincerity (**Philippians 3:3**).
4. To edify one another (**Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Romans 14:19**).
5. To give into the treasury for the work of the church (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8**).
6. To provoke one another unto love and good works (**Hebrews 10:24**).
7. To demonstrate our love for one another (**Romans 12:10; 13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12**).

7 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARDS TO THE ASSEMBLY WE ARE OBLIGED TO FULFILL

1. TO ATTEND SERVICES ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK (Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 11:18)

It is each Christian's responsibility to attend the assemblies at the appointed times.

- a. We will take it for granted that we all believe that a Christian ought to assemble on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). There are many reasons for assembling: to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-34), that the church might edify itself (1 Corinthians 14:26), to worship (1 Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 5:19, etc.), and to do all the collective work assigned to the church by God.
- b. Our relationship with God is an individual relationship and we will each be judged according to our deeds (Romans 2:5-11). God does not judge groups, He judges individuals. Every individual is responsible for fulfilling the obligations that God has placed upon him. We meet together on the first day of the week and do things together or collectively, and yet God holds each individual responsible for his thoughts, speech, and conduct. For example, we partake of the Lord's Supper together, and yet we are each responsible for ensuring that we partake in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).
- c. God wants all of us to assemble on the first day of the week and we all have individual responsibilities in the assemblies for which we will be held accountable.
 - 1) Why should I accept that it is my own personal responsibility to attend services? Because...
 - a) God commands it (Hebrews 10:25).
 - b) God expects us to fulfill all our other responsibilities that are placed upon us as a member of the congregation (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Colossians 3:16, etc.).
 - c) We are committed to serving God and serving our brethren (Matthew 6:33).
 - d) We desire to assemble with the saints (Psalms 63:1-3; 122:1).
 - 2) What does it say about me if I do not fulfill my responsibility to attend services? It means...
 - a) I do not love God (1 John 5:3).
 - b) I count as nothing and despise all the responsibilities that God has given to me to fulfill in the assemblies – I am irresponsible.
 - c) I lack commitment to God and despise my brethren.
 - d) I do not really have a desire to assemble with the saints.
- d. As responsible adults and children of God, we gladly accept the responsibilities and obligations that God has placed upon us. One such obligation is to assemble with the saints at the appointed times, and **each one is responsible to get himself to the assembly.**

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

2. TO STRIVE TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Each one of us has the responsibility to maintain the unity of the Spirit. It is not “their” responsibility, it *your* responsibility.

- a. The irresponsible party supervisor:
 - 1) A big party has been organized for 100 two year old children (it is at two years old that a child goes through a stage of development when they are prone to terrible tantrums). The hall has been hired, a present for each child is on one table, and on another three tables there are all kinds of delicious foods: chocolate cakes, jelly, sweets, etc. And a party like that would not be complete without a bouncy castle. Obviously, you need several adults to supervise the party and maintain order. Unfortunately, all the supervising adults have suddenly fallen sick, and so at the last minute your boss appoints **you** to supervise the whole event by yourself. So you turn up for the start of the party at 11am, but two minutes later you decide to abandon the children and go shopping for the day. What would you expect to find when you returned at the end of the day at 6pm?

- 2) One can only imagine the anarchy and pandemonium: (i) there would be chocolate cake and jelly all over the floor, the walls, and the children, (ii) many of the children would be fighting, screaming, and having tantrums. Some, no doubt, would be injured. I could go on, but I am sure you can picture the terrible scene. How do you think all those parents will react when they come to pick up their children? Do you think they will have something to say to you? What will everyone think of you?
 - 3) To be given a responsibility and then fail to fulfill it says a lot about a person's attitude toward those that have authority over them and a lot about their character, doesn't it? The bewildered boss says, "You are irresponsible, selfish, and without any concern for the safety of the children you were supposed to be supervising. And yet when you were interviewed for this job, you said you were trustworthy and hardworking, a good organizer, and that you loved children. Indeed, you appeared to be a nice person". Would you be surprised if his next words were, "You're fired!"?
- b. One of the responsibilities that is placed upon each one of us is revealed to us by Paul: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace" (**Ephesians 4:1-3**).
- How a person responds to the responsibilities that God has given to him reveals much about his love for God, his commitment to the Lord, and his character.
- 1) The word "endeavoring" is from the Greek word *spoudazo* and the CWSD says, "To make every effort to do one's best, to be eager", and Thayer says, "To exert one's self, endeavour, give diligence". The word "keep" is from the Greek word *tereo* and VWS says, "Keeping as the result of guarding", and the CWSD says, "To keep an eye on, watch, and hence to guard, keep".
 - 2) It is the "unity of the Spirit" of which *every individual* is charged to make every effort to keep or guard. Unity doesn't just happen and neither is it maintained by accident; *every individual* must make every effort to keep it.
- c. Here are some questions for each one of us: "Are you endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit?" and, "If so, can you explain exactly what is involved in keeping the unity of the Spirit?" "Many years ago I conducted a survey among the members of our congregation. Over a period of five months I asked one hundred and fifty-two members 'How does one endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit?' twenty-three brethren were able to answer and one hundred and twenty-nine were unable to answer" (David Collins).
- 1) If we love God and love our brethren, then we will respond positively to this responsibility to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit that the Lord has laid upon each one of us. The onus is on each one of us to find out what the Lord is teaching and what we need to do to fulfill this responsibility.
 - 2) To simply ignore this command is to disobey God and reveals much about our love for God, our commitment to the Lord, and our character.

3. TO WORSHIP GOD IN SINCERITY (Philippians 3:3)

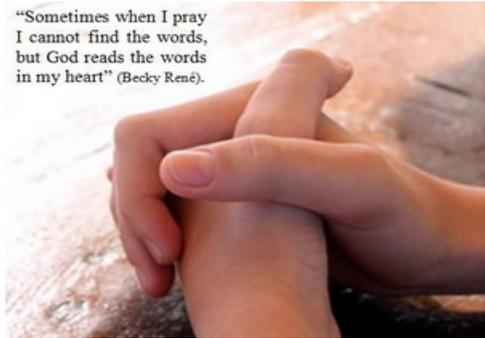
Manifold blessings are upon the one that worships God in sincerity, but a terrible end awaits the hypocrite; an end even worse than an unbeliever.

- a. There have been, and always will be, those that do not worship God in sincerity. They may go through the motions, but their hearts are not engaged. Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus quoted a verse from Isaiah that was appropriate to their condition: "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (**Matthew 15:8**).
- b. Each one of us is responsible to worship God in sincerity:
 - 1) As we partake of the Lord's Supper, we must ensure that our thoughts are appropriately focused. We must understand what we are doing and that we do so in a worthy manner (**1 Corinthians 11:23-29**).
 - 2) When we give into the treasury each one must do so "as he purposes in his heart" and with cheerfulness (**2 Corinthians 9:7**).

3) When one of the men leads in prayer, each one of us must ensure he understands what is being said so that he can say a hearty “Amen”. As Paul says, “I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15a).

4) Each one of us is responsible to sing, making sure we are “making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19). As with prayer, we must sing with the spirit, and sing with the understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15b).

5) Edification is an important part of our worship and each one of us participates in it. The preachers and teachers edify the whole church (Ephesians 4:11-16), and we edify one another through our singing (Colossians 3:16), partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26), and our prayers (1 Corinthians 14:15-17).



c. Each one of us, then, is responsible to worship God in sincerity. The person standing next to you cannot tell whether you are sincere or not because no one has the ability to see into another person’s heart. But God observes all our thoughts (Psalms 139:2) and knows the secrets of our hearts (Psalms 44:21). If any one of us fails in our responsibility to worship God in sincerity, it is not the person next to us that suffers the consequences, it is us. The consequences – unhappiness, guilt, spiritual death.

4. TO EDIFY ONE ANOTHER (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Romans 14:19)

We do not come to services to be passive recipients, but to be active participants. Each one of us is responsible to pursue peace and edify his brethren.

a. Some people mistakenly think that only the preacher and Bible class teacher have the responsibility of edifying the church. While it is true that they do have this responsibility (Ephesians 4:11-12), it is also true that **each one** of us has a responsibility to edify his brethren.

1) Paul says, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, **each of you** has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (1 Corinthians 14:26).

2) Paul says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16). The body will only grow if each part does its share.

3) Regarding the truths Paul had just been discussing, he says to the Thessalonian brethren, “Therefore comfort each other and **edify one another**, just as you also are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

4) Some of the ways we can edify one another are through our singing (Colossians 3:16), partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:26), our prayers (1 Corinthians 14:15-17), and sound teaching (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

b. Not only do we each have a responsibility to edify one another, we each have a responsibility to *pursue* ways to edify one another. Paul says, “Therefore let us **pursue** the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Romans 14:19). The word “pursue” is from the Greek word *dioko* and it means, “To follow or press hard after, to pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain, to go after with the desire of obtaining” (CWSD). Think about that! We do not just wait for opportunities to arise to edify our brethren, we must actively *pursue* ways to edify our brethren.

Therefore let us **PURSUE** the things which make for **peace** and the things by which one may **edify** another (Romans 14:19).

c. Each one of us is responsible to pursue the things by which we may edify one another. It is not “his” responsibility or “their” responsibility is **your** responsibility. Are you fulfilling this responsibility? One of the reasons we assemble together is so we can fulfill this responsibility.

5. TO GIVE INTO THE TREASURY FOR THE WORK OF THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

Every member of the body of Christ is responsible to set aside what he purposes in his in heart and contribute into the treasury that we might carry out the work God has assigned us.

- a. God has assigned certain works for each congregation to fulfill: evangelism, benevolence, and edification. This requires money. Is it scriptural for a congregation to have a treasury? I believe we can establish the scripturalness of such:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. Paul instructed the churches of Galatia and the church at Corinth to take up a weekly collection for needy saints. There will always be needy saints and so there will always be a need to keep taking up a collection for such.
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 9:14; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 4:15-18. These passages show that preachers were supported by various congregations. Since it was congregations that sent the funds, what is implied? I think you can see that each congregation must have maintained a treasury.
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 14:23-26; Ephesians 14:26. The church is to edify itself. There are various expenses that arise from this work and it is appropriate to pay for these out of the church treasury. Since such costs will keep reoccurring, then a treasury would need to be maintained.
- b. Just as we ought to sing and pray with the understanding, so we should give with the understanding. This means that we should (i) know how the money in the treasury is being spent and (ii) be sure that it is being used in a scriptural way. God holds each one of us to account for what we support.
- c. However you get an income - from an inheritance, your job, an allowance, etc. – you are responsible to give to the work of the church. Paul says, “On the first day of every week, **each of you** is to put something aside...” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

6. TO PROVOKE ONE ANOTHER UNTO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS (Hebrews 10:24)

Each one of us is responsible to provoke one another to love and good works.

- a. The Hebrew writer exhorts brethren, saying, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). In the context, the writer is encouraging them to take their attention away from their personal concerns and focus on the concerns of one another.
 - 1) The words “stir up” come from the Greek word *paroxusmos*, which means, “An inciting, incitement” (Thayer), and, “To stir up, provoke” (CWSD).
 - 2) Thus, we are to incite or provoke one another to “love” (agape) and “good works”.
- b. There are two sinful reactions to this command: (i) [instead of provoking one another to love and good works] to provoke one another to wars and fights (read 1 Corinthians), and (ii) to do nothing! The results, though, are the same... spiritual death.
- c. A congregation might die through wars and fighting or through apathy and complacency. But, either way, such takes place when individuals do not fulfill their responsibility to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). Are you fulfilling your responsibility?

“How often I have heard Christians refuting the errors of denominationalism and rebuking them for not having a love for the truth, but are we any better if we fail to fulfill such a basic responsibility?” (David Collins)

7. TO DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER (Romans 12:10; 13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).

Our love for the brethren is the proof that we love God.

- a. John makes this incredible statement about the depth of our love for one another: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). He then also says, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death” (1 John 3:14).

- 1) The same love that the Lord demonstrated toward us (**Romans 5:8**) is the same love we ought to be willing to demonstrate toward our brethren. This is the depth of the love we must have toward one another. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (**John 13:34**).
- 2) In demonstrating our love toward one another we are proving that we have passed from death to life and that we are disciples of Christ (**John 13:35**).
- b. There are a myriad of ways that we demonstrate our love for the brethren: (i) showing concern for one another’s spiritual needs (**Galatians 6:1**), (ii) providing for one another’s physical needs (**1 John 3:16-17; James 2:14-18**), (iii) showing concern for one another’s emotional needs (**Romans 12:15**), (iv) showing hospitality (**Romans 12:13; 3 John 1:5-8**), etc. The love we demonstrate must be sincere and from the heart (**1 Peter 1:22**).
- c. Each individual Christian has the responsibility and obligation to demonstrate love toward their fellow brethren (**John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10**), and love is something we must *pursue* (**1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22**). The word “pursue” means, “To follow or press hard after, to pursue with earnestness and diligence in order to obtain, to go after with the desire of obtaining” (CWSD). Are you fulfilling your responsibility in pursuing love?

Joe comes to the assembly every week, sits through the services and then goes home. He says he loves God and his brethren, but he never demonstrates that love.

“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (**1 John 3:10**).

Conclusion

1. We have many responsibilities in life, but in this lesson we have considered seven responsibilities we have in regards to the assembly: (i) to attend services on the first day of the week, (ii) to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit, (iii) to worship God in sincerity, (iv) to edify one another, (v) to give into the treasury for the work of the church, (vi) to provoke one another to love and good works, and (vii) to demonstrate our love for one another from the heart.
2. If you are fulfilling all your responsibilities, you do well. But let us not become satisfied - the scriptures tell us to continue in good works (**1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 13:1**) and abound (**Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9-10; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7**).
3. If you are not fulfilling your responsibilities, then you can begin fulfilling them today. If you need further clarification or have any questions, then talk to someone as soon as you can. Remember, to be fully aware of your responsibilities and to ignore them, is to disobey God. We cannot claim to have a relationship with God if we disobey Him who gave His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

Our response to the responsibilities that God has given us reveals much about our character, our attitude toward the scriptures and the Lord Himself.

“Only when we're being who we're supposed to be individually can the church be what it's supposed to be corporately” (Wes McAdams).