

Discipleship Groups — Level 7
WEEK 3
Life Check: My Responsibility

At the beginning of this round of discipleship, we talked about a life of fruitfulness, and that we have a choice of whether we are going to be good soil or allow the things of this life to choke the fruit of our faith out of us. God's Word needs to produce fruit—if we receive it, and then we don't let it work in us to change us and transform us to be like Jesus, then what is the point of receiving it? That change and transformation is the very fruit God is looking for. Of course, if we receive it, then it needs to start changing the things that are happening inside of us and produce the fruit of righteous living that honors God in all things.

So, the fruit of the Spirit's transformation in us is what our lives start to produce as God works in us. Galatians chapter 5 verses 22-23 says, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."* However, this was never meant to be a closed list, as if it was THE list of the ONLY good things that God produces in our lives. There are many more. As a matter of fact, Ephesians 5:9 says, *"Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord."*

Everything that is good, right, and true is what pleases the Lord—that's the fruit. Everything that makes us men that are more faithful, more pure, more respectful, less dependent on the things of this world, more honoring, more loving, stronger, and more faithful in all things is what is pleasing to the Lord. This is how God Himself is, and the fruit of His Word is that He is making us to be like Him. He is kind, patient, faithful, truthful, forgiving, righteous, integrous, and good in all He does—and He expects the same from us by the working of His Word and the Holy Spirit in our lives.

One of the fruits of God's goodness, righteousness, and truth being produced in us is that we are becoming men of responsibility. We are responsible for our words, our actions, and to be faithful to fulfill the commitments we make. Responsibility and faithfulness to our word are the opposite of lies, flakiness, and overall immaturity. Mature men are responsible men in both word and deed.

Ecclesiastes 5:33 says, *"When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow."* Jesus picks up on this concept, which is also found in the book of Deuteronomy, and in Matthew 5:31 He says regarding your vows, or your promises, *"Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one."*

It sounds harsh that something we deem as fairly trivial would come "from the evil one." We see our words, and sometimes even our responsibilities, as trivial—God does not. Our responsibility, our dependability, our faithfulness, our credibility, our honor, and our respect are wrapped up in our word. As a matter of fact, our salvation or condemnation

is wrapped up in our word, as well! Romans 10:9 says that *“if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with the mouth that you confess and are saved.”* Take note of the powerful role your word of confession plays in God’s saving your soul. There must be a faithful and faith-filled affirmation—and God takes you at your word.

We live in a society that does not want to offend. So often, when an invitation is offered, the person will say, “Yeah! Great! Sounds Good! I’ll totally be there!” Yet they have no intention of ever coming. That is a lie; it is not the truth. You cannot be faithful, dependable and responsible when you don’t tell the truth. If you don’t want to go, it is not an offense to say, “I don’t think I’ll be there, but thanks for the invitation.” Or if you might go, you can say, “I can’t promise that I’ll be there.” But there is no truth in saying you will be somewhere or do something just to not make the person feel bad in the moment. A man of dependable responsibility says “yes” or “no,” and then follows through with what he says. If you live otherwise, you will gain a reputation for being a liar and undependable.

Matt. 12:33-37 says, *“A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad. You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you.”*

Because God is always faithful to His Word, God will take us at our word and hold us accountable to what we say.

Part of our responsibility and dependability as men is Punctuality. Punctuality is a sign of what we consider valuable. I have heard people say many times, “I can never get anywhere on time.” That’s not truthful. You are on time for something you pay to go see—a concert, movie, or sporting event. You get to work on time every day. So what are you saying by not being on time to worship the Lord on Sunday mornings? I’ll be on time to make money, and I’ll be on time for the things I pay for and put my personal priorities on, but I can’t (or won’t) be on time to honor the Lord. What does that say about you?

So, we value our work and the things we pay for—and we show our esteem for those things with our timeliness. A lack of punctuality is considered a lack of respect (of course there is grace for emergencies and things like that). Walking into church 15-30 minutes late, as most of the congregation does, says that “I don’t care about how this affects anyone else.” It also says that “my time is more valuable than yours”—and that is not being said so much to the pastor as it is being said to the Lord!

Let us, then, be men of courage, honor, fidelity and responsibility. We can lead our families in this area by becoming responsible men.

God bless you. Talk about these things together. Pray for each other. And I might say, come on, time to church next Sunday. All right. God bless you. We'll see you then.