

## HOW FAITHFUL ARE WE?

All of us have "things" that we need to do. We call these things "responsibilities." There is no age discrimination with responsibilities. Though you may be retired, you still have responsibilities that you need to carry out. Even little children have responsibilities that they must carry out. This is part of life; it sort of goes with the territory. Some responsibilities are rather mundane. For example, it may be something as simple as putting out the trash once each week. If you do that, then all goes well; however, if you neglect your responsibility, then it doesn't take long for the consequences of neglect to show up. The trash takes up room, it may start to smell, you may attract rats or mice, or if it goes on long enough, your neighbors may think you are weird. On the other hand, responsibilities can be quite important and the consequences more serious. Paying your taxes, taking care of your health, going to work, carrying out the assigned job, paying your bills – all these are but a few of the responsibilities people usually accept as a part of life. Of course, we have responsibilities that are related to the Kingdom of God and these are not only of a spiritual nature but also have to do with how we use physical resources to help the Kingdom. Just as neglect of responsibilities will catch up with us and the consequences have to be faced if we don't take out the trash or pay our taxes, the consequence of neglecting our responsibilities in the Kingdom of God will have to be faced.

**LUKE 19:11** Jesus spoke often about the Kingdom of God and many people thought this would show up with some sort revolution where the Roman would be defeated and ejected and the Messiah would physically rule. Many people thought that was what Jesus meant by the use of the term "salvation." As He approached Jerusalem, some in the crowd may have thought the revolution was about to begin. The purpose of this parable was to teach about values in the Kingdom (such as

faithfulness to responsibilities), the fact that the Messiah would need to go away and then return, and that those who reject the Lordship of Christ would be dealt with severely.

**LUKE 19:12-13** In the occupied territories Rome controlled, it was the practice when a new ruler over a certain area was appointed, he would go to Rome and be commissioned for the assignment. He would know what the purpose of the trip would be and before he would leave he would call in the people that would help him govern and give them assignments to carry out while he was gone. In this way, he could get on with the job of governing when he returned. Jesus captured this idea with the giving of a sum of money to a group of servants. The amount of money is not particularly important, except that it was not a great amount to any one person. The instructions were to "occupy" until I return. We automatically interpret that to mean, "invest this money" which is what they were supposed to do. However, the word "occupy" implies more than just investing as we normally think of the term. Most people invest in a somewhat passive sense. We buy stocks or bonds or CDs and then go off and do something else as that investment either gains or loses. Jesus was implying something more than a passive involvement with the term *occupy*. The Greek word (*pragmateuomai*) literally means to "to carry on a business." This meaning gives us a sense of a more active involvement and more of a devotion to duty than "invest" might imply. It is as if the nobleman is saying to the servants, "make this your occupation until I return." If we took the commands of Jesus as something that we are to actively pursue (as an occupation) rather than something that we more passively engage in, then we might see more fruit from the investment that He has entrusted to us.

**LUKE 19:14** At first glance this verse doesn't seem to fit in the parable about faithfulness to assigned responsibilities in the

Kingdom of God. Jesus introduced this to show the difference in irresponsibility and open rebellion and how these will be dealt with in the Kingdom of God.

**LUKE 19:15-19** With responsibility comes accountability. If we could keep this concept in mind, then our devotion to our responsibilities might be more faithful. The nobleman had returned and his servants were called in to account for what they had done. This is a picture of the Judgement Seat of Christ. In the application of this parable to the Kingdom of God, Jesus is the nobleman who is going away to receive the Kingdom and Christians are the servants that have received empowerment from Him to do a job to get the territory ready for His return. When He returns each of us will be called upon to give an account of what we have done with the spiritual gifts God has given to us. Some Christians are going to be surprised on that day because they will not even realize that they had a spiritual gift that they were supposed to have used to promote the Kingdom of God.

This time of accounting that Jesus related starts off with a happy, upbeat situation. The first servant to come forth had seen his money or gift multiply by a factor of ten. Since the nobleman had been assigned to govern the entire region, he needed others that he could count on to help. This servant appeared to be someone who was responsible and he was rewarded with great responsibility. In the same way the second servant had increased his gift by a factor of five and he was given more responsibility to which his faithfulness could be applied.

**LUKE 19:20-21** Jesus did not tell us of all ten of the servants, but skipped to the one who had acted irresponsibly. This one had done nothing with the money that had been entrusted to him. He didn't even put it in the bank to earn interest. Inflation was a fact of life in those days and the money had actually decreased in value while he held it. That the way it is with the gifts that God gives to us. If we don't use them, then they lose their value. This irresponsible servant used fear of failure

as his excuse. How many times have you known people who refused to take on responsibility because they were afraid that someone would criticize them or make fun of what they were doing? In this man's case, he claimed that he feared his master. This seems to be an excuse, since real fear of his master would have led him to do the master's bidding rather than do nothing at all.

**LUKE 19:22-26** The judgement the king rendered against this servant recognized that if the man had really feared the king he would have been obedient. The man had other things with which he was occupied or other things he feared more.

The money the irresponsible servant had was given to the servant that was most productive. Is this not what you would do? If you had two stock brokers who were advising you on what stocks to buy and one consistently gave you good advice that caused your money to double every year and the other one's advice did not result in any earnings, then you would take the money away from the second broker and invest it with the guy with the better track record.

**LUKE 19:27** There is a difference in irresponsibility and open rebellion. Some people embrace the salvation that is offered by God through Jesus and they recognize His right to be Lord of their lives; however, they just aren't motivated to respond to His directions for growth. Others totally reject God and more specifically they reject Jesus. There is no remedy for these since they have rejected God's only means to redeem humanity from the fallen nature into which they were born. The consequence is spiritual death.

Each Christian should know that faithfulness is rewarded and lack of faithfulness results in loss of reward. When we are faithful in the minor arenas of life, then God gives us more responsibility as we grow in His grace and power.