



# guidelines for living

*a 5 minute message*

December 5, 2017

YES, I AM RESPONSIBLE

**“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).**

“I acknowledge my responsibility and accept the full blame for what happened!” You don’t hear words such as these very often. It’s usually, “Well, I’m really not responsible.” Or, “I can’t help what took place. I was a victim of circumstances.” Today we often play the “blame game,” pointing our fingers at everybody else for whatever happens. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians he said, “Live life with a sense of responsibility, not as those who don’t know the meaning of life, but as those who do” (Ephesians 5:15, *Philips*).

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren points out the fact that the word “fool,” which is often associated with being stupid, something like the Court Jester in a Shakespearean play, really means “one who is irresponsible.”

Interested in learning how to cultivate personal responsibility in your life? Then take time to jot down the following guidelines. Then make them part of the fabric of your life.

**Guideline #1: Develop personal responsibility by acknowledging where the buck stops.** For that phrase, we probably have to thank Harry Truman, the American president who had a sign placed on his desk, “The buck stops here!” OK, you can’t control the weather or the political situation, perhaps not even some of the things which affect you at work, since others make decisions, but you are responsible for your responses to them, for decisions that you make affecting your family and your own life.

**Guideline #2: Develop personal responsibility by being accountable to someone.** I think it is right here that we fall prey to bad thinking. “It’s my life. I should be able to do whatever I please provided nobody gets hurt,” people think and say. Nonsense! Like climbers on the face of a cliff, linked together by a rope which gives protection for each other, we are genetically and physically linked together. Every decision you make affects someone else.

One of the greatest contributions you can make in the area of developing personal responsibility is to be accountable to another person—a friend, an associate,



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someone outside your immediate circle, someone who will ask the tough questions, and make you face the consequences of your decisions. Being humble enough to be accountable helps you be responsible.

**Guideline #3: Make every decision and choice on the basis of the implications.** Of course, everybody is entitled to be a little bit irresponsible occasionally, like taking the piece of chocolate cake or thinking that by eating standing up the calories won't count, or splurging to buy something a bit beyond your budget, or sleeping in on the weekend when you could be out weeding the garden. Those acts of dereliction won't sink your ship. But I'm convinced that if we counted the cost before we made most decisions, we would make them differently. By and large, you need to count the cost before you decide to throw care to the wind and do something irresponsible. Remember the law of the harvest: you reap what you sow. There's always a payday, someday.

**Guideline #4: Realize that ultimately you are accountable to God.** Paul wrote to both the Romans and the Corinthians and stressed the fact that we are accountable to God for our decisions and choices. Writing to the Corinthians he said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). This, of course, is not all bad, not for a moment. It means that your responsible choices and decisions will be acknowledged and rewarded.

When Paul talked about assuming responsibility in the context of knowing the meaning of life, he was looking at the entire spectrum. That's the way God sees our lives, the way we have to see things as well.

**Resource reading:** Romans 14:1-12.