



# Foundations of

# FAITH

## The Christian's Responsibilities

### Lesson 20

If the Christian life were the easiest that there is, men would flock to the banner of the cross by the millions. But it is not and Jesus warned his disciples, "If any man will come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) Yet, the Christian journey is filled with joys which more than compensate for all of our self-denial. Still, we should be fully aware of the duties which must be performed if we are to be saved. We would be ingrates indeed if we refused to bear the responsibilities God has given us while accepting his divine blessings.

Christian duties are not as heavy as we might think. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**" (Matt. 11:29, 30) John further teaches, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and **his commandments are not grievous.**" (John 5:3)

However, the yoke of Christ may become heavy if it is worn in the wrong way. Jesus intends that we serve him willingly and joyfully. As one comes to love Christ more and more, the service he renders to him becomes more a pleasure and less a duty. For example, worship is a duty. If we consider it only as an onerous obligation and not a privilege, it will become burdensome. Yet, the devout Christian will find that because he loves his Heavenly Father and desires to worship him, his duty is transformed into pleasure. Again, giving of one's financial means to the Lord is a duty. One may say, "How little can I give and still be saved?" If he approaches his duty in this way, it will be hard to bear because he will begrudge every penny

that he gives. On the other hand, if he truly loves the Lord he will say, "How much can I give because I love him?" He derives pleasure from giving and regards it as a privilege rather than an obligation.

**THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS.** On one occasion a lawyer asked Jesus, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him. You shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shalt love thy neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:36-40)

These commandments are so great because they involve our two major relationships – with God and with our fellowmen. All other commandments are related to these. For example, we are to seek first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33) But if we truly love God with all our heart, soul and mind, we will do this. We are forbidden to steal. (Romans 13:9) But if we love our neighbour as ourself we would not think of taking what belongs to him.

The commands to love God and love our neighbour involve our duties to them. Consider some responsibilities that we have because we love God.

**WORSHIP.** When tempting Jesus, Satan asked Christ to worship him. To this the Lord replied, "It is written, You shalt worship the Lord your God, and him only shalt you serve. (Luke 4:8) True worship is the reverence and veneration which we extend by our actions and thoughts to God. We may worship him publicly in company with other Christians, and we may do so privately as in personal prayer. It is the duty of

Christians to worship in both ways. One's private worship will include his study of God's word and his communion with God in prayer. No Christian should neglect or forsake these acts of consecration as they are means of drawing us to our Heavenly Father. However, some mistakenly think that private worship a substitute for the worship we extend to God when in the company of other Christians. It is not. In Hebrews 10:25 we are commanded, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more as you see the day approaching." This refers to the assembly of Christians for worship. If we allow other things to interfere with our public worship of God, we are neither performing our duty nor exercising our privilege of venerating the Father.

Our assembly for worship should be with the regularity that characterised the early church. The scriptures indicate that Christians in apostolic times assembled each first day of the week to worship. (See Acts 20:7) But if we worship with fellow Christians only occasionally, or even only once or twice a month, when we are able to assemble more frequently, we do not please God because we are forsaking worship in order to satisfy personal desires. Yet our love for him should be so great as to make us want to worship. The Christian who must be prodded to worship his creator is greatly deficient in his spirituality.

**STEWARDSHIP.** One of the great obligations which we hold toward God is faithful stewardship. A steward is a manager of the possessions of another. A steward is a manager of the possessions of another. Human beings are inclined to regard those things which they have as belonging exclusively to them. Actually, however, God owns everything. The Psalmist said, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1) Even our souls belong to God. "Behold all souls are mine." (Ezekiel 18:4) Paul teaches, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and **you are not your own?** For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your Spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6:19, 20)

Since we belong to God, we must conclude that he is the actual owner of all our material possessions, our talent and even of our time. Every action must be taken in the light of the question, "Am I using my stewardship well?" If we squander our **money** upon

worthless things, we must account to God. If we waste our **ability** when it might be devoted to worthwhile service, we stand condemned before our Master. If we throw away our **time**, we are misusing our stewardship.

A duty which is actually a part of our stewardship is that of giving of our means to further the work of Christ. The New Testament does not fix an exact percentage to govern our giving to the Lord's work. But it does reveal several principles which should regulate our giving. We are to give according to our **prosperity**. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (I Cor. 16:2) We must give **purposefully** and **cheerfully**. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or out of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver." (II Cor. 9:7) However the real secret of acceptable giving is found in the example of the Macedonian Christians of whom Paul says, "that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." (II Cor. 8:2) Why did they give liberally from their poverty? Because, Paul adds, they "first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." (II Cor. 8:5) They had learned that true stewardship is not simply in giving one's possessions to the Lord, but in giving one's very being to him. And having thus dedicated themselves to his service they found it easy to give liberally of the meagre things which they owned.

**SERVICE.** "And who is my neighbour?" This is a question that a lawyer once asked Jesus when he had told him to love his neighbour as himself. Jesus replied by relating the parable of the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:30-37) The lesson of the parable is that being a neighbour means to render service to others, whether they are friends or total strangers. To love one's neighbour as oneself, therefore, is to be a servant to man, and especially to those who are in the body of Christ. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10)

Jesus taught the apostles the meaning of service when he washed their feet on the night of his betrayal. (John 13:2-11) He was showing them that if he, their Master, would perform the most menial task to help them, then there is no service so lowly that they should not perform it. As Christians we may serve in countless

ways – by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, extending hospitality to strangers. Opportunities to serve are always present, but we must be alert to seize them. Only God knows the number of souls that have been won to him because sinners saw Christ reflected in the humble service of children of God. One of the best ways to win the lost is to put Christianity into action by serving others and giving an example to follow.

**EXAMPLE.** This introduces another responsibility of the Christian – to set an example in godly living. “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” (Romans 14:7) Each person has an influence upon others. If it is not for good, it will be for bad. No man can isolate himself and say, “What I do is my own business,” because what he does will affect others, whether he likes it or not. Jesus showed the importance of our influence when he taught, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. You are the light of the world ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:13, 14, 16) Our lives must be pure and chaste so that they will reflect only credit to the name of Christ.

**TEACHING OTHERS.** One of the great responsibilities which we owe our neighbour is to teach him the gospel. Salvation is through teaching. Jesus taught, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44) Then in the following verse he showed that this drawing power is exercised through teaching. “It is written in the prophets and **they shall be all taught of God.**”

Every Christian must be a teacher. We read that when the Jerusalem church was persecuted “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4) One reason that the primitive church grew so rapidly was that each Christian had a conviction that he had a permanent responsibility to teach those who were lost. The Hebrew writer criticised his readers because “when for the time **ye ought to be teachers**, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” (Heb. 5:12)

Of course, all cannot preach publicly, but all can in their own way tell the story of the cross to their families, their friends, their neighbours. In no way may one demonstrate his love for his neighbour more than in revealing to him the way of salvation. If you love him, teach him.

#### TEST ON LESSON 20

**Underline the phrase that correctly completes each of the following statements:**

1. Jesus said that his yoke is: (a) hard, (b) easy, (c) grievous.
2. If a Christian has great love for God he will regard worship essentially as a: (a) duty, (b) obligation, (c) privilege.
3. The greatest commandment is to: (a) love one’s neighbour, (b) be the servant of all, (c) love God.
4. Private worship should include study of God’s word and: (a) washing feet, (b) prayer, (c) the Lord’s supper.
5. We should publicly worship God: (a) occasionally, (b) at Easter, (c) regularly.
6. The early Christians worshipped: (a) once a month, (b) every first day of the week, (c) whenever other things didn’t interfere.
7. A steward is: (a) a manager of things belonging to another, (b) an absolute owner of property, (c) a renter.
8. The Macedonians gave liberally because: (a) they knew it was their duty, (b) they were afraid not to, (c) they first gave themselves to the Lord.

9. As we have opportunity we are to do good to: (a) just our close friends, (b) those who help us, (c) all men.
10. Jesus gave the apostles an example of service by: (a) washing their feet, (b) preparing their meal, (c) inviting them into his home.
11. Jesus called his disciples the salt of the earth and: (a) the spice of life, (b) the apple of his eye, (c) the light of the world.
12. Those who have the responsibility of teaching the lost are: (a) preachers of the gospel only, (b) elders and preachers only, (c) all Christians.

**Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Then place an (X) after those statements which contain a conclusion which may be drawn from this parable:**

1. We are stewards of God. ....
2. We all have the same amount of ability. ....
3. God requires more of those who have been given more. ....
4. All have been given some talent. ....
5. One with little ability is expected to render as much service as one with great ability. ....
6. We will be held accountable for not using what we have been given. ....
7. One with little ability should not try to use what he has. ....
8. A steward who does not properly use his talents will be punished. ....

**Match the following statements which contain thoughts which Jesus said about service with the passages in which they are found by writing the correct scripture locations after the corresponding statement:**

1. No man can serve two masters. .... (a) Matthew 20:28
2. We will be judged by the way we help others. .... (b) Acts 20:35
3. When we have done our duty, we are unprofitable servants. .... (c) Matthew 6:24
4. Whoever would be chief must be a servant of all. .... (d) John 13:16
5. It is more blessed to give than to receive. .... (e) Matthew 25:34-40
6. The servant is not greater than his lord. .... (f) Mark 10:44
7. If any man would serve Jesus he must follow him. .... (g) Luke 17:10
8. Christ came to minister. .... (h) John 12:26

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### Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

- Section 1 –
1. (b)
  2. (c)
  3. (c)
  4. (b)
  5. (c)
  6. (b)
  7. (a)
  8. (c)
  9. (c)
  10. (a)
  11. (c)
  12. (c)

Section 2 – (X) after nos. 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8.

- Section 3 –
1. (c)
  2. (e)
  3. (g)
  4. (f)
  5. (b)
  6. (d)
  7. (h)
  8. (a)

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