

Teaching E-mail 64

Are You A Fully Responsible Man?

“The woman [Eve] You put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Genesis 3:12).

(March 13, 2012)

Introduction

Like so many men after him, Adam made a BIG MISTAKE when he *excused himself* of any responsibility for his sin. And more than that, he not only shifted the blame to his wife, but then *blamed God* for having given her to him! Had he only humbled himself to accept responsibility and ask his Maker for forgiveness, this whole scenario would have turned out far differently. At the very least, keeping his mouth closed before his God would have been better than his defiant complaint!

And the result for men ever after? In the sorry footsteps of Adam, EVERY man is plagued with the predisposition to **blame** or **give excuses**. No one overcomes this sinful tendency by himself! A Kingdom response in Christ requires a *desperate desire* to become like Jesus—and that calls for a humble, repentant heart. You also need the help of others who'll come alongside you as *His heart and mouth* to rebuke you and give constructive input in order for you to overcome your innate urge to blame or give excuses. That's part of biblical one-anothering.

In 1986 when we were administrating and teaching at a retreat center in eastern Connecticut, several religious leaders in our area asked me (Mike) to help the men in their faith communities learn how to live up to the biblical responsibilities God calls for in males. Over half our retreats each year involved men, and after 26 years of experience I have some things to share with them (and with the women who care about them).



If you're a man who belongs to Jesus, you are called to LEAD in some capacity. Leading in every realm in which our Lord holds you responsible in His Word isn't optional.

It's a military-type duty in which you respond to your holy Commander-in-Chief!

The apostle Paul intentionally uses a military analogy with his younger son in the faith to press home this point: *“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier”* (2 Timothy 2:4).

If Christ, the *Captain* of your salvation in Hebrews 2:10 dwells within you, then you're a member of His Kingdom that's *at war!* Pause here to revisit Ephesians 6:10-18, for example, and pay close attention to the spiritual “military equipment” that's a must in this battle for souls.

With this warfare framework in mind we're writing especially to you men. Too many of you are blind to the reality that Satan is at war particularly against marriages and families, while you are living like complacent civilians asleep in the dark. There are people around you who need you to represent the Jesus in you and lead the way in the spiritual battle—but where are you? Getting carpal tunnel syndrome from your TV remote!

Try to hold your breath for five minutes. When you feel you can't hold it any longer, keep holding it... You're beginning to understand how truly desperate for Jesus you need to be, and how fervent the yearning to become like Him in self-sacrifice and character.

Has it occurred to you how many men today throughout western Christendom live under a veil of duplicity? Armed with ready-made excuses, they blame everyone but themselves for the wrongs they see in their home and family. Over these three decades of ministering I can accurately describe the spiritual life of many of these guys: “*As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man turn on his bed*” (Proverbs 26:14). They think they’re moving along spiritually, but in truth they’re going nowhere! Everything about their spiritual walk is done for their own convenience.

I realize that a good number of men on our mailing list have been raised in a religious system and/or a public education system that have been deemed by research to be “**totally effeminate**” in their passive approach. Many of you also have had little or no positive relationship with a father or father figure, and were raised by single or divorced mothers. How this tragic course has fed Satan’s scheme to destroy men as Godly leaders and wreck covenant marriage as the picture of Christ’s relationship with His bride, the collective called-out ones!

This demonic combination of absentee fathers and female-molded youth has produced a multitude of adult males who live like “**Momma’s boys.**” They’re concerned more with their own feelings and self-satisfaction than in maturing to meet the emotional and physical needs of others as responsible husbands and fathers.

Think, for instance, of how many men in their 20s and 30s are so heavily in debt that they’ve reverted to “adult-olescence”—moving back home and expecting Mom to take care of them! Quick to resist any kind of correction, they’d rather interact online and with their

techno gadgets than face to face with a live human being. Thus, *vastly diminishing numbers* of young men are now willing to commit to marriage; those who do frequently marry women who “mother” them and allow them to continue in their self-focused immaturity.

It’s become rare to encounter a man in Christendom who has experienced the *life-altering admonition* Paul prescribes:

“*We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, **those who are guiding you in the Lord and confronting you in order to help you change***” (1 Thessalonians 5:12,CJB; see also 2 Timothy 3:16-4:3).

Most of the men I’ve encountered over the years who’ve had meaningful, life-changing confrontation experienced it in the military. Those who have served can more readily recognize that the Bible, especially the Newer Testament, depicts life in terms of *spiritual warfare*. They also can understand from its chapters the *determined life of obedient trust* in Christ that keeps pressing on despite opposition. Through God’s Word the Spirit shows a man how to live victoriously himself and how to lead others into the same way of life in Christ.

God’s commands are just that: **COMMANDS!!!** They’re not mere suggestions that you can rationalize away or observe at your own convenience. Through His Spirit you have His power and grace to obey out of grateful love for Him. And He expects you as a man to “hear and obey.”

If there’s anyone who merits a responsive “Yes, Sir!” or “Aye, aye, Sir!” it’s the Captain of the hosts of God’s army, our Lord Jesus Christ. As an older man who’s been to war in both the physical and spiritual arenas, I’d like to pres-

ent several points for you men and the women who care about you to discuss together. Here's the first directive an authentic man of God needs to learn:

1. Keep your mouth shut and don't try to blame anyone else or give excuses!

In officer candidate school I was taught that the only acceptable response when confronted by a senior officer was this: ***"No excuse, sir!"*** After several years in the Navy I began to read the Bible for the first time. I noticed immediately that God didn't accept excuses from anyone. Moses, for instance, tried to use his speech impediment as an excuse to avoid returning to Egypt. But when he pushed his point, *"the Lord's anger burned against Moses"* (Exodus 4:14).

Ponder these two examples and the vast difference in the outcome based on their response to Godly confrontation:

- **King Saul** was confronted by the prophet Samuel for failing to completely destroy the enemy Amalekites. The monarch blamed his fear of the people for his act of disobedience. For passing the buck, Saul lost the kingdom.
- **King David** repented for adultery and murder when confronted by the prophet Nathan. By taking full responsibility through repentance and not defending his sins, David kept his kingdom.

Both men were rebuked by a prophet. One gave excuses and the other repented. Who are you more like, Saul or David?

**Do you fear corrective feedback?
Is this verse directed toward you?**
"A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

2. Humble yourself, die to your own ambitions, and seek to love others the way Jesus would.

"LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'LOVE your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27).

When our Lord calls for you to love Him with all that's within you, He's letting you know that you aren't even close to that *unless* He's so precious and treasured by you that you'd give up *everything* for Him—**EVERYTHING!!!** This is the essence that's captured in Jesus' parables about the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46). Once you've found it, you give up "ownership" of all that you have on behalf of the King of the Kingdom.

It's out of this *wellspring of love* by which all else is forfeit that our Lord calls a husband to love his wife—*just as Christ* loves His called-out ones! (See Ephesians 5:23,25,29 for three "*just as Christ*" clauses that pertain to YOU as a husband.) The love that's commanded of a husband for his wife is so sacrificial and devoted that nothing on earth competes with it.

If you didn't love your wife this deeply when you said "I do!", you need to be earnest and wholehearted to see that she does experience it from you. Be assured of this, brother: *Only Jesus* can give you such profound love.

The things that matter most to you are what you talk about: *"For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34). What do your wife and family hear from your mouth? Do you focus on the transitory things of this world which will ultimately be meaningless? Or, do you build up your loved ones with testimonies of

divine encounters—opportunities in which you were the loving agent of Jesus in someone’s life? Do you engage your family in conversations in which they experience His Spirit in you ministering to them? Remember, whatever comes out of your mouth first or most often is what you value most. What does *your* mouth reveal?

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

The apostle John emphasized that God IS love (1 John 4:8), and His kind of love in His people takes action according to what is needed in each situation. In fact, God’s commands and prophecies express what *love for Him* and *love for others* look like when practiced!

The sacrificial love that permeates Scripture sees from *our Father’s perspective* what is needed. In the supreme example of love, God knew how great was our need for forgiveness of sin and acceptance into His Fatherhood, so He sent His Son to die on humanity’s behalf (John 3:16-18).

We can learn from this kind of responsive love in our own lives. You can never fully love another person until you understand what they really need from you. Is it any wonder that our Lord commands you to put yourself in the other person’s shoes, so to speak? This means you need the humility that places the needs of others ahead of your own desires. And, to love your “closest” neighbor as yourself, you need to put it into practice in your *own home* first.

Whether you’re single or married, our Lord Jesus holds you responsible as a man to lovingly and sacrificially lead in your home. It’s not “what” you do as a

leader, but your *heart motive* which undergirds *why* you treat others as you do. Your primary goal in all your relationships is to rid yourself of SELF as your idol and personal ambition as your motivator, and humbly become like Jesus in character, response, motive and attitude:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:3-7; see also Romans 12:16).

Our Lord Jesus, the King of the universe, was willing to take on frail human flesh and empty Himself of His glory *for you*. That’s love in action, a love He has called you to walk in! As His beloved servant and friend, you are called to follow in His steps and be transformed into His character. To do that means you’d better make loving others as yourself and doing for them what you’d want them to do for you your highest priority. This will only happen if you *die to yourself* (Luke 9:23).

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down his life for his friends”
(John 15:13)

“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matthew 5:41).

To lead as Jesus would if He were you is to willingly give up your own life on behalf of those who know you well. You can’t do that unless you’re following the Master and have already died to yourself.

How will you know if you're dead to self? You gladly, willingly, and lovingly *go the second mile*. In the first century a Roman soldier could compel a civilian to carry his heavy pack the distance of one mile. Anything beyond that was voluntary (and unlikely!). But a man who lived to walk in his Lord's steps did the unexpected: he carried that load an extra mile, no doubt prompting some interested inquiry from the surprised Roman.

Several years ago our Lord gave me a dream that illustrated the intentional sacrifice that men who purpose to lead like Jesus must be willing to offer.

The first mile: A battle was raging. An army officer who was hunkered down in a foxhole spotted one of his troops wounded in front of him. With bullets flying around him, he crawled out of the foxhole and dragged the wounded man back into it. The officer was glad just to have survived the rescue.

The second mile: A few minutes later a hand grenade was tossed into the foxhole. The wounded soldier was too injured to move away from it. The officer could have jumped out of the foxhole to save himself, leaving the wounded man to die. But instead he leaped onto the grenade, absorbing its deadly blast.

Passive westernized Christianity has produced men who habitually limit themselves to the first mile, to what they think is expected of them by their clergy and their religious system. Nothing is required or called for that would take them beyond their comfort zone. Dominated by the complacency of "first mile" attitudes, these men will be grief-stricken when their self-righteous, spiritual laziness shatters at the Judgment Throne.

Those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells are *empowered by love* and *equipped to go* the second mile. In obedient trust

they are willing to *go anywhere* and *do anything* the Father asks them (Matthew 7:21). These will rejoice as they're welcomed into eternity.

In the world, a man is defined by his accomplishments and failures.

In the Kingdom, he is known by his love for God and his indomitable will to make every command a way of life.

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

Think of the above verse from God's point of view. He created man and woman in His image, yet formed each uniquely with different responsibilities toward one another in their marriage relationship. Have you ever really considered to its fullest extent what it means for you to *understand and honor your wife as a weaker vessel*? I doubt there's hardly a man reading this Teaching E-mail who has exhausted how to make this command a way of life! Nor are there many wives reading this who have experienced the full blessing of humility in her husband to make this command real for her.

If you're a married man, one of the most powerful ways to walk humbly dependent before our Lord on behalf of your wife and family is to *fervently seek God's will*. Knowing His specific will not only strengthens your determination to guide your family in the way He would have you all go. Reassurance of *His faithfulness* to make His will known each step of the way also intensifies your obedient trust as you discern *how* He would have you apply His Word to your family. The

kind of love men are commanded in Christ to walk “sets apart and cleanses” your home through God’s applied Word, His *rhema*: “**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the called-out ones and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word [rhema]**” (Ephesians 5:25,26).

Passionately seeking God’s guidance [His *rhema*] for both *His direction* and for *application* of His commands to your family life [your *halakhahs*] requires a humble heart that’s dependent on His Spirit. And, patiently sharing with your wife and family His guidance and helping them make each command a way of life is a testimony to your humility and obedient trust.

When you resist fulfilling wholeheartedly this responsibility (for instance, by giving way to spiritual laziness or self-interest), you’re squandering the opportunity to produce authentic, Christ-honoring peace in your home. As a result, you’ll probably find yourself assailed by frustrating emotional tensions that rob your home of peace. And in the swirl of tension and angry words, your wife and/or family will resist hearing anything you might say about God’s guidance. We’ll discuss the consequences of missed opportunity when we discuss the *Amasa spirit*, still ahead.

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4; see also Psalms 103:17,18).

Do you love God enough to be *passionate* about putting His commandments into practice on behalf of your family? Really, how much do you love your children, your grandchildren? The

reason I ask is that if you *don’t* love them enough to instill in them a love for our Lord and a heart to live His commands, they’ll suffer because of your failure. *Love for God* translates into obeying His commands, the evidence that your relationship in Christ is for real (1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6). Think seriously about His warning to the children of Israel whom He called out of the world (Egypt) to love and serve Him alone:

“I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me [who disregard God and His commands], but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5,6).

With these words God introduces the Ten Commandments. From this point and all the way through the Newer Testament, loving our God and keeping His commands are inseparable. If you’re a father or grandfather, you should deeply consider how much you really love Him and your progeny. Even now, are they being *punished*—suffering the torment and insecurities and rebellious domination of sinful choices—because of *your* failure? Do you need to repent and ask their forgiveness, and then lay a new foundation in Christ for your relationship with them?

3. When Our Lord Calls You, Obey Immediately! Don’t Listen To The Amasa Spirit.

Immediacy is a critical feature in your obedience to the Spirit of Christ in you. Keep in mind that when you’ve heard our Lord’s call or have a heart conviction about how you should respond, a certain unclean Satanic messenger comes to dis-

suade you. The *Amasa spirit* shows up right at the moment God is calling you to a particular task, or when you're convicted by His Spirit to take an action.

The nature of this spirit's operation is found in 2 Samuel 20. King David commanded General Amasa, "*Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself*" (v.4). However, we're told, "*when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him*" (v.5). His delay proved fatal for him.

The Amasa spirit leaves chaos and disheartened people in its wake whenever those who pay it heed refuse to follow through in the timeframe they've been given to do something. They miss the *opportune moment* in which they should have responded. It's as though your own negligence caused you to miss an important flight you needed to catch and no others are available.

I'd like to relate the Amasa spirit to something I learned years ago.

When I was in the Navy, one particular situation was an automatic career killer. It was called "**Overcome By Events**", or **OBE** for short. This meant that someone wasn't ready when they were called on to act. Every commanding officer in the military is responsible for both the *operational readiness* and the *morale* of his or her unit.

Operational readiness means that the leadership has ensured that every person has done everything necessary to prepare for all contingencies, and that all are ready to respond when needed. If the unit was unprepared when they were called to action, they were considered "overcome by the event." The event for which they were needed had come, and they *weren't ready*. During Vietnam, whenever I witnessed message traffic containing the words "OBE" I knew that someone's career was over.

To warn people about being unprepared, the military used a poster similar to this, showing an alligator climbing into a boat with a frantic man.



How does this scenario apply to you if you purpose to follow Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Matthew chapter 25 relates the parable of five foolish virgins who failed to be prepared with adequate lamp oil before the bridegroom came. When he did arrive they were away trying to buy oil and were locked out of the wedding. Wouldn't you consider that *OBE*?

Jesus also tells of two men, each building a house. One lays the foundation on solid rock, and the other on shifting sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Don't you think that the man who built his house on the sand, like someone who failed to put His Word into practice, was *OBE'd* by the rain? What a catastrophe!

God's grace is a window of time in which you *MUST* act in order to fulfill His will and particular purpose. That's what having "ears to hear" means. Those who have followed Jesus into a mature life in Him recognize that God offers His people a "**window of grace**", a specific measure of time in which He gives us the power and the desire to respond in obedient trust. It's clear throughout God's Word

that whenever people delayed through laziness or outright disobedience, they missed the window of grace God offered; they were OBE'd!

Painful repercussion surrounds the misguided man who mistakenly believes that when God calls him to do something, His grace allows him the slack to do it on his *own terms* and in his *own timing*. Far from it! And the saddest part of his failure to act right away is this:

His disobedience results in NO testimony to our Father's glory. And sadly, he often ends up defaming God with blame and excuses.

If this describes you, then those who know you would say you *whine!* You're always complaining about your life circumstances or blaming others for your discontent. But *this is only a mask to cover your failure to trust our faithful Father and obey His will.*

4. Stand Up for Jesus in the Face of Injustice No Matter What it Costs You.

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

(Luke 10:27)

"Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked" (Proverbs 25:26).

Jesus sharply criticized the religious leaders of His day when He lamented, *"you neglect justice and the love of God..."* (Luke 11:42). All through the Older Testament our God calls for justice for the underprivileged, widows, orphans, aliens. A just heart overflows with ALWAYS doing for others what you would want them to do for you.

This country is now mired in the middle of race and class warfare. The "haves"

who enjoy material security and luxury seem oblivious to the daily fears and pressures of the "have-nots" whose little may be abruptly taken away at any time.

Historically in this nation, the failure of so many who called themselves "Christian" to act justly toward those who couldn't stand up for themselves has brought about this moral bankruptcy. Remember, it was the Christianized South that supported slavery, excluding people of color from their church buildings and from opportunity for education. It was Christian missionaries the Bureau of Indian Affairs recruited to destroy the solidity of the Native American family and assimilate into Europeanized culture.

Today the phrase "illegal alien" is tossed about to incite disdain and fear, especially in regard to Spanish speaking people. Yet so many Spanish speakers especially from Mexico and Central America have entered this land illicitly because our CIA supported the very dictatorships that robbed them of their resources. Desperation and starvation have sent them north in hope of finding work that few US citizens are willing to do. And, the news has broadcast the desperation of American farmers whose crops rot on the ground for lack of harvesters, those who fear deportation.

The tragic legacy of much of US history has been robbery and enslavement of the few so that the majority can be comfortable, secure and well-fed. If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus, can you reconcile your personal oblivion to this painful reality with what HE would do on behalf of the most needy? Please, prayerfully discuss this with your family. Is complacent passivity the image of Christ that you want to pass along to your kids and grandkids?

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge righteously; defend the cause of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8,9).

Behind the guise of political conservatism is the quest by the affluent to exercise control and keep the struggling middle class and persistent poor in economic slavery. Face it! The “god” of this nation in which so many put their trust is greed. What a far cry from just compassion of the vineyard owner who cared for all of his laborers as if they were he (see Matthew 20:1-16).

Every human being is made in God’s image, and our Lord Jesus willingly died on their behalf out of love. That person with a different colored skin or language or cultural heritage is someone our Lord demands that you love as yourself. Where you find injustice, do something about it! The Samaritan traveler put love and justice into action toward the man he found beaten and robbed. Are you willing to go the second mile wherever you encounter injustice? But for the grace of our God, that person could’ve been you.

No man stands so tall as when he reaches out to help someone else up.

It takes the love and courage of Jesus to help someone who is not like you.



A Final Note:

If you are an older man who has complacently been enjoying the amenities that friendship with the world’s values gave you, shame on you! I’ve never met a retired man who, in the course of satisfy-

ing his desire to achieve worldly success and accolades, didn’t fail the people who really needed him along the way. Tunnel-visioned on how to reach comfortable retirement, all too often these men turned their back on injustice when they could have done something about it.

It’s time now to put into perspective the shallow goal of financial security you established when you were young. You became an enemy of God when you pursued the world’s values with your heart and soul (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). Even more tragic, you’ve instilled in your children your view that this world’s ways and goals are worth everything they can do to achieve them so they can be like you! That may not have been your intent, but by your actions you’re robbing the next generation of the courage needed to be true to Jesus. **For that alone you should be ashamed!**

Please explore these resources, all free at our website:

- Discussing How to Restore the Early Church,
*Lesson 30. *God’s Purpose For Marriage; So Your Marriage Had A Bad Start; Honey, We Aren’t The Same*
*Lesson 33. *Why We Need Fathers*
*Lesson 37. *Authority in the Home*
- Teaching E-mail 42. *Develop Loyalty—Giving Up Your Life For Someone*
- Lifebyte 22. *Obedient Trust versus Reasoning*
- Lifebyte 40. *Do You Confront For Jesus? Or, Placate For Satan?*
- Lifebyte 45. *Do Your Manners Represent Jesus?*
- Hebraic Article: *I Hate Nicolaitanism! (Part 5) Hebraic Home Fellowships—Relationally-Connected Men Produce Successors in Leadership.*