

“BEING RESPONSIBLE MEN”

HOLINESS

DR. BRUCE BICKEL

Ephesians 5

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Bruce: Good morning, men!

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Great to be with you. Don, let's correct all the stuff that Sig said. (*Laughter.*)
Let's go before the Lord and know that He is God. (*Music.*)

Indeed, gracious Father, You are the fount of every blessing. You've blessed us with all the spiritual blessings in Christ. Open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Christ's sake. And may it be so for Jesus' glory. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Men, before we get into our study of what the Lord might have for us, beginning a new year, the year 2015, I want to tell you how much I was deeply touched and moved and humbled by your gracious gift two weeks ago when we met. This Legacy Book is just overwhelming. I've read it all, and it's just—the amount of effort that you put into it, the sneakiness and slyness of how you did it, (*laughter*), and the beauty of it just ought to be commended, and I was deeply, deeply touched by it. It's one of my great treasures, and I will always be very, very grateful. The only thing about it is that you really put pressure on me, because now I have to live up to all the expectations of what you said. (*laughter*)

But seriously, brothers, that meant more to me than you'll ever realize, and thank you very much. I just want to express my deepest sense of gratitude to Dick and all of you sly guys who pulled that off, and thank you very much.

And secondly, for your most generous gift to the Servants Fund. We've processed all of those checks, and that's a wonderful way in which some people in the city of Pittsburgh, or around the country, may experience the compassion of the kingdom of God because of your graciousness. Whenever a check is sent out from the Servants Fund, it's sent out anonymously. And all it basically says is that it's a gift from your friends concerned about your financial situation, for the glory of God. It's just designed to let people see that God is a compassionate God, and a merciful God, and a generous God, and you help us to do that through the Servants Fund. So thank you very much for enhancing the Kingdom's glory by just a little quiet ministry known as the Servants Fund.

So thank you, brothers. You've deeply touched me, and I just trust that the Lord will be pleased to glorify Himself as we gather together for another year. May it be so, for Jesus' sake.

Participant: Praise God.

Bruce: I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. We're going to do something today that I did several years ago. But, just as a reminder, as we move into a new year, please open up to the book of Ephesians.

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One of the great advantages of preaching expositoryly, or being an expositional preacher, in addition to just going verse by verse-- Now traditionally, expository preaching is basically described as going verse by verse by verse. That is true. But there is much more to expositional preaching than just going verse by verse.

Basically, expositional preaching does four things. It tells you what to say. It tells you why you are saying it. It tells you when you should say it, and how you should say it.

What you should say comes from the Scripture. Why do you say it? Because it's Biblically based. When do you say it? It's in the context of those passages where you say it. And how you say it is in the spirit of how it is written. That's the real joy of expository preaching.

So I want to take us through an example of that today, as we look at some priorities for a new year.

Now to help us understand this expository preaching methodology, to better understand these verses we're going to look at today, I want you just to open your bible to the book of Ephesians. And notice this, how it all fits together.

Chapters 1-3 of the book of Ephesians deal with our wealth in Christ, or who it is that we are in Christ. That's another way of looking at it.

Chapters 4-6 deal with our walk in Christ, or how we are to live.

And so you can take a look at this: our wealth in Christ, our walk in Christ, or who we are in Christ and how we are to live in Christ.

Another way of looking at this book would be that the first division, chapters one, two and three, deal with our possessions because of our position. You and I have certain possessions in the body of Christ because we are positionally in Christ. Our possessions because of our position is another way of looking at it. And the key verses would be chapter 1, verses 1-3.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

Now there, the first introduction to the book of Ephesians is talking about our possessions because of our position. We have certain possessions that we have as members of the body of Christ because we are positionally, individually, in Christ.

In the second section, which deals with how to live the life of Christ, or our walk in Christ, it deals with the practice of our position. So chapters 1-3 deal with our position, and chapters four, five and six deal with the practice of our position. Now those fit together in an order that is divinely inspired. You need to know who you are before you can know how to live. That's exactly what you see in our passage in the book of Ephesians today.

Now Paul teaches us. In the passage that we're going to look at today, we're essentially going to look at chapter 5, verse 15 to chapter 6, verse 20. Here is just a quick overview, and I want you to see how this all fits together, because this tells us what to say, it tells us when to say it, it tells us why we should say it, and how we should say it.

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You’ll see the same systematic working through it, as we overview the book of Ephesians.

So time is not going to give me a lot of time to go through this individually, but Paul gives us certain responsibilities. I call these “responsibilities for a new year.”

Now the reason I choose the word “responsibility” is because the word *responsibility* is defined as “knowing and doing what’s expected of you.” A responsible person is somebody who knows and does what is expected of him.

Now why is it that we say that somebody is responsible? It’s because they finish what they do. They finish what they have been given to do. When somebody does not finish what he has been given to do, we call him what? Irresponsible.

So Paul is going to teach us responsibilities for a new year. Now I use that word *responsibility* by design to help us understand the personal nature of the instruction that Paul is going to give us through the Scripture today in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 15 to chapter 6, verse 20. These are certain responsibilities for a new year.

Now one of the great management principles in all of Scripture, and all of literature, in my judgment, is to be found in John 17, when Jesus said this. “I brought You glory on earth by finishing what You gave Me to do.” You see, there is your definition of responsibility. He knew what He was given to do, and He fulfilled that responsibility, and therefore He was a finisher. What Paul is going to teach us today, in these responsibilities for a new year, is basically how to be a finisher. And that means that you know what is expected of you, and you finish it and you do it, and by that God is going to be glorified.

So let’s take a look at these individual responsibilities for a new year. Paul lists five in our passage today, qualities of life that God wants to build in each of us, in a very specific order by design.

And notice this order, beginning in chapter 5, verse 15, all the way to chapter 6, verse 20. He goes through this order, and I’ll go over it very briefly with you. But, first of all, it’s life, marriage, family, vocation, and ministry, in this order. Notice that ministry is the result of the first four. When you are living in the priorities of God’s Scripturally based organization and style of life, the end result of that will be ministry, because ministry is what? Ministry is who you are, where you are. Your ministry is a function of four things—your life, your marriage, your family, and your vocation. The consequence of that is that you and I are in a permanent ministry mindset.

Now let’s take a look at these individually. First of all, in verses 15-21, Paul teaches us to be responsible persons. Be a responsible person. Now a responsible person is the person who knows and does what is expected of him. They are finishers. When you see something in the Scripture, you take it under advisement. You ask the Holy Spirit to help you complete it, and you finish that. And so you become a responsible person. I define that quickly as this: putting your practice with your position.

Take a look at verses 15-21. “Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

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In other words, if you claim to be converted, Paul says to be responsible and live like it. Notice that he starts off by instructing us to use our time wisely. And the reason he instructs us to do that is “because the days are evil.”

The Bible speaks of two kinds of people. There are only two kinds of people. There are those who are in darkness, and there are those who are in light. There are those who are unconverted, and those who are the converted. There is the nonbeliever and the believer. And lastly, there is this: the unwise versus the wise.

There is a contrast. You are either one of these. Either you are unwise, or you are wise. And Paul says, “Use your time wisely, because the days are evil.” That means that you have to discern the difference between the important and the urgent.

Now the urgent is what everybody else wants you to do. The important is the things that you know God wants you to do.

Urgency is defined by what other people think you should be doing.

I get all kinds of calls from people saying, “The Lord has told me that you need to do this.” (*Laughter.*)

And I say, “Terrific! When He convinces me of it, I’ll be glad to do it.” (*Laughter.*)

You see, everybody wants you to do what they want you to do. It’s always their agenda. That’s the urgency of life.

But the Scripture says that you’ve got to discern the difference between the important. Do the important things. And the first thing is this. Practice your position because you are a responsible person, using your time wisely because the days are evil.

A wise person is one who lives in accordance with God’s divine principles revealed in the Scripture. One’s ministry in life begins right here, with our personal responsibility to God, to be conformed to the image of Christ. Ministry starts right here in your person, not in your platform, in your personality. It starts not as a function of your platform or your position in life, but of your person. If you want to be involved in ministry, it has got to start with your personhood. Be a responsible person, and practice your position that you have in Christ.

And the only platform that one ever needs for ministry is personal holiness. It’s the only platform that God ever requires of us. It’s to be personally holy. That’s the beginning of your ministry. Everything else is activity which God may be pleased to use, or may not use in His sovereign grace.

An ancient philosopher once said this. “Show me your redeemed life, and I’ll be inclined to believe in your Redeemer.” Show me your redeemed life! Practice your position. Be a responsible person. Use your time wisely. Discern the difference between the important and the urgent. Do the things that God calls you to do, not the things that everybody else wants you to do.

Notice what Paul writes in the book of Philippians, in 1:27. “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” You see, men, the gospel is holy. Therefore, we should be holy. Be a responsible person. You want to put your practice with your position.

Next, we come to the next activity as priorities for a new year. In addition to being a responsible person, you ought to be a responsible partner. You’ll find that in verses 22-23

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of chapter 5. Be a responsible person in verses 15-21. Be a responsible partner in verses 22-23.

So what is it that makes a strong Christian marriage? It's two strong Christian people who are responsible partners. Marriage is God's divine means of refining your character, and your spouse is the instrument He is going to use.

In Genesis chapter two, the husband/wife relationship is the very first social relationship established in creation. In Hebrew literature, the thing that is listed first, known as the primogeniture, is the priority relationship of the family. What is the primary relationship in the family? It's between a husband and a wife. Children do not make a family. They expand the family. You have a family if your marriage is between you and your spouse. That is a family. That is the priority relationship in all of Scripture—the husband and wife, next to your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, in your personal relationship. It's the primary relationship.

Children do not make a family. How many times have you heard somebody say, “We're going to create a family by having children?” Children don't make a family! The husband and the wife make the family. Be a responsible person, and then be a responsible partner. That's the second thing in our priorities for a new year.

That's why marriage comes before children, before family. It's because the primary relationship is between a husband and a wife. So often, children become a division. They are an expansion, not a division. They are an addition to the family, not the creation of the family. That's why marriage comes before family in our list of priorities.

So, if you have problems in your marriage, go back to what? Be a responsible person. Yes, Jim?

Jim When you say that children can be a division, I've often seen that in blended families.

Bruce: Oh, yes.

Jim: The children get the upper hand.

Bruce: Absolutely. You see, what we need to help people to understand is that a blended family, when two families come together, the primary relationship- is what? It's still the husband and wife.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It's not the children. Now that doesn't mean that you can put the children aside. I'm not saying that. The next priority is to be a responsible parent. You are to be a responsible person, and then, the degree to which you are a responsible person will be the degree to which you are a responsible partner, and the degree to which you are a responsible partner will be the degree to which you are a responsible parent. You see, these are in order. That's part of what I'm saying about expository preaching. It teaches you what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and why you say it, because it's in the same divine order.

So don't worry about your rights in a marriage. You don't have any, anyway. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: Tell my wife that. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: She called me and told me to make that statement. *(Laughter.)*

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You see, we don't have rights anymore. We gave them up to follow Christ. You now have what? You exchange your rights, personally, for human personal responsibilities, knowing and doing what is expected of you. So don't worry about your rights. You don't have any. You only have personal responsibilities. If married, part of wise living is being a responsible partner.

You see how this flows? Be a responsible person, then be a responsible partner.

Then the third thing is this. Be a responsible parent. Being a responsible person is putting your practice with your position. Being a responsible partner is perfecting your position with your partner. You are perfecting your position in Christ with your partner. And being a responsible parent is perpetuating your position with your progenies. That took a while to think. (*Laughter.*)

Perpetuating your position. What's your position? You're in Christ. You see, it all starts there! You're practicing your position! So being a responsible person, you're putting your practice with your position, in Christ. Being a responsible partner, perfecting your position in Christ with your partner. And then, being a responsible parent, perpetuating, passing on your position in Christ to your progenies, that is, your children. You'll see that in chapter 6, 1-4.

Now the first area of being effective by being a holy person and having a holy marriage, and having a strong relationship with your partner, is the impact upon your family, your children. The reason that it is listed next is because the success of parenting is based upon the quality of the priority relationship between the husband and the wife. There is a direct correlation between the rearing of children and the quality of the relationship between the husband and the wife.

Every ingredient of Christ's relationship in God is perfected and pictured in the family. And here is what you see. This is what you're going to see in a family relationship where people are being responsible persons, responsible partners, and responsible parents. You're going to see loving submission, you're going to see loving care, and you're going to see loving obedience. That's what you're going to see in a godly family—loving submission, loving care, and loving obedience.

You see, children are one of the means by which God preserves a holy race of people.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: But children do not make a family. They expand the family. They don't make the family. Who makes a family? The husband/wife relationship defines a family. Love your spouse, if you really love your children. That's our priority. Be a responsible person. Be a responsible partner. And be a responsible parent.

The fourth priority for a new year that I offer for your consideration is to be a responsible provider. That is providing your family with needed provisions. You'll see that in chapter 6, verses 5-9.

Now when we look at this in the proper perspective biblically, from a priority basis, work should be visualized as a means by which you support or supply the physical needs of your family while serving the Lord. That's why we are providers. It's the means by which we provide for the needs for our families, while serving the Lord.

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Now we need to understand something that we need to teach our children, but we need to first understand this ourselves. We need to understand the difference between a need, a want, and a desire.

Participant: mm-hmm!

Bruce: We need to provide *needs* for our families, not necessarily wants or desires. There is a difference. Basic needs would be those which you discern by the Holy Spirit that your family needs for survival, to benefit them and glorify Him and bring glory to the kingdom of God through your ministry to your family. What those needs are, only you can discern. You’re going to hear a lot of things. “Well, I want this,” or “I desire that.” There is a difference.

Now just let me give you a quick illustration in rearing my own children. Years ago, my stepdaughter Amy was a very good tennis player, and she needed to have some tennis shoes. So I looked at our budget with my wife Becky. I took her out to dick’s and said, “Amy, my responsibility is to provide for you your needs in life. That’s part of my provision, providing necessary provisions for my family. I have x number of dollars with which I can provide for you a pair of tennis shoes. Go pick the ones you want.”

She came back to me, and she said, “I want these.”

I said, “Now that exceeds the budget of what I can do to provide for you. Now my job is to provide what you need, not what you want. So here’s the deal. I’ll give you \$125 towards your need for your tennis shoes. Anything above that, you pay the difference.”

The shoes that she picked out that she wanted cost \$150. I said, “I’ll give you \$125, because my job is to give you what you need. Can you play tennis with these shoes?”

“Yes.”

“All right. Then I will pay for them. Now, if you want the ones over here that you want, that are \$150, you can make up the difference of \$25. Do you want to do that?”

She thought for a minute and said, “No.” (*Laughter.*)

I said, “Fine. Then I will give you—“

But she said, “Here are the ones that I really desire.” They were \$200. (*Laughter.*)

And I said, “I understand that. There’s a difference, Amy. My job is to provide your needs. Anything above what you need is your want. You make up the difference. With what you desire, you pay for the whole thing. So here are your choices. I will give you \$125 for the shoes that you need. I’ll give you \$125 towards the \$150 that you want. Or you pay the \$200 for the ones you desire. What do you want to do?”

She went, -- (*grimace?* “I’ll take the ones that I need.” (*Laughter.*) So I bought her the \$125 shoes.

Now, it’s interesting. We were on a vacation in California with Amy. She is now a mother, and has a little boy. Little Teddy is eleven months old, and we were together over Christmas.

And Becky’s mentality is this. “Oh, Teddy needs this!” (*Laughter.*) “I want to give this to Teddy.”

And do you know what her response was? “Teddy doesn’t need that.” (*Laughter.*) “He doesn’t need that. I know, Mom, that you want him to have it. You desire him to have it, but he really doesn’t need that. I’m supposed to provide what he needs, not what

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he wants. Now he doesn't know what he wants yet, but I know that you want this for him, and that you desire this for him. But I've got to train him to understand that my job as a parent is to provide what he needs, not what he wants. So, Mom, we're not going to get him that.”

Now, you see, that's part of teaching principles of wise living to your children. They learn that because they learn that from us. And if we're going to be the ones that provide needs for our children, providing basic needs for the family, we have to understand in our own minds what our needs are. Yes, there are going to be things that they want. That is not our responsibility. Yes, there are things they desire, and it would be nice if we could do that all the time. But to live wisely, you've got to discern the difference between the important and the urgent. They will say the urgent thing is, “I've got to have this, because all the other kids have it! They've got the Air Jordan shoes. If I don't have them, I'm going to be looked at as a freak, because I don't have the right kind of shoes!” You see, we have to fight through that. Our responsibility, as godly family persons, is to provide our basic needs, not our wants and desires. That starts with our family, understanding the difference between needs, wants and desires. You see how that works? That is how we begin to raise our children to lead wise lives. Yes, Bill?

Bill: I'm a little grayer than some of the guys here, so help me with regard to the transition. I understand the responsibility in regard to raising my children, but my children have become men themselves. What is my responsibility now as a grandparent to their children? You alluded to that in regard to Becky, but still, in some regard, I think there is a bit of confused information there, because of the dynamic I have with my wife, exponentially.

Bruce: Oh, my goodness! (*Laughter.*) You just ripped off the scabs of my own body here! (*Laughter.*)

Bill: I don't see Biblical instruction with regard to what grandparents are supposed to be doing. I don't have a real clear model.

Bruce: Well, I don't think there is one.

Bill: Right.

Bruce: There is not one, so don't make one up. Now here is what I would say. In our conversation over the weekend, over Christmas, Becky's comment was, “Well, this is my grandson.”

I said, “Becky, Teddy is Amy's son. You're the grandmother. She's the responsible person, not you.”

There is a difference. We can be supportive, but the issue is not “my grandson.” It's “her son,” not “my grandson.” Now there's a difference.

When we raise our children, for many years we are, Biblically, in the position of responsibility as the discerning decision makers. We are in the position of responsibility. There comes a time when we change that over to the position of counsel, not responsibility.

Now let me give you an illustration. My mother was a pacifist, a real, died-in-the-wool pacifist. And she had a son who went to the Naval Academy, and spent three years in Viet Nam. My mother was a pacifist.

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Now we had friendly conversations, sometimes, over those issues. It was part of our family growth and maturation process.

My second tour in Viet Nam, as a foreign air controller, is when I got involved with the Tin Lan Church, and built the orphanage. It wasn't finished. Now I was trying to figure out the Lord's will for my life, to discern the difference between the important and the urgent.

So I wrote my folks a letter, and I said, “Mom and Dad, here's the situation. I can stay over here another year and finish this orphanage, and help these people get this little church started, and fly my missions. I've been very fortunate. I've not been wounded or hit yet. But the job I'm in is very, very dangerous, and I just need your help for me to make the decision. Should I stay and finish, or should I take my duty and go back to the States?”

My mother was a pacifist. And my dad wrote me a letter that I still treasure as one of the most important things he ever wrote me. He wrote me this letter and said, “Look! At your age, now, your mother and I had the responsibility to bring you up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And there was going to come a time in your life when we were going to have to turn you loose, to let you make your own decisions about what God is doing in your life, and we now become a support to you, rather than a directive to you. You make the decision that you feel God wants you to do, and your mother and I will support it, because our role now is to be a supportive counselor, not a directive decision maker. We no longer have authority for you. We have counsel to you. Our counsel is, you do what the Lord wants you to do, that you discern He wants to do through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your own prayer life, because we have tried to raise you up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And whatever that decision is, your mother and I will take that as God's will, and we will become supportive, because that's our position.”

Bill, I think the very best thing we can do is to have that model be with our grandchildren. We are not in the position of authority. We are in the position of support and counsel. We can counsel and support our children in the rearing of their children, but the grandchildren are not our responsibility. We are to be supportive and constructive and helpful, counseling our children as they raise their children. But it's their children, not our grandchildren. It's not “our,” it's “their,” and we need to be supportive and counseling. Bill, that's the best I can come up with, at some degree of understanding of what our role would be. So we are not in the authority position. We are in the supportive, counseling position. That's what it means to rear our children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Is that somewhat helpful?

Bill: Yes.

Bruce: Great. Be a responsible person. Be a responsible partner. Be a responsible parent. Be a responsible provider, that is, providing your family with needed provisions.

You see, vocation or career is so low on the list because God is far more concerned about your person and your relationships than He is about your work. Your work is a function and result of your relationships and your personhood. Now, if these priorities are in the proper order, you're going to draw your greatest fulfillment from god, your spouse, and your family.

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When you understand these priorities—being a responsible person, being a responsible partner, being a responsible parent, and being a responsible provider, guess what you’re going to do at your work? You’re going to take your fulfillment to your job, rather than getting fulfillment from your job.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now that’s the big difference. When you are living a wise life, you will take your fulfillment *to* your job, rather than deriving fulfillment *from* your job. Now that doesn’t mean that you won’t like it. I really enjoy what I do. I really have a wonderful opportunity at PNC. They’ve given me some wonderful things to live out my life in a wonderful way. But the greatest thing I do for PNC is that I take my personal fulfillment to my job, rather than be saddled from getting fulfillment from my job. I enjoy it immensely, but it is not my form of satisfaction. That’s how I can put up with all this corporate stuff that you have to put up with in America. It is because that is not what affects my fulfillment. I take my fulfillment to my job. That’s what happens when these priorities are in the right order.

Be a responsible person. Be a responsible partner. Be a responsible parent. And be a responsible provider. Yes, Sig?

Sig: There’s a wonderful scene I saw in a movie over the holidays, where a Jewish man goes to his Rabbi. He can no longer afford to pay for the Yeshiva School for his kids, and he’s trying to be an actor. That’s his vocation.

And the Rabbi says, “Well, what is your work? What do you do?”

He said, “Well, I’m trying to be an actor.”

Rabbi replies, “But you can’t afford for your kids to go to school.”

And he said, “Well, what about my happiness?”

And the Rabbi says, “That was something Thomas Jefferson wanted you to have. God wants you to be responsible to raise your children.” *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: I guess you had to be there. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: You’ve got to see the movie. I’ll tell you more. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Yes, sir?

Participant: I’ve got two ways of looking at that.

I’ve seen the lights of London.

I’ve seen the lights of Rome.

But the prettiest lights I’ve ever seen

Are the tail lights that my grandchildren beam

Driven to my home.”

(Laughter.)

Bruce: By our poet laureate! Thank you very much! Thank you! *(Laughter and applause.)*

Now let me address something here. Somebody says, “Well, I’m not married, and I don’t have children.” The priorities are the same. It’s just that you go from being a responsible person to being a responsible provider. You see, you have opportunities to do things that we married folks with children cannot do. But the priorities are the same.

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You just don't have a partner. You're not a parent. But the responsibilities are the same. Be a responsible person, and be a responsible provider.

Now if you want to have a career orientation, then don't get married, because your vocation is going to drop a notch. If you want to have a career oriented mindset, then don't have children, because your vocation is going to drop a notch. The highest it can be is four, because it's a consequence of other things. So if you're not married, if you're single, then you have opportunities to do things that none of us who are married can do, because the priorities are the same. Be a responsible person, and then be a responsible provider. You'll have opportunities for ministry that none of us can do. And fulfill that while the Lord gives you freedom to do that.

Then, lastly, I want you to see this. Go to chapter 6, verses 10-18, and you see this. Be a responsible penetrator. I define that as penetrating your surroundings with god's power. Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10-18.

Now the third division of Ephesians is spiritual warfare. And I honestly believe, brothers, that if you and I live under these priorities, of being a responsible person, being a responsible partner, being a responsible parent, and being a responsible provider, that you're going to be involved in spiritual warfare, because that's why the full armor of god, chapter 6, verses 10-18, comes at the end of the book, not the beginning of it. I've always wondered why he doesn't start with the full armor of God in chapter 1? Because you don't need it until you live according to these priorities.

I'll tell you what. If you live according to these priorities, the evil one and society are going to be after you, because they are going to try everything in the world to get you to change your priorities. And that's why you need spiritual armor. You put it on as a result of this.

So, when you live the life of a responsible person, a responsible partner, a responsible parent, and a responsible provider, you're going to need spiritual armor, because you're going to be a penetrator of society, because you'll be living a different style of life that the world does not understand, and they're going to be after you. That is called spiritual warfare.

The church, Biblically, is defined, from the book of Genesis to Revelation, by three significant words: *remnant* (It's not everybody), *persecution* (if you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, you will be persecuted), and thirdly, *spiritual warfare*. When you live according to these priorities, men, you're going to be involved in spiritual warfare.

And what you're going to need is this. You're going to need the full armor of God. You're going to need what the Scripture teaches us.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes, the schemes of the evil one. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the principalities, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark age, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm, then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness

“BEING RESPONSIBLE MEN”

that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Now, men, here is the last thing you do. When you live according to these priorities, you are going to be penetrating your environment with God’s power, because you’re going to be demonstrating a lifestyle that is radically different from the history of this world, and the system of this world. And when you do that, you’re going to need the full armor of God.

Now notice this. When you go to the very last verse, I might say that there is one other thing that we might want to add, and that would be our protection.

What is our protection to live a life of being a responsible person, a responsible partner, a responsible parent, a responsible provider, and a responsible penetrator of our environment through God’s power? What is it that we’re going to need? Take a look at verse 18. I think our protection is prayer.

After summarizing all this wonderful instruction about the priorities of our lifestyles, he now summarizes it by saying this in verse 18. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert, and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”

Men, we’re involved in a team effort. The kingdom of God is not just about us, and our responsibilities. It’s about the man’s responsibilities right beside you, the one to your left, to your right, in front of or back of you. When you pray for yourself, to be a responsible partner, a responsible parent, a responsible provider, a responsible person and a responsible penetrator of your environment, be sure and pray for the rest of the body of Christ, because we all need to pray for each other, so we can take a stand against the evil one.

Remember this. Use your time wisely, because the days are evil. May it be so, that this small group of men, known as The Brave Men of Friday Morning, will have a list of priorities that will occupy our mindset and our style of life, as we go through the year 2015. May it be so, for God’s glory, that we will be responsible persons, responsible partners, responsible parents, responsible providers, and responsible penetrators of our environment, with God’s power. May it be so, for God’s sake.

May we pray. Father, we thank you for the clarity of Your Scripture, how it fits together in a right sequence, how these priorities are in a divinely inspired order. These are not manmade requirements. These are divinely inspired instructions for people to live a life that is holy to God. Father, You’ve called us to live a life that is worthy of the gospel. Our life is designed to be a means by which the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is made beautiful in the lives of people. And that can only happen, Father, when we live according to these priorities of the Scripture. And may it be so, that we’ll be known as people who are responsible. We know what is given to us, and we will finish what we have been given to do. Let’s do it for God’s glory, and for Jesus’ sake. Amen and amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)