
MONDAY MANNA
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TAKING RESPONSIBILITY AND DOING THE WORK

By Robert J. Tamasy

We live in an unusual time. More and more, people seem unwilling to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. For some, it has become a case of casting blame on others – people, specific institutions, or society in general – and assuming the role of victim. If they fail, they believe it is not their fault but that of “the system,” or someone else. The fact is, however, much of what happens to us is indeed our responsibility. If we fail or fall short of our goals or aspirations, it is no one’s fault but our own.

Helen Keller lost both sight and hearing due to an illness when she was only 19 months old. However, with the help of a devoted instructor, Anne Sullivan, she overcame her considerable disabilities to become an author, disability rights advocate and lecturer. One of her strengths was she never offered excuses; instead, she was able to state, “What I am looking for is not out there. It is in me.”

Citing Keller’s example, leadership consultant Tim Kight observed, “Doctors don’t make you healthy. Nutritionists don’t make you slim. Teachers don’t make you smart. Trainers don’t make you fit. They help, but you must take responsibility and do the work.”

We see this every day in the marketplace. To get a job, we usually need to complete a resume, fill out an application and be interviewed first. To make a sale, we have to interact with prospective buyers and inform them of the value and benefits of our product or service. To earn a promotion or a pay raise, we have to prove ourselves worthy of it. As Kight says, we must take responsibility and do the work.

The Bible has a lot to say about this. For instance, it affirms the virtue of honest work. “For even when we were with you, we gave you the rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’ (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Even 2,000 years ago, the Scriptures were teaching, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.”

We may admire a colleague who understands how to effectively integrate his or her faith with her work, but it will take effort for us to accomplish the same. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The “word of truth” – God’s truth as revealed in the Scriptures – does not come to us through osmosis. We must devote time to reading the Bible, studying it, meditating on it, and memorizing it to internalize its truths and principles for practical application.

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At the same time, to become a consistent, fruitful “ambassador for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20), we also must understand that while we have an important role in our success, so does God. Philippians 2:13 tells us, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

This aligns with what Jesus taught His disciples when He declared, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.... Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me...apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:1-5). We must take initiative and put forth the necessary effort, but to realize God’s purposes for our lives, we must rely on Him. As the apostle Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).

© 2023. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC’s Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today’s Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd’s Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you observed that more and more people seem to be refusing to accept responsibility for their own lives, along with the consequences for their actions and decisions? If you can, cite an example that comes to your mind. How do you feel about that?
2. Do you agree with the observations that doctors do not make us healthy, teachers do not make us smart, and physical trainers do not make us fit? How then can we balance the roles these and other professionals can play in our lives with our own responsibilities for accomplishing desired outcomes?
3. What do you believe the Bible teaches about the necessity for us to take initiative and personal responsibility in the work we do and how we conduct our daily lives?
4. How can we balance “our part” in what God desires for us to do as His ambassadors or representatives with the part He must play if we are to accomplish anything to lasting, even eternal value?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Ecclesiastes 3:9-13; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 2:14-18

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