

## Lesson 4: Personal Accountability

Teacher: Phillip Shumake

**1.) Do you Agree or Disagree?** “We are personally responsible for making daily choices that please God in every area of life.”

- If you agree, can you think of any outside circumstances that would cause you to “excuse” evil behavior in especially difficult situations?
- If you disagree, can you think of any MAJOR issues where you believe everyone is personally responsible to God’s standards, even if they are NOT responsible in “every area” of life.

Read the following passages and write down a few phrases that teach the concept of personal accountability...

- Ezekiel 18:1-24
- Matthew 25:1-13

### 2.) The Classic Challenge & The Modern Challenge

The Classic Challenge was: “Behaviors the Bible describes as sinful or unauthorized are actually excusable.” People would often argue whether certain things like lying or stealing were excusable in very hard situations.

The Modern Challenge is different and more personal. Today the debate is whether certain things are excusable not based on the situation, but based on the personal qualities of the individual in question. Thus the modern challenge can be stated as: “It is unjust to hold all people to the same standards. There must be more allowances given because of 3 personal factors: Race, Gender, & Wealth.”

- Please review Daniel chapter 1, and answer the following questions...
  - What things were within Daniel’s control?
  - What things were outside of Daniel’s control?
  - What excuses might people today make, to permit Daniel to eat the king’s food?
  - What were the results of Daniel’s choices?

### 3.) Difficult Circumstances – Personal or Situational – Do Not Excuse Sinful Behavior.

- What topic is Jesus teaching about in Matthew 19:1-12?

## MODERN CHALLENGES TO FAITH

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- Jesus explains that these commands may seem easy or hard to different people. What conditions does Jesus use as an example of those who are in a unique personal situation?
- How long have these people been in this personal condition?
- Some wonder, “Is it fair for God to hold everyone to the same standard?” Part of the answer depends on what information is available to them. What does Romans 1:17-23 say about the evidence for God available to everyone?
- Does a person’s nationality exclude them from following the gospel? (Acts 17:30-31)
- Do you think there should be different standards of morality for men and women? rich and poor? Are there Bible passages to support this opinion?

### 4.) How Should We Respond?

If everyone has personal responsibility, but for some people it is very hard to live up to the standards maybe we should just Change The Standards? In California, a law called “Prop 47” made stealing anything below a value of \$950 a crime that would not be prosecuted. What do you think was the outcome of lowering the standards?

In Atlanta, council member Antonio Brown had his car stolen by kids. He said the kids who stole his car acted out of “hopelessness and desperation.” He called the theft “a generational poverty issue.” He said he doesn’t intend to file criminal charges. Why would Mr. Brown choose not to prosecute the teens who stole his car? What would you do?

In the Bible, we are shown a powerful option: To Maintain God’s Standards, But Extend Mercy.

- What does James 2:12-13 say about this?
- What might it look like to Maintain the Standards, But Extend Mercy in the two cases above?
- Would it be reasonable to consider a person’s level or type of regret when extending mercy? What might we look for?

### 5.) God’s Perfect Judgment

Please read and consider Matthew 25:22-23. What factors does God consider in His judgment, and how do you feel about His combination of Holy Standards & Loving Mercy?