

All things lawful
by Hendrik Joubert

The level of personal accountability and the associated responsibility taught in the Bible is remarkably different from the general perception in our society. Notice for example the following words spoken by the Lord: **“Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”** (Matthew 15:14 NKJV) Careless *followers* may not see their inclusion; however they too *fall into a ditch*. Those who *verified* what Paul and Silus said by searching the Scriptures are considered *noble*, or *noble-minded*. (Acts 17:11)

In 1Corinthians 6:12 another level of personal responsibility becomes apparent when Paul writes: **All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.** (KJV) The NKJV substitutes *helpful* for *expedient* and the NASB read *profitable*.

There are things I may have the right to do, however I may easily abuse this right. We must eat, however I may make myself guilty of gluttony as I become addicted to food – **brought under the power by** an otherwise lawful thing. The example in the context seems to address the sexual desires we are created with; these may be expressed in the proper context, while abuse may result in fornication, adultery or homosexuality. **Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.** (1Corinthians 6:13 NKJV) I should not allow anything to interfere with my relationship with God.

The principle of personal responsibility extends to my causing others to taint their relationship with God, and in this regard *I am my brother's keeper*. I may have the right to do many things, however if by exercising these rights others are caused to stumble, I am abusing these liberties; they are no longer *expedient*, or helpful.

Take a look at this statement made a little later in the same letter: **Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.** (1Corinthians 8:13 NKJV) Paul said this after he confirmed that idols are **nothing in the world** (1Corinthians 8:4 NKJV); however if a brother who does not understand this is caused to sin because of my actions, I need to be willing to forgo of this *right*. My responsibility is to keep myself and others focused on man's single most important duty, to **Fear God and keep His commandments.** (Ecclesiastes 12:13b NKJV)

This exhortation implies a level of sensitivity foreign to a society bent on fighting for individual *rights*. The Bible refers to these as *liberties*, or simply *lawful* actions; they are not rights to be exercised without consideration of others. Instead the Christian should deny himself in favor of the rights of others, and even more: **...Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?** (1 Corinthians 6:7 NKJV)

A young lady scantily dressed in a bathing suit may argue that it is the men who need to control their minds, just as a young man without a shirt may think he has nothing to cover, because he thinks as a man. The Bible puts the responsibility on each Christian to consider how his or her actions may influence others.

There is another practice I want to address here as we enter our summer, and that is the popularity of *Bible, or church camps*. We are careful about designating these properly as we realize it is not the work of the church to keep and entertain the youth; however it is what we cause others to think that becomes an issue here. Campers assemble for *Chapel* (Latin for church) and a lady I know defends these *camps* as *worship events*.

Some express their concern about the pressure put on young people to be baptized, while others (few) would even encourage them to wait until the camp to be baptized. The latter demonstrates a lack of understanding and awareness of the responsibility to guide these young people to a proper understanding of the role this act plays in establishing a covenant relationship with Christ through His blood. (1Peter 3:21; Hebrews 10:22; 9:13-14)

Does God accept every baptism here as an appeal for the blood of Christ? (1Peter 3:21; Hebrews 9:13-14; 10:22) Is it possible for a young person walking away from this event to not have the *presumed* relationship with the Lord? Could this perception ultimately cause such a person to never obey the Lord?

Mixing pleasure, or at least leisurely activities, with worship diminishes the reverent attitude with which we are to approach God in our *worship events*. Consider the context and the words God chose to reveal through Paul to

describe that terrible event while Jehovah was revealing His law: ***“Nor should we be idolaters, even as some of them, as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” (1 Corinthians 10:7 MKJV)***

It is quite interesting that the Lord does not refer to the golden calf, but rather to the social activities and sins associated with *play*. Events such as these are not *worship events* causing spiritual thoughts, but rather *fun* stuff often leading to mischief. All this is covered under the umbrella of the Bible, and those who dare speak out against the inexpediencies are made to feel guilty about speaking out against *innocent* events meant to stimulate *godly* behavior.

Using events such as these to attract unbelievers does not help a person realize the seriousness of sin, and detracts from the gospel, God’s *power unto salvation*. (**Romans 1:16-17; 1Corinthians 2:1-5**)