



# Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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## Responsibility and Choice

"Okay! Who's responsible for this?!!!" We've all heard these words some time in our life. Often, they're followed by a responsive chorus of "Not me!!" They're spoken at home and on the job, with both school children and seasoned professionals. Unfortunately, they're typically spoken in response to an undesirable situation, rather than a surprisingly pleasant one, in an effort to assign blame and impose consequence. As a result, something as natural and honorable as responsibility often becomes frightening and intimidating, a burden to be avoided or passed along as quickly as possible.

The truth is, however, that all of us are designed and called to be responsible. In fact, each of us is *already* responsible. The question is, though, responsible for what? Most of us fall into the trap of either overestimating the bounds of our responsibility or underestimating them. Sometimes we even do both.

It has been said that we cannot be responsible for what we do not control, and to a large extent this is true. Certainly, from a social and business perspective, leaders are held accountable for the results of those they lead, even though they have no direct control over them. In fact, their very position of leadership depends on the willingness of others to follow.

On a personal level, however, we might well consider what we do control and what we are responsible for. Once we get beyond our delusions of grandeur or insignificance, we are left with one conclusion - we are responsible for our own decisions, choices, and behaviors.

Author and motivational speaker Tony Robbins has noted, "Decision is the ultimate power." Our decisions reveal our values, channel our emotions, and direct our behaviors. They are the arena where our power, our control, and thus our responsibility exist.

So what does this mean in practical terms? Let's look at a few areas.

1) The decision to *not* choose is itself a choice. We are as responsible for this decision as for any other choice we make.

2) The devil didn't "make us do it." The truth is, the devil can't make us do anything. He can only tempt us, and he is very good at what he does. Yet, we are still responsible for the choices we make, healthy or unhealthy, in response to his tempting. We are well advised to "suit up" for the battle as described in Ephesians 6:10-18.

3) Parents (and teachers, pastors, other leaders - you make the application) are not ultimately responsible for the decisions and outcome of their children. If we had exclusive access to and ultimate control

over our children, this would be different. Yet, such control is only a fantasy. Having said this, however, we must be reminded that we are called to be a significant influence on our children as family leaders guiding their development. Our responsibility is to be the best parents we are capable of being, exercising wisdom, self control, and love in our decisions and interactions.

4) We are not responsible for other people's responses to our choices or actions. *They* are, since that is *their* choice. *We* are responsible for *our* choices and the direct impact they have on others.

5) The outcomes of our choices often reveal the quality of those choices. Poor choices, whether at home, at work, or in our private life, typically result in negative outcomes. Such outcomes call for a review of the decisions made, though we should remember that wise choices can also result in unfavorable outcomes, at least in the short term.

6) Responsibility should be recognized and owned in positive situations, not just negative ones. Honoring and celebrating good choices motivates each of us to be our best and to use the gifts we are blessed with. It's also a lot more fun than blaming.

Responsibility and choice - it's a natural combination meant to live together. Let's claim the power of this pairing and recognize the freedom of others to do the same.



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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## Growing Responsibility

As parents, managers, group leaders, or business owners, we are often faced with a decision regarding how much freedom, decision making, and responsibility to give to those we are charged with leading. Behind this issue, however, is the larger question of how to develop our charges so they expand the scope of their competence and the range of their wisdom. This is important, because in doing so, we also increase the arenas where they can competently exercise their decision making and assume responsibility.



To develop those in our care, we must provide input into at least three areas of growth.

- 1) The training of appropriate skills and abilities - Such training provides the knowledge necessary for wise decisions.
- 2) The communication and development of appropriate values - These values guide the use of the knowledge so that the decisions made are both wise and moral.
- 3) Opportunity to "practice", with available mentorship and guidance -

Experience helps value-guided knowledge come alive while it builds confidence. Enough freedom must be given to allow room for measured failure as well as success. Our charges will let us know what they can handle by how well they perform, and we should adjust the scope of their freedom and responsibility accordingly.

"Failure is an event, never a person."

- William D. Brown