

Talking about Responsibility

HEARTLINES film – The Good Provider

Preparation for the discussion

Read the notes “Leading a discussion group around the eight values” on pages 2 & 3. Read the Bible notes on Responsibility in the ‘Go deeper’ section on page 40.

KEY THOUGHT to keep in mind when leading a discussion on responsibility:

God calls us to be responsible with the gifts he puts in our care in order that we can provide for the people he places in our care - spiritually, morally and practically.



Jabu and friends



Solomon

1) Introduce the discussion 3 Minutes

Briefly introduce the film “The Good Provider” and the value of “responsibility” that the film highlights. Read the following Scripture from Matthew 6:26: **“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”**

2) Show the film 16 Minutes

Show the HEARTLINES film “The Good Provider” as provided on the DVD in the back inside cover of this book. If you are extending the discussion over 2 sessions, and have already watched the film, read the summary at the start of the second session.

3) Start the film discussion 20 Minutes

1. What do you think is the main message communicated in this film?
2. Why do you think Solomon did not tell his wife and son about the collapse of the company where he worked?
3. What do you think Solomon should have done?
4. How do you think Jabu felt when he found out that his dad was unemployed and had been lying to him and his mother?
5. What caused Jabu to become involved in alcohol and drugs?
6. Do you think it took courage for Solomon to arrive at the chess tournament dressed as he was? What impact do you think this had on Jabu?

[film summary]

Solomon, his wife Thabi and teenage son Jabu are a close-knit, happy, township family. Solomon has a responsible job in a printing firm, but when the firm suddenly goes bankrupt, Solomon’s world falls apart.

He feels too ashamed to tell his family and instead continues to act as if all is normal. Each day he pretends to go to work but instead joins the queue to try to get some casual work as a labourer. One day Jabu follows his father to work, and discovers his deceit. Solomon, exposed and embarrassed, moves out of the home and into a shelter.

Without the presence, love and support of his father, Jabu becomes negatively influenced by a group of delinquent youth.

Solomon eventually realises the damage that his irresponsible behaviour is causing at home and moves back to his family.

4) Discuss the film quotes *15 Minutes*

Show the following clips as provided on the DVD and use the relevant quote as a springboard for discussion:

[CLIP 1] Opening Narration (Isaiah)

"No elephant finds its trunk too heavy. Our families are a gift from God. Your family is your trunk"

[CLIP 2] Solomon talking to Jabu in the car

"You get nowhere without hard work."

[CLIP 3] Solomon and Thabi speaking at the shelter

"When I lost my job I felt such a failure." (Solomon)

"This is not about you Solomon. It is about your family." (Thabi)

"What kind of example are you if you run away when there's trouble?" (Thabi)

"Jabu is in trouble, he needs his father" (Thabi)



Solomon and Jabu

[film discussion summary]

One of the hardest things that can happen to a person is to lose a job. It can leave you depressed and discouraged and questioning your own worth. It is even worse when losing your job affects not only you, but the family for whom you are responsible.

This was Solomon's experience. He knew that he needed to be responsible to his family by providing for them; he wanted to be a good example. However, ashamed at the loss of his job and unable to face his wife and son, he left home to find work. But even as he sought to be a good provider to his family, he failed to be a responsible husband and father: he failed to be an emotional and spiritual support to his family through everything that happened to them, both good and bad.

**"Our families
are a gift
from God."**

5) Discuss: How can we practise responsibility? *25 Minutes*

NOTE: If your group is made up of individuals who do not have parenting responsibilities, you will need to adjust the questions and direct the discussion to either responsibilities of children, responsibilities within the church family or responsibilities at work.

1. Ask the group to share some of the responsibilities (family or other) they have that are causing stress or anxiety in their lives right now.
2. Deut 11:18-21 says *"Fix these words of [God's] in your hearts and minds... teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up so that your days and the days of your children may be many..."*

Q: What are we personally doing to ensure that our families know and live by God's Word? What challenges make it hard for us to fulfil our spiritual and moral responsibilities to our families?

[leader's note]

In The Good Provider Solomon left his family. His concern was to find a means to provide for them practically but, because of his shame he failed to provide for them morally. A father cannot be a spiritual guide if he does not make himself available for his family.

Group discussion on Responsibility

3. In 1 Timothy 5:8 we read *“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith.”*

Q: What are the practical responsibilities we have for our families? What challenges make it hard to fulfil these responsibilities?

[leader’s note]

Circumstances such as the current high unemployment rate in South Africa may make material provision difficult, but do not excuse parents from doing whatever they can to meet the practical needs of their children.

4. What should our attitude be to our work and related responsibilities?

Colossians 3:23 says *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”* and 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 says *“We hear that some of you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.”* Discuss.

5. Read Matthew 6:26: *“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”*

Q: Do you worry about whether or not you can fulfil your responsibilities to your family? How does this truth about God as described here help you in this matter?

[He is our perfect Father]

In our sinfulness we are very often blind to our responsibilities. However, in God we encounter our perfect Father (Matthew 5:48) who provides for us perfectly, for He Himself takes seriously His responsibility towards us (Matthew 6:25-34). His care for us enables us to care for our families and for others. Knowing, trusting and obeying our heavenly Father is the start to becoming a person of responsibility.

6. Ephesians 6:2-3 reads: *“Honor your father and mother... that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

Q: What responsibilities do children have to their families? What can parents do to encourage children to take such responsibilities seriously?



Principal Matabane and Thabi



Solomon

“Knowing, trusting and obeying our heavenly Father is the start to become a person of responsibility”

[time to think...] 10 minutes

Read the following and ask each person to think about responsibility in their own lives.

Think of the various responsibilities you have. How are you doing with each?

Are there some that need attention?

What can you do to be more responsible?

Pray and ask for forgiveness where you have fallen short.

Ask for grace to carry your burdens and strength to fulfil your responsibilities

At home this week:

Encourage the group to read the story of Eli and his sons, Hophne and Phinehas in 1 Samuel 1-3 this week. **Encourage the group to memorise Colossians 3:23** *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”*



Isaiah

6) Talking about HIV&AIDS (Optional) 10 minutes

1. How does the problem of absent fathers impact on HIV&AIDS in our society?



[leader's note]

When a father is absent from the family, children are more likely to get involved in social groups that will encourage them to practice ungodly behaviour, some of which could put them at risk of contracting HIV. The responsibility which a father demonstrates in providing for his family is a good example of doing the right thing even when it is difficult. This will model self control to the younger generation who are in need of exercising self control in their lives.

“What can you do to be more responsible?”

7) Responsibility in Action: Ideas to make a difference in your community

- Think of ways in which you and other people in your church could support families where one or both parents are absent.
- Think of the various responsibilities that we have to one another as church family:
 - Are there people in your church that have spiritual needs for which you need to take responsibility? (See Deut 11:18-21)
 - Are there people in your church that have practical needs for which you need to take responsibility? (E.g. food, clothing, financial, lifts to church or to school)



Jabu and friends



What God says about Responsibility

HEARTLINES film – The Good Provider

One of the hardest things that can happen to a person is to lose a job. It can leave you depressed and discouraged and questioning your own worth. It is even worse when losing your job affects not only you, but the family for whom you are responsible.

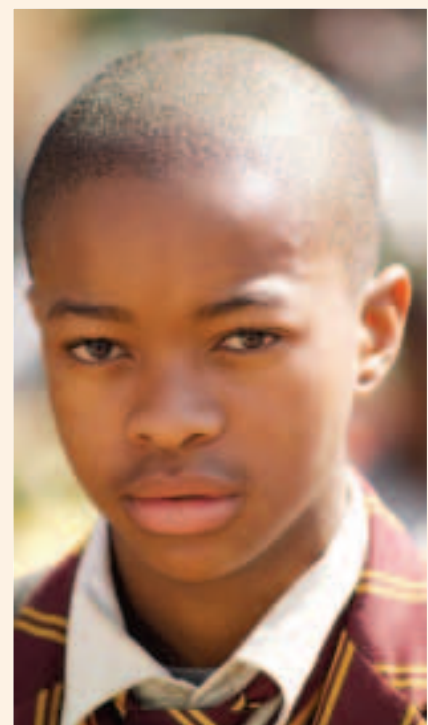
This was Solomon's experience in the HEARTLINES film – **the Good Provider**. He knew that he needed to be responsible to his family by providing for them. He wanted to be a good example. However, ashamed at the loss of his job and unable to face his wife and son, he left home to find work. But even as he sought to be a good provider to his family, he failed to be a responsible husband and father: he failed to be an emotional and spiritual support to his family through everything that happened to them, both good and bad.

Solomon's experiences are widespread among us today. Unemployment in the country is very high. Inhumane labour practices – historical legacies including the geographical isolation of many from economic centres and the perpetuation of migrant labour, make it difficult for families to stay intact. Millions find themselves under social and economic pressures to choose between family and work.

What responsibilities do you have for your family? Are you fulfilling them? Responsibility to one's family is not always easy. Many challenges and temptations have to be overcome in order to become responsible people.

MORAL responsibility

Scripture tells us that before anything else, parents (and leaders of all kinds) have a moral responsibility. It makes it clear that parents are to walk closely with God and pass on what they learn to their children: "Fix these words of [God's] in your hearts and minds... teach them to your children,



Jabu



Thabi

“Parents are to walk closely with God and pass on what they learn to their children”

talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up so that your days and the days of your children may be many ...” (Deuteronomy 11:18-21). Fathers are expected to play a leading role in this by providing the “training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). These days this is too often done only by the mother. The father is often absent and the children lack the influence of a godly father figure. The book of Proverbs portrays the model father who, having walked with God, passes on his years of wisdom to his children.

Scripture also shows that we have a responsibility before God for the behaviour of the children within our care. In 1 Samuel 1-3 we meet the High Priest of the Lord’s Temple, Eli. Eli’s sons, Phinehas and Hophne, worked with him in the temple. Their job was to ensure that people worshipped the Lord properly according to the Jewish sacrificial laws. Instead, Eli’s sons frequently abused worshippers by dishonouring their sacrifices and by practising sexual immorality (2:12-17, 22).

Eli was known in the community as a godly man. But both as a parent and as the temple’s leader, he did nothing to correct and take responsibility for what was happening. God spoke to him about this, saying:

[from the word]

“Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?”

1 Samuel 2:29

Eli’s sons may have been the ones at fault but Eli was also responsible, for he allowed his fears to prevent him from exercising authority and good judgment both as a parent and as a leader.

This lesson applies not only to parents but to all leaders, because it reveals something very dear to God’s heart. It was not only that Eli had neglected to control his son’s abuses. By doing so, he was avoiding his responsibility to ensure that Israel’s people had proper access to worshipping the Lord and hearing from Him. 1 Samuel 3:1 says that “In those days the word of the LORD was rare.” God wants His people to be spiritually fed and it starts within the family. Eli failed in his responsibility to make sure this was happening. So God did two things: firstly, he brought judgment on Eli’s family and secondly, he raised up a new leader, Samuel, to replace Eli in giving spiritual leadership to Israel (2:27-3:21). In contrast to Eli, Samuel took his responsibilities seriously, and so we see that the Lord “let none of his words fall to the ground ... [and the] Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word” (3:19-21). Later in his life though, even Samuel failed to be a moral leader to his own children. Israel may have been drawn into an encounter with God through his leadership, but his own sons were not (1 Samuel 8:3-5).

In *The Good Provider* Solomon left his family. His concern was to find a means to provide for them practically but, because of his shame he failed to provide for them morally, for a father cannot be a spiritual guide if he isn’t at home! What things prevent us from taking our responsibilities to our families seriously?

PRACTICAL responsibility

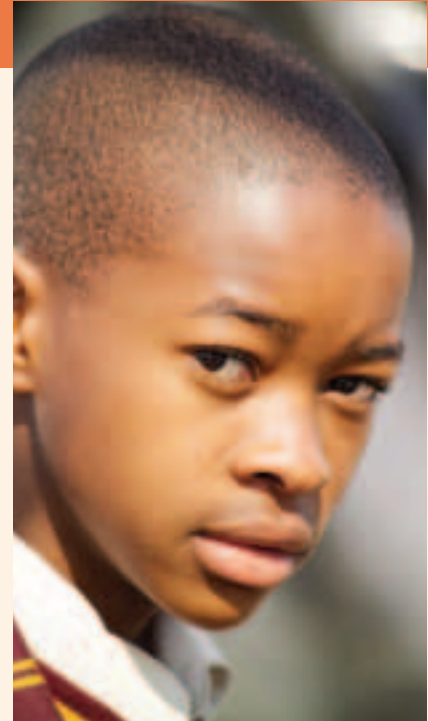
As we see in *The Good Provider* we do not just have moral responsibilities to one another and to our children, but also practical responsibilities.

[from the word]

“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith.”

1 Timothy 5:8

Proverbs 31:10-31 describes a wife and mother who is an outstanding role model: she is diligent and hard-working; she is smart with investments and handles money wisely; she cares for her children’s and husband’s needs; she is compassionate towards the needy in her community and, she is a storehouse of important life-knowledge. Not many wives or husbands can be all these things all the time, but you can imagine the impact on children growing up under the good example of a parent like this!



Jabu

RESPONSIBILITY in both directions

A victim mentality exists that is increasingly wide-spread in society today. It says that if one was mistreated as a child, then as an adult, it is acceptable for one to mistreat others. In the film, we learn from the experience of Jabu, Solomon’s son, that each of us is responsible for our actions even when we feel someone who should be caring for us in some way, has let us down. That is why God judged not only Eli, but also his two sons for their irresponsible behaviour. Furthermore, Scripture repeatedly says that children are to “honour your father and mother” in order that “it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (e.g. Ephesians 6:2-3). So the well-being of a family depends on both parents and children taking their responsibilities to one another seriously.



Isaiah and Solomon

“Honour your
father and
mother”

HE IS our perfect Father

In our sinfulness we are very often blind to our responsibilities. However, in God we encounter our perfect Father (Matthew 5:48) who provides for us perfectly, for He Himself takes seriously His responsibility towards us (Matthew 6:25-34). His care for us enables us to care for our families and for others.

Scripture describes God's father-relationship with us in different ways. He is a Father who provides good gifts (7:11) and the ultimate gift He gives is the presence of His own Spirit within us to empower us to know and obey Him as His children (Luke 11:13). 1 John 3:1 describes this as an act of "lavish" love.



Jabu and Thabi

We are told that "the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:12) and that this is "for our good, that we may share in his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

God is a "father to the fatherless", caring for those whose fathers have "forsaken" them or died (Psalm 68:5 & 27:10).

Our heavenly Father goes on the search for His children whose choices have led them astray, for He "is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Matthew 18:14). He is a Father who restores those who have fallen on hard times due to their own bad choices (Luke 15:11-31). And as our Father He is willing to forgive us (Matthew 6:14-15).

Jesus said "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). This means that when we come into a relationship with Jesus, we find that we have entered into a relationship with the divine Father. Once we are in this relationship, the Father gives us the gift of His Spirit. His is a Spirit of love that does not make us "a slave again to fear." It is instead a family relationship enabling trust, for His Spirit is the "Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

Knowing, trusting and obeying our heavenly Father is the start to becoming a person of responsibility.

"His care for us enables us to care for our families and for others"

[from the word]

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land."

Psalm 68:5-6

"Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me."

Psalm 27:10

How can we practise Responsibility

1. Share some of the responsibilities (family or other) you have that are causing stress or anxiety in your life right now.

2. Deut 11:18-21 says *“Fix these words of [God’s] in your hearts and minds... teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up so that your days and the days of your children may be many...”*

Q: What are you personally doing to ensure that your family knows and lives by God’s Word? What challenges make it hard for you to fulfil your spiritual and moral responsibilities to your family?

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Q: What responsibilities do children have to their families? What can parents do to encourage children to take such responsibilities seriously?

At home this week:

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