

Responsibility in the Work - Questions and Answers

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of functioning in the local church and developing gifts and ministry before considering a call to be a worker in God's work.

Duration: 44:26

Scripture: Acts 13:1

Topics: "Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, Brother Stephen Kong discusses the importance of the work of God and the different roles within it. He emphasizes that God has called certain individuals, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, to carry out His work. These individuals are chosen and trained by the Lord Himself, just as Jesus personally trained His disciples. Brother Kong encourages believers to start serving in the local assembly and not to aim too high at the beginning, but to faithfully use the gifts and abilities that God has given them.

Transcript

I suppose it's very difficult for us to be quiet down after such a fiery session. May we look to the Lord in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, how we do praise and thank Thee that we can come together again this afternoon.

We do worship Thee because Thou art doing such a great work. And Thou does call us to work together with Thee. And we do pray that Thou will clarify for us any confusion or any misunderstanding that we have.

We pray that Thou will bring us not only to understand but also to really be a functioning, living, participating fellow worker of Thine and of Thine. So we just commit this time into Thy hands and pray for the spirit of wisdom and understanding. In the name of our Lord Jesus.

I think first of all I have to clarify a point. Because what I mentioned yesterday about the work, that is God's work, the work of God. I do not have anything in mind as to a recognized, organized sort of work.

What I mean is God has a work to do. And He is doing that. And as He does that work, He does call many to join in the work that He is doing.

In other words, what I'm presenting is more of a spiritual general picture. I'm not thinking in terms of how do you join the work or things like that. So I think this is the point that I like to clarify.

Because even if you are not formally joined to a work, yet you still can be in God's work. It is not necessarily that you have to join a work in order to be in God's work. Sometimes you may join a work and you are not in God's work.

But you may not join a work and yet you can really, spiritually, really be in the work of God. So I think this is a point I would like to clarify before I go on. Now there are a number of questions here.

Some questions I feel probably we should go into it. Other questions probably are not very much important or much essential for our consideration. So I will just go on and read the questions and wait for your help to answer these questions.

Especially two brothers here. And we'll see as we go on. You quoted the scriptures that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are workers.

Do these ones develop their gift in the church? Or are there times that these ones that show promise are trained and developed in the work by a proven worker? Let me read again. I think it's a good question. You quoted the scriptures that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are workers.

Do these ones develop their gift in the church? Or are there times that these ones that show promise are trained and developed in the work by a proven worker? Dana, what do you think about it? Communicate. I think that if the church were in its normal state, that a brother or sister whom God was raising up to be a worker would be trained in the church and develop their gift in the church, because don't forget that workers are part of the church too. And then these workers in the church perhaps would notice the gift and the talent of these young men and women and give them some training in the context of the church.

I think perhaps many of us see that as the normal that God is trying to recover in this day, which is why we emphasize when we see a brother or sister that obviously has some gifting from God, if they can really learn church life, then they will be saved. Now the question as to whether a worker should take them as an alternative really implies that the church isn't being the church. If a worker has to take somebody out over here to train them, then it's saying that the church is such that they can't be trained there.

And I would hope that contradiction in our context wouldn't be the case. Now, of course, a lot of what is considered training today is when a young man or woman goes off to a school to learn. And I have a few hesitations with that, but I think Stephen really ought to answer this question a little bit more.

My hesitations are really twofold. Number one, that you cannot help at a school. And I say this from personal experience, having been to a seminary for four years, that you develop a mentality of a minister and one who leads.

And it's awfully hard once that happens. And then when you graduate, you get a position. It's awfully hard not to turn that down and say, no, I'm just going back to these people and I'm going to be an electrician.

When instead you could be a full-time worker and a head of a church. Very hard to overcome that sense. And, of course, also I think sometimes in certain schools there's problems with how they train you, both in theology and in practical work.

Often you don't get the discipline of your personal life that you need, and it produces many workers who lack on the life side. Good. Good.

Thank you. Now, we do believe that God gave to the church some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. And we call them workers.

Because these four classes of people represent, really, God's work. As I said yesterday, that there are many others that are involved in the work, but these four classes of people seem to represent the work. Another thing I think we can emphasize, and that is, personally I feel these people are called by the Lord in a special way.

In other words, generally everyone is called to the work. You know, like a parable in Matthew chapter 20, you find a householder went out and he just, whoever he saw, standing there idle and asked them to come in and work in the vineyard. So in that sense, you know, that call is a general call.

But I personally believe that people of these four classes of people, they not only receive the general call, but they really receive some specific calling from God. In other words, God does, in a specific way, call them into the ministry. So Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, said, having this ministry.

In other words, there is a ministry called this ministry. It is the ministry of the Word. And those who are engaged in this ministry, they have received special call from God.

God has specially set them apart, appointing them by divine appointment into the work that God has called them to. Now, not every worker or fellow worker in God's work are among these four classes of people. So I think this is something we need to be clear about.

You know, many will be involved in God's work. But there will be four classes of people as if they represent God's work. Therefore, they need special calling from God to be such.

Now, that is one point. Now, the second point, I will just re-emphasize it. Our brother has already mentioned.

The training or the developing of a worker. Now, it is true. When our Lord Jesus was on earth, out of all the disciples, he chose twelve to be with him.

In other words, he put them under his personal training. But at that time, of course, you don't have the church yet. So the Lord himself personally trained these people.

But when you go into the New Testament, in the Book of Acts, aside from the original twelve apostles, of course, Paul stands out. And here you will find that Paul received a special calling from God. God appointed him to be a witness and a servant.

So he received a special calling from God. And probably we will think that Paul had never received any training in the church. He seems to be very original in a sense.

But we have to remember the background. Number one, you will find that Paul, being Saul the Pharisee, he had a very good background of the Old Testament. He was not a person that knew nothing about the Word of God.

He was familiar with the Word of God. But unfortunately, he was blind. You know, he read the Word of God with a colored spectacle.

That is with the tradition of the fathers. He misread the Bible. But he did have a good background of the Bible.

Now, number one. Number two, you will find that after the Lord had saved him and called him, he went to Arabia for three years. And there he was, I believe, he was re-studying the Word under new light.

He had met Christ. So therefore, he is studying the Bible in terms of... So he learned directly from the Lord. But even so, you will find that he went to Jerusalem.

He got too hot. He had to be sent away. And there he was in Cilicia, in Tarsus.

We do not know how long. It must be probably a few years there. Until Barnabas went out to find him.

And brought him to Antioch. And for a whole year, he served the Lord with Barnabas. And then in Acts chapter 13, you will find, God raised up in the church in Antioch, five prophets and teachers.

But among the five, Saul was listed last. Now, you know, the order in the Bible is very meaningful. In other words, when the Spirit of God put names down or put the order down, it is not just Achilles listed.

He listed very carefully. So here you will find even Paul, with such a background. In a sense, he was learning to serve with Barnabas.

Not under Barnabas, but with Barnabas. And with the others, but he was the last one. And it was then that God separated Barnabas and Saul.

For the apostolic work. And in the beginning, you will find it was Barnabas and Saul. Until, later on, the Holy Spirit changed the order and said Paul and Barnabas.

So, even with such a great apostle like Paul, you will find that he still received some help and some training in the church. Ministering together with the other whom God has raised up. He was not a person that is just so original that he has nothing to do with training or with other people.

Now, of course, Paul is an exception. I do believe that the rule in the New Testament of how a worker is being raised up, developed, I think the clearest case is Timothy. Is Timothy.

Here was a young man, saved, when Paul visited Derbe and Iconia, Lystra, these places. And after this young man was saved, he was in the church there. And while he was meeting with the brothers and sisters in the church there, in Derbe and Iconia, gradually, it was manifested that he had a gift.

Maybe of teaching, even though he was a young man. But again you find that he knew the sacred letter from his childhood. There was a background there.

And because of that background, and added to it his diligence, you find gradually he was functioning as a member of the body of Christ. You know, that's the wonderful thing. The church is the training ground for God's workers.

In the church, every member of the body functions. You know, today the problem is, either you have no opportunity to function in the church where you are. You are not given the opportunity.

Because there is someone there who is in charge and who takes care of all the spiritual things. It's all centered upon one person. So, the rest doesn't have a chance to function and to develop the gift or gifts that God has given them.

Now that is one extreme. The other extreme is, people do not function. They just are passive.

Maybe the opportunity is there, but they don't seize upon the opportunity. They don't function. And if they do not function, they will never be manifested by the Holy Spirit.

A person that is to be manifested by the Holy Spirit, you have to function first. So I do believe that when God's people are together in the church, local, this is the place that all the members of the body function. And as they function, gradually, those whom God would raise up as future workers will be manifested.

Locally first. Locally, maybe Timothy, as he was functioning, you know, maybe as he was exhorting or as he was encouraging, as he was expanding the word of God, the brothers and sisters are edified, are really helped, you know. And probably some older people will encourage this young man to do more of it.

And as gradually it developed, then after a while you find Paul came to Derbe and Iconia. And this young man was recommended by the church there. That here was a young man who seemed to have a potential.

And he has already proven himself in the local church. And Paul took him with him and helped to develop whatever God has already vested in this young man. So I do believe that, number one, a worker, and by the worker there probably more in the sense of these first classes of people.

I do believe a worker is developed in this way. First, in the assembly, in the local church. You know, the problem today is, I do not know how you feel, but that's how I feel.

I feel the problem today is, usually, you know, in a revival meeting or in a conference of some sort, you know, when people are fired up, then there will be a call for workers. Saying that, well, who wants to present, offer himself to serve God. You know, and in that sense it means, not in the sense of generally that we offer ourselves to God, but more in the sense of being one of the four classes of people.

You know, that's the mentality today. So people heard the call, they responded, and they felt that now they are called. And they had already responded.

So what should they do? And the quickest way, of course, is go to a seminary or Bible school to be prepared. You know, that I think is the traditional mentality. And in a sense, I feel that it is not really in accordance with the word of God.

To me, I feel, if we can function in the church, don't bother about calling, this matter of calling. You know, just be simple and serve in the local assembly, you know. And according to the measure that God has given to you, don't strike very high at the very beginning.

I am called to be a pastor, therefore I have to be a pastor, and nothing else. You know, I am called to be an evangelist, so unless I stand up and three thousand get saved, I'll never open my mouth. You know, don't strike too high.

Be very practical. You know, don't bother about calling. Don't bother about calling.

You know, that will come, if. Just begin as a simple brother, as a simple sister. And just be faithful in the little thing that God has given you.

And as you are faithfully serving, then you'll find gradually the gift, or gifts that God has given you begin to develop. And as they begin to develop, a ministry begin to be developing. And probably, to a certain point, you will hear the calling.

And God said, now, it is time for you to be more involved. You know, and you have the confirmation from the church. The whole church will respond and say, God has really raised this man up.

You know, I feel that is much safer than to have a kind of a calling and try to fit in with that calling. You know, it's a little bit artificial. Why not just start until you come to a point.

And when the calling comes, there's already manifestation and also confirmation from the church. And I think, probably, with Timothy, that is the case. And if it is the will of God that you should enter into a more wider field of service, I think it would be very good if some more experienced worker, you will work together with some more experienced worker instead of launching out all by yourself.

I think that would be a good thing because there are many lessons that we need to learn. So, I would say, what is mentioned here would be very good. Of course, sometimes, some people say, well, where can I find an older worker that I can work together with? Now, this is something that God has to sovereignly arrange it.

You cannot do it in a mechanical way or human arrangement. You know, put yourself under certain one. But God has to form that kind of relationship.

So, that's what it is. The second question, I think, should be reserved to your brother Ernie, at his session. Because it has to do with elders.

You go ahead. I will leave you to it. That way, when they ask me the question, I'll know what to say.

Okay, I'll call upon you then. Elders seem to need gifting to accompany the office they hold, such as prophetic ministry, a pastor's heart, evangelistic burden, aid to teach, in order for a church to be strong. How do we know if a person should be an elder or a worker if they show such gifting? Now, go ahead and answer.

You answer. First of all, the qualification for an elder is more spirituality than ability. I think this is very clear in 1 Timothy and in Titus.

As you read through that list, and again, it is not an exhaustive list. It is just an illustrative list. And as you go through the list in Timothy, chapter 3, and also in Titus, you will find that of all the things that are listed, actually they are more related to spirituality than to ability.

So to be an elder, the first thing is character. The first thing is spirituality. But it doesn't mean that someone that has absolutely no ability can be an elder.

Because in the list, at least you can find two items that seem to have something to do with ability. One is a person has to know how to rule his own house before he can rule the house of God. Now that's ability.

And another thing is ability to teach. But the ability to teach, to me I feel, doesn't mean that he is a teacher, necessarily. Because in other places in the scripture you'll find some elders have teaching ministry.

And if an elder has a teaching ministry, he should receive double honor. So it proves that not all elders have teaching ministry. But they have the tendency or the ability to counsel in that sense.

Not in the sense of teaching publicly. But more in the sense of, because of their knowledge of the Lord, of their understanding of their spiritual stature, some discernment, and because of that they are able to teach people. Whether it is in public or maybe it is in private.

Counseling and things like that. So these are related to ability. Now whether an elder must have prophetic ministry or not, I don't know.

It can be, but it is not necessary. An elder can be a prophet. It is possible.

But it is not necessary. But a pastor's heart an elder must have. Because if you read 1 Peter chapter 5, you will find that elders are also shepherds.

They shepherd the flock. Now pastor in the Greek original simply means shepherd. Pastor and shepherd are one word.

Pastoring is really shepherding. So an elder has to have a shepherd's heart. Now whether he is functioning as a shepherd.

But here I think you have to distinguish. In Ephesians chapter 4, really you find that these four classes of people are related to work. But in 1 Peter 5, when it mentions that the elders shepherd the flock.

It is more related to the church. So actually you have two kinds of shepherds. And I think that is all you can find in the New Testament.

One kind of shepherd is one of the four classes of workers. They are shepherds and teachers. The other kind involved in the work and the other kind of shepherd are the elders in the local church.

They are shepherds. Now today I am afraid we use the word shepherd in a very very general way. And to me I feel probably we have extended too far.

You know we hear that anybody shepherding a few people and things like that. Really you cannot use that word because strictly speaking in the New Testament. You will find the word shepherd is only used either for the work, one class in the work.

Or it refers to the elders of the church. So surely he has to have a shepherd's heart. Now an elder can be an evangelist.

He can be. There is no reason why he cannot be an evangelist. But not necessarily.

Now for a church to be strong, how do we know if a person should be an elder or a worker? Now the only difference between an elder and a worker is here. An elder is for the local assembly. In other words, he will stay there.

He will be with the people all the time. It doesn't mean that he cannot go out sometimes. But you find that his responsibility actually is local.

Now a worker, so called, that is he is involved in a work. And as I mentioned yesterday, a work is regional. Its scope is larger than a local assembly.

So whether that person should be an elder or a worker, it really depends on how the Lord will use him. If the Lord is calling him and use him locally, then he can be an elder there. Or if the Lord is calling him for a wider field of work, more than just one local assembly, then he can be a worker.

So it depends on how the Lord will use that kind of person. I don't know if that's all right. Ernie, will you please add something to it? Our brother is not communicating.

And I think here is a question that has something to do with the same, in the same area. How is it possible for a brother or sister to join in the work without first being a functional and living and contributing member of a local assembly? It is not possible. It is not possible.

You have to be a living, functioning, contributing member of the local assembly before you can really be involved in the work. Isn't this the proving ground of submission and service that must precede the work? That's true. The local church is the training ground.

Is the training ground. Of course, when you really get into the work, there are still much more to learn yet. But the basic things you have to learn in the local assembly.

Now just use an illustration. John Mark is an illustration. It seems that John Mark hasn't learned in the church in Jerusalem.

He was a person sheltered. And because of this, when he was taken into the work, he couldn't make it. He couldn't make it.

So I think that's the good thing. If a person will first be proven in the local assembly. He had to learn submission.

That's very true. And you'll find that that's a problem with John Mark. In the matter of submission.

He could submit to Barnabas but not to Paul. So he had to go back. And probably Peter did help him in that area.

And later on, of course, Barnabas helped him. So finally Paul said, John Mark is useful in the ministry. So I do think that is correct.

That is very important. This question is, you stated that if a worker has a job, his job is for the work. And if they have a family, their family is for the work.

Would you elaborate on this? Now again, I would say, there is a difference here. When you think of the work in general. That is God's work.

You know, you may just stay in one place. You are a member of the local church. But at the same time, you are serving God in the work.

By that I mean, generally speaking. You know, God is doing a work. And what is his work? He is building his church.

That is the work of God today. And because you see the vision. And because you really give yourself 100% to it.

Therefore, even though you are a local brother or a local sister. And you are locally involved in the building up of the church there. At the same time, you may be considered as participating in the work of God.

That is working with God. So that is one way to look at it. Now, if this is the case.

Then if God, it is God's will that you shall have a job. First of all, you do not look at the job as your real profession. It is your application, not your vocation.

Your vocation is serving the Lord. But in serving the Lord, it is the will of God that you shall have a job. So that job is an application.

You use that job to support yourself, to support your family, to help others. And to enable you to serve God in the way that He has ordained or He has opened up for you. So, in that sense, when you are doing a job, you are not doing it, you are doing it for the work.

Now, let me use an illustration probably. For instance, like Aquila and Priscilla. Now, Aquila and Priscilla, they are tank makers.

And you will find that they make tanks. That is their job. But, no doubt, you will find that Aquila and Priscilla are very much involved in God's work.

They do not make that job as the most important thing of their life. Do the work of God is their priority. And because of this, sometimes you will find, Priscilla and Aquila, they will move to another place.

When they arrive another place, they still carry on their job. But the reason why they move is related to the work of God. So, their work, their job is for the work.

Their job is not just for themselves. Their job is for the work. Or, make another, use another illustration.

Suppose you are a businessman. And you are involved in business. Now, it is the will of God that you should be involved in business.

But, your business is for God's work. In what sense? Whatever God has given to you, the profit that you receive from the business, you channel it to the work of God. That is a fellow workman of God's work.

So, you will find that the job is for the work. This is when we think of local situation. Now, if you think of, you are involved in a work that is like Paul, Timothy and other people, you know, who are involved in work in a specific way.

Now, if you are involved in the work in a specific way, then, of course, like Paul, you will find that sometimes when the need is there, he works with his hands. And other times, you will find that he doesn't work at all. In Philippi, you will find that he did not work.

And, even when he was in Achaia, you will find that the people in Philippi, they are still sending gifts to him to support him in the work. But in Corinth, he worked with his own hands. In Ephesus, he worked with his own hands.

So, you will find that the work, the job that he is doing is for the work. If it will help the work, he will do it. If it interferes with the work, then it shouldn't be done, should not be done.

So, here you will find another instance. You know, not in the local sense, but more in a specific sense. Side 2 of Responsibility in the Work by Brother Stephen Kong is of such poor quality that we are unable to amplify it to the degree that it would be discernible and understandable.

So, we are sorry to lose the answers to the questions in the second portion of that Thursday afternoon, 7-8-82. The tape, cassette tape, you can just barely hear it. And, if you want to try to hear the remainder of this question and answer period, you might ask, order the tape and try to hear it for yourself.

However, the current technology that we are using is unable to reproduce it at an adequate volume for online purposes. We apologize and God bless and may the Lord answer all your questions. If you wish to order the tape, it's SK4036.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2233.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stephen-kaung/responsibility-in-the-work-questions-and-answers/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net