

## **Responsibility Towards the New Believer and the Backslider**

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The individual Christian, the Christian leader or minister and the church as a whole have a responsibility towards the new believer and the backslider (Mt. 28:19; Jude 22, 23).

One major cause of backsliding is a poor Christian foundation. It is therefore, necessary that believers, church leaders, counsellors, evangelists and pastors, in making converts, explain to those whom they seek to win for Christ the nature of the Christian journey (Eph. 6:10-18; Lk. 6:22; Lk. 14:26; Jn. 15:18).

In addition, they must ensure that these ones are taken through converts and discipleship classes so as to provide them a firm foundation in Christ (on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand) and also bring them to a point where they can 'journey' on their own.

Maturity in the life of the Christian is very important (Heb. 5:11-6:2). It is not enough to lead others to Christ; our additional responsibility is to make them disciples of Jesus Christ by helping them grow in the Christian faith.

Our failure to do this has produced a lot of immature Christians who are polluting the church with false doctrine, and destroying the unity of the church. Some of these, who have left their original churches to establish congregations of their own, are manipulating new believers by using various methods in the name of performing healing and miracles. In other instances, failure to bring new converts

to the point of maturity has resulted in strife, envy and power struggle within the body of Christ.

We fail in our duties as watchmen when it comes to the responsibility we have towards backsliders. Christians should avoid behaving like the older son in Luke 15:25-32 who "... became angry and refused to go in" (v. 28a) when the prodigal son had returned and the household was throwing a feast for him.

We yearn that the world would change, but a lot of times when people we know to be notorious repent or when backsliders return to the faith, we become judgemental and suspicious.

Jonah, for example, became indignant when God decided to spare Nineveh (Jonah 4). Then God asked him, "But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:10) If God was so concerned about the cattle in Nineveh, how can we ignore the spiritual needs of repentant backsliders and sinners? The next time you feel like judging, remember the GRACE of GOD.

Paul the apostle faced the challenge of being accepted as a repentant sinner. The disciples in Jerusalem did not believe that he had converted (Acts 9:26). But when Barnabas introduced Paul to the disciples, they recognized him as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Whenever a sinner returns home, we should rejoice and give him the necessary support and encouragement to help him grow in Christ Jesus. As Christians, we need to have a burden for the backslidden. We are called to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2), "exhort one another daily" (Heb. 10:25), as watchmen, to warn the wicked (Ezekiel 33:7, 8) and so on and so forth.

However, in our attempts to help the backslidden 'rise up', we have to make sure that we are strong enough to avoid being influenced (Jude 22, 23). In whatever circumstance or situation, our attitude towards the backslidden should remain one of compassion, of love and of mercy (2 Thess. 3:6, 15).

In addition, we must keep information about our converts confidential. By so doing, we can help new believers remain in the Body of Christ. A reward awaits you if you would so do (Jas. 5:20). God bless you.

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