

## **Needed: accountability**

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In hot and humid Brisbane, I once had a brand-new split-level air conditioner installed in my house. It was defective. I visited the retailer, who referred me to the installer, who referred me to the manufacturer's service agent, who referred me to the manufacturer, who promptly sent me back down the line. This went on for a number of weeks. No one, it seemed, was prepared to be accountable for the malfunctioning product. So I prayed.

In my prayer I affirmed that everyone naturally had within them the spiritual attributes required for honest, accountable practices. Why? Because man and woman are created by God in His own image. Thus, as God is Mind, each person has the ability to intelligently resolve issues. As God is Truth, each one of us has integrity. As God is Principle, each is ethical. As God is Soul, harmonious resolutions are reachable. Everyone has the God-produced intelligent capacity and determination to do what's right, because that's how everyone has been created. Each person is thus responsible and accountable. As I stuck to these spiritual truths regarding those I was dealing with, the defective unit was replaced and the situation resolved amicably.

That experience seems especially relevant today, when so many people in my country, and elsewhere, are asking, "Who's responsible for the rising prices of supermarket food items, energy, fuel, and other necessities? Who's accountable for corporate losses that cost people their life savings or homes?" At first, it may seem as though there's just a faceless bureaucracy and that justice isn't possible. But as with my experience with the air conditioner, there actually is a solution.

I found that accountability began when I, as an individual, refused to be put off in my quest for justice. Ideally, every decision, every action, that a corporate entity (and its staff) takes, is thought through before it's implemented. While this is not always happening, our prayerful efforts can help promote it to take place more and more, causing companies to look beyond the financial bottom line and take into account the human and social costs.

To me, this is a spiritual exercise, not just an intellectual activity. Qualities such as humility, wisdom, honesty, and foresight are key to good decision-making because they tend to produce just outcomes for everyone. And there is no substitute for a heart that cares about the consequences for the company *and* the consumer.

An excellent benchmark was set long ago by an individual named Solomon. According to the Bible, he was king, the top man in charge of his country's welfare. And it was a big responsibility. Solomon was mindful that the obligations associated with his high office directly impacted citizens and that he was accountable to them. The moral obligations that went with this position were so great that he admitted he felt like a little child – inexperienced, unqualified, unsure about his ability to make sound decisions and deliver good results. As a consequence, Solomon realized that he needed special help.

One night, the Bible says, God asked Solomon what He could give him. Solomon's response was to ask God to give him wisdom, and an "understanding heart," to enable him to execute honest and right judgment for everyone (I Kings 3:9). He was making an extraordinarily unselfish request that had at its heart the humble desire to be of service to others – to bless, not injure. As a result of Solomon's desire for spirituality

and for reliance on God alone, his wisdom and good judgment went down in history. People today still refer to needing or wanting “the wisdom of Solomon.”

To emulate such inspired accountability, what’s required? From Solomon’s example, a few things are clearly important:

- Accept the responsibility placed on you and take it seriously.
- Be accountable for the consequences.
- Acknowledge that you don’t know everything.
- Ask for God’s help and guidance.
- Be humble.

It seems the last point is especially important. Humility is a vital spiritual attribute. It’s like an open hand outstretched to receive what’s good. On the other hand, egotism – lack of consideration for others, greed, pride, power—is like a closed fist that receives nothing. Humility by its very nature opens us up to divine intuitions, unselfish choices, and beneficial judgments that achieve the best for everyone. Justice, equity, and accountable practices in private and public life are achievable today.

God is still present to aid the “Solomons” in society who seek spiritual mindedness, rather than wealth, prestige, or personal gain. Through the exercise of right motives, they will fulfill their moral obligations, execute good judgments, and follow through on them with wisdom.

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