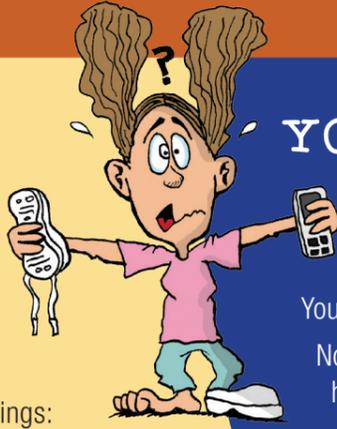


Stewardship

[Bible texts from NIV unless otherwise noted (NIV, NCV)]



TAKING CARE OF GOD'S STUFF

God has generously shared some of His stuff with you. Remember, it's not yours—you're just a "steward," or manager. He asks you to take good care of it for Him (Matthew 25:14-30).

As a steward, you're responsible for five main things:

YOU DON'T OWN A THING

This may surprise you, but you don't actually own your cell phone, your backpack, and your tennis shoes. God owns everything. "The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it" (Psalm 24:1).

You don't even own yourself! God does. "He made us, and we belong to him" (Psalm 100:3).

Not only did God make us, He paid with His life to buy us back after Satan took us as hostages. "You do not belong to yourselves. Christ has paid the price for you" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).



1. the earth



2. your body



3. your time



4. your abilities



5. your money and possessions

You get to enjoy all these gifts while using them wisely for God's purposes.

EARTH NEEDS YOUR HELP

God put Adam and Eve in charge of the whole earth and all the animals (Genesis 1:28). He made a home for them in the Garden of Eden and asked them "to take care of it" (Genesis 2:15).



Taking good care of the earth makes sense because

- we live here
- it's a gift from God
- nature helps us learn about God (Romans 1:20)

We can't fix all the effects of sin on our world, but we can be smart managers in our little corner of it.



THE GREED FIGHTER

No matter how much money and stuff we have, it seems we always want more. That's why Jesus warned, "Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. Life is not measured by how much one owns" (Luke 12:15, NCV).

To help us remember that everything we have is His, God asks us to give a tithe (one tenth) of our earnings back to Him. We also give offerings to show our thanks for all that God has given us.

Of course, smart managers use whatever they have left for good purposes too, not for junk.



BONES, MUSCLES, AND SKIN

Your body can do all sorts of cool things, from digesting food to running a 5K race to giving a hug. You can also use it to get high on drugs, show off the latest fashions, or punch someone in the face.

Smart managers use their bodies in ways that show self-respect, love for God, and love for others (see FUN-da-Mental #22).

"Don't you know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? . . . So use your bodies in a way that honors God" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

WHERE TITHE GOES

We don't return our tithe to God by sending it up into the sky. God doesn't need our money. He asks us to give it to His workers to support their daily needs.

In old Israel, the tithes went to the priests and Levites as payment for their work in the temple (Numbers 18:21). Today we don't have priests, but we do have pastors, evangelists, and others who work for God full time. "Those who preach the good news should receive their living from their work" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

TIME TO SHINE

You may think you're not quite as talented, rich, intelligent, or healthy as someone else, but everyone has the same number of days in a week. Is the time yours? The seventh day is a gift reserved for spending with God, and the other days are His too!

Some people waste their time on worthless things like "foolish talk," "dirty jokes," and "wild living" (Ephesians 5:4, 18). Smart managers use the time to help them and others get closer to God.

"Use every chance you have for doing good, because these are evil times" (Ephesians 5:16, NCV).



OFFERINGS DO A LOT OF GOOD

Spreading the gospel around the world takes more than well-fed pastors. We need



- church buildings
- Web sites
- Sabbath school quarterlies
- Pathfinder uniforms
- medicines

and many other things to do a good job.

Did you know? The money for church programs and buildings comes from offerings, not from tithe (1 Chronicles 29:2-9; Nehemiah 10:32-34). There's no set amount for offerings—we decide what to give based on how much God has blessed us. God loves it when we give with a cheerful attitude (2 Corinthians 9:7).

YOU'VE GOT TALENT

What's your secret ability? Whether it's baking fat-free banana bread, writing poetry, or touching your nose with your tongue, there's gotta be a way to use it for God. Plus, every Christian has spiritual gifts to help them do God's work (see FUN-da-Mental #17).

Some people use their talents to earn popularity and praise. Smart managers use them to make God look good (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).

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LIVE TO GIVE

If we don't give our tithes and offerings, we're stealing from God (Malachi 3:8). Not a good idea! Besides, smart managers get so many blessings that they run out of room in their closets (verse 10).

- They become less selfish and more like Jesus.
- They find out how much fun it is to help people.
- They add money to their thief-proof heavenly bank account (Luke 12:33).

Managing God's stuff is a big job, but it has big rewards. You can do it!

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