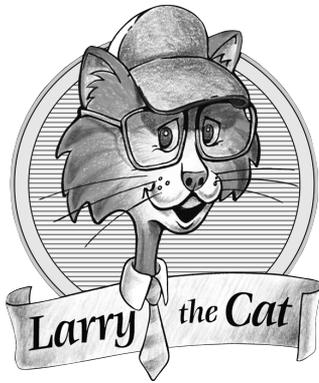


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STEWARDSHIP

Imagine you have a pet you really love. If you go away for a month, who will look after it? You'll probably ask a friend that you trust to watch over your pet. You know you can count on your friend to take good care of it.

God has done just that! He's given some of His valuable possessions to be taken care of by His friends. Who are His friends? All of us who've asked Jesus to take away our sins and come live in our hearts. When we've done that we belong to Him and Jesus says we're His

JOKE:

Do rabbits use combs?
No, they use harebrushes.

friends. (If you haven't asked Jesus to come into your heart, ask your parents or pastor for help or contact the publisher. You'll find the address in the back of this book.) Being Jesus' friends makes us God's friends, too. God's given us, His friends, all kinds of things to look after—everything we have, in fact.

Think about it. What do you have that

you didn't receive? The Apostle Paul asked the same question. *"For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"* (1 Corinthians 4:7)

If you think carefully, you'll see that everything came from somewhere else. And, if you trace back as far as you can go, you'll find it all came from God—money, possessions, time, energy, abilities, etc. All these things are really God's. He's loaned them to us and made us responsible to care for them and use them wisely. We're managing God's stuff for Him. The Bible calls that being His "stewards."

To be a good steward, we first need to understand that all the things and abilities we're managing aren't ours. They don't belong to us. They're God's. They're just on loan. Then we need to commit ourselves to managing and using them the way the owner (God) wants us to.

Don't worry. God loves us. He knows what's best for us. You'll find that doing what God wants, and doing things His way, works out great! That's the reason He wants us to do it His way—He wants us to have His best.

Read Matthew 25:14–30.





HOUSE RULES

“I’m HO-OME!” you yell, racing in the door. You dump your schoolbooks, kick your shoes off, drop your coat, and open the fridge. You drink straight from the juice jug, then toss it in the sink. It breaks. Oops. You race into the family room, jump onto the couch, do a somersault, and kick the TV. It crashes to the floor. Glass flies everywhere. You race upstairs, knocking over vases and pictures. What a homecoming!

Would you do that? NOT! Why not? True, you’d get in big trouble. But think about it. The stuff you broke isn’t yours. The house and everything in it belongs to your parents. They let you use their things, like the TV, VCR, fridge, and furniture. But they expect you to take care of it. You probably have house rules like “Don’t jump on the furniture.” Some things are just common sense—like no grilled cheese sandwiches in the VCR.

Your parents own the house and its contents. They let you use it. But they expect you to take care of it. In that way, you’re stewards of your parents’ stuff—especially when they’re out or you have friends over. In a small way that’s like God and us. God’s the ultimate

TRIVIA:

Before people used coins and paper for money, they used other things. In China, rice and small tools were used as money, while people in India used cowry shells and Hong Kong citizens used gambling counters.

owner of everything (yup, even your parents’ house). God lets us use His stuff. We’re His stewards. He expects us to treat His things wisely and take care of them. His “house rules” are written in the Bible.

Let’s take a look at what we are stewards of.

THE STEWARD LIST

There are at least seven different kinds of things that we’re stewards of.

Our Relationship with God:

We need to work on our relationship with God. He’s our best friend. We trust Him with everything. We get to know Him and learn more about Him through the Bible, prayer, spending time with Him every day, and giving Him our lives and hearts. We do things His way because we know He loves us and always wants our best.

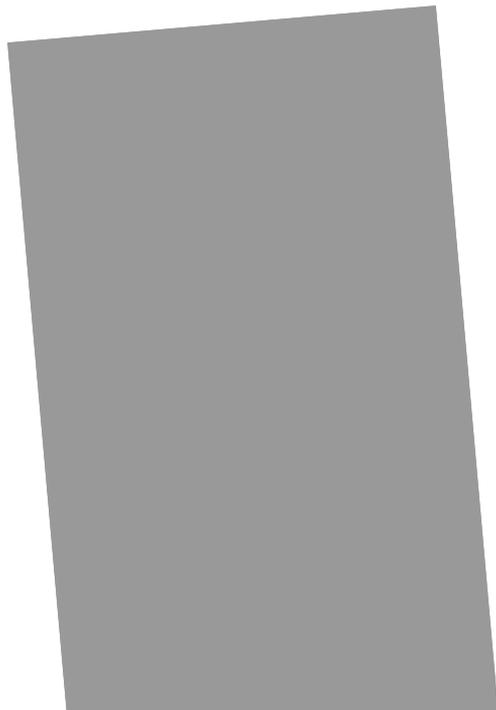
Our Relationships with Others:

Other people are important in our lives—like friends, family, and classmates. We should focus on others and their needs instead of ourselves. When we remember that the relationship is more important than the little details (who sat next to whom, who got invited first . . . you know what I mean), then we’ll be the kind of friend we’d love to have.

Who We Are:

We’re the “temple of God” because God’s Spirit lives in us.

A STEWARD'S HOUSE RULES





God made you just as you are—you are unique! He has great plans for your life.

That means we need to take care of our bodies, make sure we get enough food, rest, and exercise, and keep ourselves clean and nicely dressed. We also need to keep our minds and spirits clean and

healthy by feeding them good thoughts, pictures, and ideas.

JOKE:

Why did the dalmatian refuse to bathe in the dishwasher detergent?
He didn't want to come out spotless.

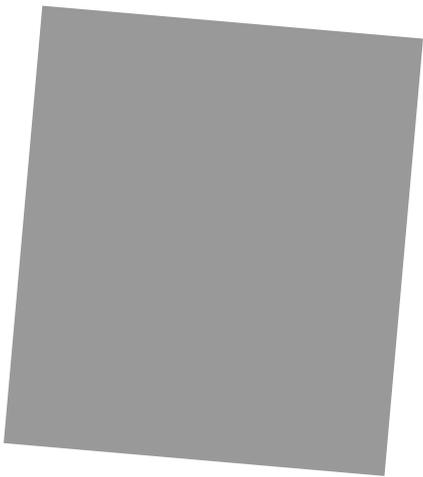
What We Choose:

You have choices you have to make. This is called using your will. The choices you

make are your responsibility. The most important choice you must make is whether you'll do things your way (self will) or God's way.

What We Do with Our Time:

We can never get time back once it's gone, so we should make every minute count. That means using time wisely and not procrastinating—putting stuff off (like homework and chores) until we run out of time. It's much better to do those things first. Then we'll have time to really enjoy ourselves, with no nagging feeling that we should be studying or working. It also means giving our lives to God and spending each moment, day, week, month, and year as He wants.



What We Own:

This means everything: all we own—our treasures, possessions, and money. That’s easy to understand. Everything we have ultimately comes from God. It’s our responsibility to look after it for Him and use it wisely. God loves us to have fun so it’s our job to enjoy what He’s given us. That sounds easy! Just remember, because it’s God’s we should be ready, willing, and eager to share it with others.

What We Can Do:

What kinds of things are you good at? What do you like doing better than anything else? Do you know why this is? God gives each of us unique talents, abilities, and gifts. He designed you for a special purpose—and when you can count on God’s power to use those gifts, you’ll be filled with joy in whatever you do.

Put ten pennies on a piece of paper, and write the words “God” and “Me” as shown. Now by moving only three pennies, make your money triangle point to “God” instead of yourself.



Answer on page 63

GOD’S HOUSE RULES

OK, we’re stewards, but how do we do it? Remember God’s “house rules”? We check the Bible for the relevant rule. Here’s the main one: *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”* (1 Peter 4:10). This means our first thought is about how we can use something to help or serve someone else. It means looking after others before worrying about how we can benefit or have something.

Sometimes we can’t figure out what to do. That’s OK. God says if we ask for wisdom He’ll give it to us (James 1:5). God’s interested in our decisions. He wants us to make the best ones, so He’ll help us figure them out. For example, the Bible has lots of instructions about money: we should tithe (Proverbs 3:9–10; Matthew

23:23), be ready to give to help people (Luke 6:31,38), not store it up as if it will take care of us (Matthew 6:19–21), always pay our debts (Psalm 37:21).

Stewardship is about our whole lives. Money can help us learn about stewardship because how we handle it can carry over into how we handle other areas of our lives. We should give our money, our time, and ourselves willingly. Money is a great, in-your-face, see-it-every-day reminder that we’re stewards. So let your good money stewardship lead to good stewardship in the rest of your life.

IS THAT IT?

No way! That’s just the beginning! Being good stewards is a two-way street.





What do you have that you did not receive? Use your gifts to serve others.

In fact, it's a superhighway coming our way! It's the best way to live. Why? It boils down to God's love.

Think about this: Why is sticking a grilled cheese sandwich in a VCR a bad idea? The VCR just won't work with cheese all over its innards. Why can't you punch holes in the walls or jump on furniture? Well, holes are ugly, and so is jumped on, trashed furniture (it's uncomfortable, too). And a trashed house won't sell very well—your parents would lose money, big time. But the main reason is that your parents are training you to be responsible. They know one day you'll have to look after a house, fix walls, buy furniture, and pay bills (like a mortgage). They want you to learn the skills and attitudes you'll need now so you'll have them later and have a better life. They train you because they love you.

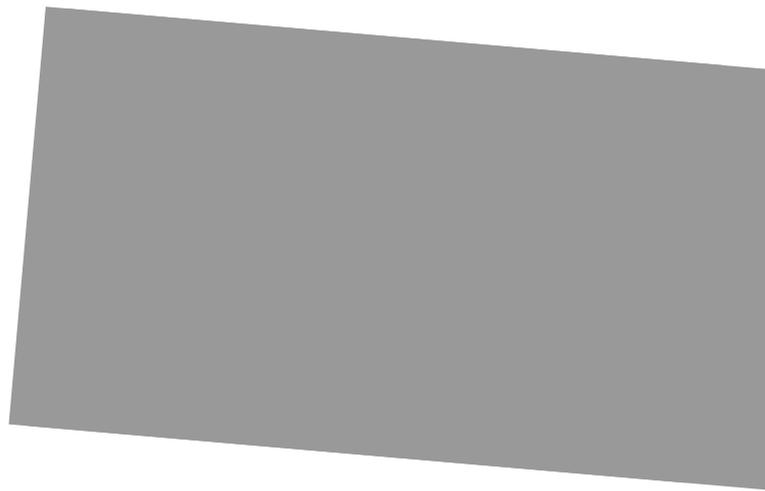
Now think of God's love! He loves you way more than your parents love you. When God tells you to do things a certain way, you know He has a good reason. His reason is to give you a great life. He's

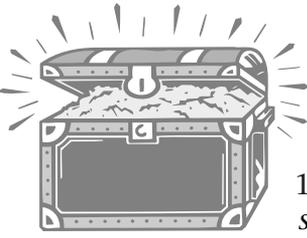
training you to be the kind of person who'll have great friends, a good reputation, success in work, and peace and joy.

So go to the Steward's Instruction Manual and House Rule Book—the Bible—for help in knowing how to be God's stewards. Happy stewarding! It leads to the best life!

TRIVIA:

What do franc, mark, rupee, ringgitt, won, baht, and kwacha have in common? They're all money. Franc is French. Mark is German. Rupee is Indian. Ringgitt is Malaysian. Won is South Korean. Baht is from Thailand. And Kwacha is from Malawi.





MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 4:10 — *Each one should use whatever he has to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

BIBLE STUDY PASSAGE

Matthew 25:14–28; Romans 12:6–8
(Paraphrased)

Jesus told a story to help people understand what God's kingdom was and how God wanted them to use He had given them.

¹⁴ *will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and his property to them.* ¹⁵ *To he gave five talents of money, to another two, and to another talent, each according to his ability.* While he was away, the first two servants wisely used what he had given them and the amount! But the third servant feared his master. He was also afraid he would lose the little he had. So, of using it, he it away so that he would have when his master came back.

The master returned and called his to find out what they had done. To the first two he said, ²¹ *Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness.* But to the third he said, ²⁶ *You wicked, lazy servant! . . .* ²⁷ *You should have my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.* And took the money away from him so he had .

Like that master, God has given us His things to use and enjoy. But He has given us much more than just money. The apostle Paul says, ⁶ *We have different gifts, to the grace given us.* (Read Romans 12:6–8 to see what some of the gifts are.) God wants us to use His gifts wisely, like good stewards. Then we can enjoy them, unlike the third servant, and help others to boot.

1. How did the master reward the servants who used his things wisely? Why do you think he did that?
2. Who do you think knew their master better, the first servants or the last one? Why?
3. When we get to know God, it's easy to use things His way because we know that He loves us and that His way is best. What are three things God has given you that you can use for him?

Is there something you're having a hard time trusting God with? It could be anything, for example, a special ability, your allowance, time after school, or choices you make with friends. Ask God for help to trust Him and to use that thing wisely, the way He wants.