



## Play well. Finish strong.

The psalmist wrote, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” God is the author of creation, and He entrusted us to care for it. We do that by taking responsibility, which means showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you. When we do what is expected of us, we can point others to Jesus, the One who put us first and took the responsibility to die in our place on the cross to pay for our sins.

According to Jesus, our most important responsibility is to love. The religious leaders continuously tried to trap Jesus with His own words. They had numerous laws, and they asked Jesus about which ones were the most important to follow. Jesus simplified everything by explaining that our most important responsibility is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus gave the perfect example of what it means to love God and others by allowing Himself to be put to death on the cross—for us. When we understand how much God loves us, it changes us. It makes us want to love others and treat them the way we want to be treated. When other people experience your unconditional love for them, they can see how much God loves them, too.

Through a parable, Jesus taught about a rich man who was focused on the wrong things. As a successful farmer, the rich man’s land produced more crops than he needed. The rich man was greedy and selfish. He decided to build even bigger barns to keep the extra food for himself, but he died that very night and never got to enjoy any of it. Everything we have is a gift from God, from the food we eat, to the stuff we own, to the people we love. Jesus’ parable teaches that we have a responsibility to share what God has given us, and to put others first. Jesus generously gave up His life so that we could be forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit, and inherit eternal life. When we understand what Jesus did for us, we will want to be responsible by serving others and by sharing what we have, even when it’s hard.

In Proverbs 6, King Solomon wrote about the hard work of the ant. God created ants to take responsibility and to work hard by storing up food for the winter months. God also designed us to work, yet often we try to do whatever we can to avoid it. Just like the ants, we should take responsibility by working hard at everything we do. When you work hard and can be trusted with something small, you can earn more responsibilities, allowing you to make an even bigger difference. God wants to use every unique quality and passion that He placed within you to change the world for the better. Don’t wait for someone to tell you to do something. Work hard, even with the small things, and always give your best effort because you never know what God will entrust you with or how it will fit into His plan.

In another one of Jesus’ parables, a businessman traveled on a journey and left three of his workers in charge of his money. Two of the workers turned a profit, while the third buried his portion, wasted his opportunity, and ended up having it taken away. God has given each of us responsibility over something—our stuff, talents, even our friends and families. Everything we have comes from God, and we need to use those things wisely. Sometimes the world tells us we need even more, bigger, or better things to accomplish something great. However, God tells us that He will give us exactly what we need to fulfill His plans. All you have to do is look at what you have been given and make the most of it.

In his letters, Paul reminded the Ephesians about the power of their words. It’s easy to speak thoughtlessly, but we must be aware that while our words can build people up, they can also tear people down. God’s given us a responsibility to use our words to encourage others, and to repair and our relationships. That means we need to stop and think before we speak, say we’re sorry, own up to our mistakes, and forgive others. Jesus used his words wisely by building people up and repairing their relationships with God. God even gave us His Word so that we can know Him, understand the gospel, and speak words of life to ourselves and others. When you reflect Jesus by using your words and actions responsibly, everyone around you can know God and feel His love. Our lives are filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God’s character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God, now and forever.



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### **Read Matthew 22:36-40**

1. What are the two greatest commandments and how can you put them into practice?

### **Read Luke 12:16-21**

2. How did the rich man NOT show responsibility?

### **Read Matthew 25:14-30**

3. What happened to each of the servants and why?
4. How can you show responsibility with the talents that you've been given?

### **Read Memory Verse**

5. How can you be responsible, even with the little thing that God has given you, and what will happen if you are?

### **Life Application Questions**

6. How can you use your words responsibly, so that you build others up?
7. Why should you share with others and put their needs above your own?
8. What are some ways that you can work hard and make the most of what you have?