



PRETEEN
JANUARY 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITY AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, *"The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it."* (NirV) God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate the world we see around us. We do that by taking responsibility. From work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use, life is 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 forever.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for RESPONSIBILITY

Transformation by the power of God's Spirit. God's Spirit is transforming my unique and imperfect life into the character of Jesus.

Taking responsibility may not come naturally to us, but God's Spirit can help us develop it in our lives as we follow Jesus and learn to live like Him.

RESPONSIBILITY is showing you can be trusted with what is expected of you.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY WITH KIDS

Even though "fun" and "responsibility" don't seem like they'd go together, we think this could be a really great month for kids in your community. Everyone has some sort of responsibility. It could be getting homework done, or picking up after playing a board game. Other times it might look like practicing a new instrument, or caring for a hamster or puppy. For Pet Project, we hope to inspire kids to reflect God's character in the way they follow through on the work that needs to get done.

Throughout the Bible, we read a lot about how to live with responsibility. The Bible is filled with stories about people who could be trusted . . . along with others who struggled in this area. But beyond those stories, the writers of Scripture included proverbs, principles, and parables that also bring God's ideas about responsibility to life.

Sometimes these concepts are more difficult to teach because there is no story included. However, the truths we find through Solomon and Paul, along with what we discover through Jesus' parables, can be life-changing when we learn how to live them out.

It's also important to remember that we can't make promises about what will happen if we choose to put these ideas into practice. Proverbs and principles like these aren't intended to offer certainty. Instead, they demonstrate that living with wisdom creates positive natural consequences that are likely to happen when we choose to honor God and others with the responsible choices we make.



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FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

WEEK 1

Key Question: **What are things you're expected to do?**

Even kids have responsibilities. As they start to name them, we hope that they'll start to realize that those expectations don't exist just to frustrate them. Each of us has things we need to accomplish—including our responsibility to love one another. We pray that kids will take Jesus' words to heart as they discover how to show God's love to others.

We kick off the New Year in **Matthew 22:36-40**. The religious leaders were always trying to trap Jesus with His own words. This moment was no different. A law expert asked Jesus, out of hundreds of laws they were to follow, which one was the most important. Jesus simplified everything and defined love as the top priority. Our most important responsibility is to love God and love others as we love ourselves.

Bottom Line: **Love God and love others.** These are two simple ideas, but they're not always simple to put into practice. We hope that, as kids discover more about responsibility, they'll start to understand the ways they can love God and love the people God has put in their lives.

WEEK 2

Key Question: **What do you have that you can share?**

From an early age, most kids are taught to share. As they get older, though, the stakes get higher . . . and it can take more effort to let others use or borrow our things. As we ask this question, we pray that preteens will see that they can share more than their stuff. They can share their time, their friendship, and their talents.

In week 2, we head to **Luke 12:13-21**, where we find a parable Jesus told about a rich man who was focused on the wrong thing. This man was a successful farmer whose land produced a large amount of crops. He decided to build bigger and bigger barns to collect it all. The man might have had a lot for himself, but he failed to think about how he could have helped the people around him.

Bottom Line: **Share what you have.** Sometimes we're on the receiving end of someone's generosity . . . but other times we get to show responsibility by sharing and being generous to others. When we realize that God has given us everything we have, we're more likely to share with other people. We pray that as kids learn more about the parable of the rich man, they'll discover ways they can be responsible by sharing what they have.



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WEEK 3

Key Question: When have you had to work hard? Kids tend to want to avoid hard work at all costs. However, when they remember how God has helped them work hard in the past, it can encourage them to work hard with whatever they're facing now. We hope they'll see that they can try their best to accomplish whatever task stands in their way.

For week three, we take a closer look at **Proverbs 6:6-8**: *"Think about the ant! Consider its ways and be wise!" (NirV)* God created ants to take responsibility and work hard storing up food for the winter months. We can look to their example as we take responsibility and work hard.

Bottom Line: Work hard. God has created us to work, yet often we try to escape having to do the work in front of us. We pray that this simple Bottom Line will be a reminder for kids to take responsibility when they have a job to do. God can give them the strength they need to follow through and get the job done.

WEEK 4

Key Question: Why do your words matter? Preteens are starting to be aware of the impact their actions have on their relationships—and the words they choose are a big part of that. We hope that kids will start to think about the importance of their words and how they can use them responsibly to help others.

We finish the month with something Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:29**: *"Don't let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs." (NirV)* Our words have the power to help or hurt others. We should use our words responsibly, because what we say and how we speak to others matters.

Bottom Line: Use your words wisely. Words are important, but even as adults, we tend to use them without thinking. We hope that as kids discover what Paul wrote in Ephesians, they'll understand that the way they use their words can show others how much God loves them.