

STEWARDSHIP

WEEK 1

TAKING CARE
OF WHAT
YOU HAVE

BECAUSE IT
ALL BELONGS
TO GOD



THE EARTH BELONGS TO THE LORD

PSALM 24:1

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 16:10a

Amos Finnegan ran a hand over his nearly bald head as he scooped one level spoonful of brown sugar into his oatmeal and counted out exactly 23 raisins. He peered into the nearly empty box.

“Already? Hmph,” he groused. “I’ll have to go buy more.”

For fifty-one years, Amos had gone grocery shopping together with his wife, Mary. Now she was gone, and he didn’t like going to the store by himself.

Sighing, he glanced out the window. His wooded lot was wild and full of brambles. Only the grass right around the house was neat, mowed by Ilsa, a college student who came to help him out every Monday. As Amos turned to look out the front window, he was surprised to see a moving van in front of the dilapidated house next door.

“Someone must have bought the old Randall place,” he said, surprised. But his thoughts were interrupted by laughter and the sound of voices from behind the house.

“Now what’s that?”

Grabbing his cane, Amos hobbled through the kitchen to look out his back window. An untidy apple orchard grew at the back of his lot. Though it was usually peaceful, now he spotted three children—two boys and a girl—scrambling up the trees.

“Those rascals!” he exclaimed.

Amos barged out onto the back porch, waving his cane. "You! Get out of my orchard!" he shouted.

The oldest boy swung down from a low branch, a half-eaten apple in hand. "But there's no fence or anything," he pointed out.

"It's mine, you miscreant," Amos thundered. "Leave it alone!"

"Okay, okay. Sorry," the boy said quickly. He rounded up his siblings and they trotted back toward the house next door.

"Rascallions," muttered Amos.

A dark cloud of irritation followed Amos for the rest of the morning. He was even short with Ilsa when she arrived to clean his kitchen and vacuum the floors.

"Those scalawags are back!" he exclaimed. "I warned them."

"Do you have to be that loud?" he grumbled. When she was finished, he sank down in his armchair. "Finally. A little peace and quiet."

But the stillness was interrupted by the sounds of a barking dog and shouting children. Amos grabbed his cane and rapped it on the floor. "Those scalawags are back!" he exclaimed. "I warned them."

Heaving himself up, he stalked to the back door. Ilsa followed close behind. As Amos shoved open the door, he could see a large, spotted dog bounding through the orchard, the three children chasing after.

"Git," called Amos. "I told you to git out!"

“We’re only trying to catch Scooby!” the girl shouted.

“He chewed through his leash,” the younger boy explained.

The oldest boy finally got a hand on the dog’s collar. “We’re going, okay?” he said. The children scurried away, dog in tow.

Ilsa watched them leave. “They weren’t doing any harm,” she pointed out.

“That’s my Mary’s orchard!” Amos told her. “I won’t have anyone tearing it up.”

“Well, of course, it’s a special place,” Ilsa agreed. “But Mary let anyone come pick apples. And you know how many apple pies she gave away.”

“No one made apple pie like my Mary,” Amos reflected.

“That’s right,” Ilsa prompted. “She knew God gave you both this beautiful place and all those apples—to do amazing things with.”

Amos nodded slowly. “You sound a bit like she did.”

“I know you miss her very much,” Ilsa said gently.

Cooling down, Amos headed back into the kitchen and picked up the well-worn Bible on the counter. “This was hers,” he told Ilsa. “She was always going on about our place, how it was a gift . . .”

The Bible fell open to the Psalms. One passage stood out, highlighted. Amos read, remembering: *“The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it. The world belongs to him. And so do all those who live in it.”*

Ilsa smiled as she pulled ingredients from the fridge. “I like that. And I really hope you like this pot roast I’m leaving in the oven for your dinner.”

After Ilsa left, Amos stared out his back window at the tangled orchard. The twisted branches hung heavy with ripe fruit. At last he picked up a burlap sack and made his way down the back steps, whistling.

A short time later, Amos arrived on the front porch of the house next door, heavy bag in hand. The door stood wide open. Boxes were stacked everywhere inside, and he could hear thumps and footsteps from somewhere inside in the house.

"Hello?" he called out.

A woman wearing overalls and a kerchief over her hair appeared from the living room. "Hi," she said, hesitant.

"I live next door—" began Amos.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" the woman exclaimed, her face reddening. "The kids, I know they've been bothering you—"

"No, no. Not at all," he assured her. "I'm Amos."

He could hear thumps and footsteps from somewhere inside in the house.

The woman held out her hand. "Molly Wright. My husband Patrick is around somewhere, and you've seen the kids." She paused briefly and then asked: "Is it just you, or—?"

Amos smiled. "If my Mary was still here, she'd have brought you the best apple pie you've ever tasted. But it's just me, so this will have to do," he said as he handed over the bag of apples. "There's McIntosh in there, and Gala and I don't know what all."

"Thank you!" Molly exclaimed. "You didn't have to . . ."

"No good keeping 'em all for myself," Amos told her. "You come pick them any time. And tell your friends."

Molly smiled. “That’s very gracious.”

Amos caught sight of the kids, peeking down from the top of the stairs. He winked. “And tell those young’uns they’re welcome to do all the fort building and treasure hunting they’d like in the orchard.”

“Well . . . if you really don’t mind,” Molly said. “They’ll be so excited to use your place.”

“Oh, it’s not mine,” Amos noted. “Not really. You could say . . . it’s on loan.”

Amos waved goodbye and headed back to his own home. As he let himself inside, he found himself smiling for the first time all day.



Let's Talk!

Share with each other your three favorite things that you own or use.

It might be a toy, a game, a gadget, or even a place. Whatever you listed, there’s one thing true about all those things: they all belong to God. He created the entire world and every person in it. Sure, He may not have directly made your tablet, but He created all the resources that go into it and gave individuals the creativity and intelligence to invent them. Whatever you’ve got, it’s like Amos said—it’s on loan from God. How does this change how you view your “stuff”? How does it change how you treat your things and what you choose to do with them? Together, ask God to remind you that everything you have is a gift from Him—and ask Him to show you how to use it.