

# Adult Disciple Math Court: Module 1

## Lesson 2

### **Backyard Responsibilities: A Biblical Perspective on Maintenance Disputes**

#### **1.0 Lesson Overview and Learning Objectives**

This lesson explores the complexities of property maintenance, specifically in landlord-tenant relationships, through the lens of biblical principles. Using the case of Mary and her landlord John, we will analyze the spiritual foundations for fair agreements, diligent stewardship of property, and peaceful conflict resolution. The goal is to help learners understand how faith can inform their approach to shared responsibilities and financial disputes related to property upkeep.

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- (a) Identify and explain biblical principles related to property stewardship, honouring agreements, and fair financial dealings in landlord-tenant contexts.
- (b) Apply biblical perspectives to analyse specific scenarios of property maintenance disputes, distinguishing between responsibilities.
- (c) Develop practical "dos and don'ts" for both landlords and tenants, guided by biblical wisdom, concerning property maintenance.

#### **1.1 Case Study #2 (Fictitious): The Great Backyard Battle: Mary vs. John**

Mary, still reeling from the premature eviction, found herself in a new, slightly less traumatic but equally frustrating situation. Her new apartment boasted a

charming, albeit overgrown, backyard. The lease agreement, a standard template, stated that minor yard maintenance was the tenant's responsibility, but it vaguely implied that major landscaping fell to the landlord.

The backyard was huge – a sprawling 1000 square feet of green space. When Mary moved in on January 1st, it was a jungle. She spent hours meticulously clearing out weeds and trimming bushes. She focused on the 400 square feet closest to her patio, making it pristine. She then hired a gardener for \$300 to tackle the remaining 600 square feet of wilderness, believing this part constituted "major landscaping" that should fall to John, her new landlord.

On January 15th, the backyard was looking magnificent. However, two weeks later, on January 29th, a massive storm hit. Branches fell, leaves scattered, and the entire backyard, including the portion Mary had just paid to have cleared, was once again a mess. Desperate to maintain her peaceful space, Mary hired the same gardener again. This time, the gardener cleared the *entire* 1000 square feet, costing Mary another \$500.

Mary, now feeling overwhelmed by the unexpected expenses and unclear responsibilities, decided to approach John. She believed she should be reimbursed for a portion of the second gardener's bill, arguing that the *entire* backyard clean-up after the storm, especially the 600 square feet she already considered John's responsibility, was a major maintenance issue.

## **2.0 Biblical Perspectives Relating to the Case (Mary vs. John)**

**2.1 Stewardship of Property (Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 4:2):** The Bible teaches that all things belong to God, and we are merely stewards of what He entrusts to us. Both landlord and tenant have a responsibility to care for the property

diligently. Mary's initial efforts to clear the backyard show good stewardship, and John, as the owner, also has a stewardship duty over the larger property. "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1 KJV).

**2.2 Honouring Agreements and Clarifying Commitments (Proverbs 25:9, Matthew 5:37):** While the lease was a "standard template" and "vaguely implied" responsibilities, the biblical standard calls for clarity and faithfulness in promises. Ambiguity can lead to strife. Both parties have a responsibility to ensure mutual understanding of expectations. "Only let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:37 KJV).

**2.3 Fairness and Just Dealings (Leviticus 19:36, Proverbs 11:1):** God expects fairness in all transactions and dealings between people, especially concerning finances and labor. If Mary incurred costs for work that was truly John's responsibility (e.g., major storm cleanup), then a just resolution would involve equitable sharing or reimbursement. "Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath." (Leviticus 19:36 KJV).

**2.4 Bearing One Another's Burdens (Galatians 6:2):** While not all burdens are shared equally, a spirit of compassion and understanding in difficult circumstances, like dealing with storm damage, reflects a biblical call to empathy. John, as the landlord, could consider Mary's unexpected expenses. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2 KJV).

**2.5 Seeking Peace and Resolution (Romans 12:18, Matthew 5:25):** When disagreements arise, the Christian response is to seek peace and swift resolution,

rather than prolonged conflict. Mary approaching John to discuss reimbursement aligns with this principle. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18 KJV).

## **2.1 Biblical Dos and Don'ts for Landlords and Tenants (Mary vs. John)**

### **For Tenants (like Mary):**

#### **Dos:**

1. Do diligently care for the property entrusted to you, recognizing it as an act of good stewardship, even beyond minimum requirements.
2. Do communicate clearly and respectfully with your landlord about maintenance issues, especially unforeseen events like storm damage, seeking a fair resolution.

#### **Don'ts:**

1. Do not assume responsibilities that are unclear in the agreement; instead, seek clarification in a spirit of transparency before incurring costs.
2. Do not neglect routine upkeep that is clearly your responsibility, expecting the landlord to always step in for minor tasks.

### **For Landlords (like John):**

#### **Dos:**

1. Do ensure your rental agreements are clear and unambiguous about maintenance responsibilities, reflecting fairness and foresight.
2. Do act promptly and justly in addressing major property issues, especially

those caused by external forces like storms, recognizing your stewardship over the property.

Don'ts:

1. Do not use vague clauses in a lease to avoid responsibilities that are typically yours as the property owner.
2. Do not dismiss a tenant's legitimate concerns about unexpected maintenance costs, especially after an act of God, without seeking an equitable solution.

### 3.0 Interactive Multiple Choice Questions

Here are 10 multiple-choice questions relating to the backyard maintenance case between Mary and John, from a biblical perspective.

[Click Here to Take The Test](#)

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### END OF LESSON 2

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