

CHOICES

Scenario 13

Finders keepers

You are in a park one day with your friend Pete.

You have been skateboarding and are sitting down on a bench to rest.

An old lady in a thick fur coat comes by. She is walking with some difficulty, using a stick.

She stops. She opens her handbag and pulls out a handkerchief. She blows her nose.

At that point, something drops to the ground.

She closes her handbag again and begins to walk off.

You both watch her.

“What did she drop?” says Pete.

He goes across and bends down. He holds something up in the air.

He comes back to you. He smiles.

“Money.”

“How much?”

“Two \$100 bills. How about that – money for nothing.”

“But we can’t. We have to give it back.”

“Why? She dropped it. We found it. Finders keepers. She’ll never know. She’s rich. Think what we could do with the money. We’ll split it. How would you like \$100? Our lucky day, hey?”

What should you do?

A You say, “No. It’s her money.” And you take the money and go after her.

What next?

You catch up with the old lady.

“Ma’am,” you say. “You dropped something.” And you hand over the notes.

Close up you can see that she isn’t rich, as Pete said. The coat is old and frayed. And she looks cold.

She looks at the money. She opens her handbag. And she sighs.

“How silly of me. That was the money I needed to pay the electricity bill. I should have kept it in my purse but I put it where I could get it out easily.”

Then she realises what you have done.

“Why thank you,” she says. “You could have kept it, couldn’t you? But thank goodness you’re such honest boys.” She beams at you and Pete.

“What about if I give you a reward?” She hunts in her purse.

“No. No. Thank you but it’s not necessary.”

She pats you on the head.

“You’ve done an old lady a great kindness. You are truly good boys. God bless you.”

You smile. You and Pete head off, feeling strangely proud and happy.

Think about it

Seeing other people in need, and deciding what to do about it is a challenge that we sometimes face in life.

Doing nothing is natural – if the person is a stranger. She’s not a relative, not someone you know. You owe nothing to them. Or do you?

If you see that they are at risk in some way, then to do nothing is not a good reaction.

Let’s go sideways. If the old lady was about to cross a road and a big truck was coming, would you do nothing?

The problem of the ‘money for nothing’ temptation is twofold. First, to do nothing puts the old lady at a disadvantage. She has lost money which might be very important to her. Second, to take something that is not yours is a type of stealing.

While it might seem that you can 'take it or leave it' – from a moral point of view the only way forward is clear.

Do you want to look at another scenario involving an old person? (Go to 3)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 13)

B You say, "I guess so. She shouldn't be so careless. And she looks like she's loaded. Let's go and spend it."

What next?

You head off, before anyone sees you.

You head to the local shopping mall.

Pete hands you a \$100 note.

"This is so good. Our lucky day."

And he heads into his favorite store, a great big grin on his face.

You look at your \$100 note.

Could the old lady afford to lose it?

What if she really needed it for something?

"Pete, I don't feel right. I'm going back to see if I can find her."

"Don't be soft. You'll never find her. Enjoy it."

You follow him around.

But suddenly it doesn't seem like a lucky day at all.

Think about it

Everyone knows that stealing is wrong.

Stealing is knowingly taking something that is not yours.

What if it doesn't involve taking it by force – like a burglary or a bank robbery? Is it still stealing?

What about if your mother left her purse on a table in a restaurant – and someone grabbed it. That's stealing. But isn't taking money from an old lady the same?

A great man once said: "Every person is guilty of all the good he did not do."

Do you want to look at another scenario involving money? (Go to 6)

Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 13)