



## The pile of stuff

It can be helpful to think of this, and get a picture of it in your mind.

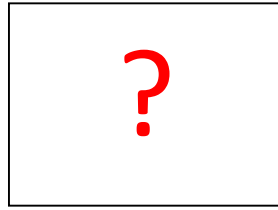
Everyone has a pile of stuff in front of them, which belongs to them. There are all sorts of things in this pile: some of them are things you own like your clothes and car and phone and whatever. But there are lots of other kinds of stuff in the pile as well: things like your responsibilities at work; or your role in your relationships with your spouse, family, God, and others. Also things like the unique purpose for which you were created – your mandate – a vision or dream you may have. All these things are in your pile of stuff, and it is your job to look after them.

There are four basic rules about piles of stuff which are important to learn and follow:

- Figure out what's in your pile of stuff
- Recognise when something belongs in someone else's pile
- Look after the stuff in your pile and do a good job of it
- Keep out of other people's piles



So here are some examples of empowering questions you can often ask:



- Is that actually in your pile or not?
- Whose pile is that in?
- Does that belong in your pile or someone else's?
- Have you taken something out of someone else's pile?
- Have you let someone take something out of your pile?
- What's in your pile that you haven't picked up?

Being aware of this concept can be helpful in so many different situations:

- A woman who thinks her husband should be more social
- A "rescuer"
- A father who's not really interested in his children
- A mother who is over-protective of her teenage son
- A guy who says it's his boss's fault that he's unhappy at work
- The man who doesn't think his son-in-law is in the right job

And many, many more...



Let's look at the following skit, which shows some of the issues around our piles of stuff:

*(Two people, each with a pile of stuff in front of them – boxes and containers – Bob is holding one container with other stuff piled in front of him, and Nancy is balancing four boxes with others lying around)*

**BOB:** It's a busy old life, isn't it?

**NANCY:** I reckon – sometimes I feel like I'm spread pretty thin!

**BOB:** So what's all the stuff in your pile, then?

**NANCY:** Well, I've got my job, which has got lots happening right now - *(indicating a box with a number of things in it),*

then I've promised to host the family for Christmas this year - *(another box full of stuff)*

and I'm nearly finished my study, with my last assignment due next week - *(box)*

Hey, how come you're only holding one box?

**BOB:** Oh well, I'm just a bloke...only any good with one thing at a time...actually, this one's my lunch *(takes the lid off to display it)*

So what's that heavy-looking box you're holding as well?

**NANCY:** Oh, that's my husband's weight problem

**BOB:** Oh.....so what are you doing with that? Doesn't that belong in his pile?

**NANCY:** Well, he's not really worried about it, but I'm trying to get him to exercise more, and eat more sensibly...

**BOB:** And is it working?

**NANCY:** Well, no...

**BOB:** So why don't you try putting that back in his pile, where it belongs?

**NANCY:** But then he might just keep getting fat!

**BOB:** And whose problem is that?

**NANCY:** Well... I suppose it's his really.....ok, I guess I could try putting it back in his pile....  
*(gets up and puts it away off camera; comes back and sits down)* Wow! That feels better!

**BOB:** Great! And I suppose there's a chance he might notice it and pick it up himself now. He certainly couldn't when you were holding onto it!

**NANCY:** Well.... now I'm wondering if there's anything else I'm trying to carry, that I shouldn't be.....What about all this stuff where the family's coming for Christmas *(indicating that earlier box)*. I should get Mum to do the food, cos she always bosses me anyway if I try to do it *(throws that one out of the box)*... And Sarah's kids are actually her responsibility, not mine...so all that's left for me to do is tidy the house *(takes out and holds onto the "tidy the house" container, and throws away the whole box including the rest of the contents)*

**BOB:** Hey what's that box down there? *(pointing at a pretty little box by her feet)*

**NANCY:** Oh gosh, I couldn't even see that before, with all the other stuff I was carrying. That's a dream of something I've wanted to do ever since I was a little girl. I've never picked it up, but it's still there! Now that I'm free of that other stuff I shouldn't have been carrying, I wonder if I could pick it up, and get ownership of it...