

# Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-9)

## A Small Group Outline



### 1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
  - Sing a few songs of praise to God

### 2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

### 3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

### 4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

### 5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

#### • **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 366-375
- "The **rich man had left all his possessions in the hands of this servant**; but the servant was unfaithful, and the master was convinced that he was being systematically robbed. He determined to retain him no longer in his service, and he called for an investigation of his accounts" (COL 366).
- "This unfaithful servant made others sharers with him in his dishonesty. He defrauded his master to advantage them, and by accepting this advantage they placed themselves under obligation to receive him as a friend into their homes" (COL 367).
- "'And the Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.' The **worldly man praised the sharpness of the man who had defrauded him. But the rich man's commendation was not the commendation of God**" (COL 367).
- "And the Saviour was speaking also to the Pharisees....**To the unfaithful steward his lord's goods had been entrusted for benevolent purposes; but he had used them for himself. So with Israel.** God had chosen the seed of Abraham. With a high arm He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. He had made them the depositaries of sacred truth for the blessing of the world. He had entrusted to them the living oracles that they might communicate the light to others. But His stewards had used these gifts to enrich and exalt themselves. The Pharisees, filled with self-importance and self-righteousness, were misapplying the goods lent them by God to use for His glory" (COL 369).
- "After relating the parable, Christ said, 'The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' That is, **worldly-wise men display more wisdom and earnestness in serving themselves than do the professed children of God in their service to Him.** So it was in Christ's day. So it is now. Look at the life of many

who claim to be Christians. The Lord has endowed them with capabilities, and power, and influence; He has entrusted them with money, that they may be co-workers with Him in the great redemption. All His gifts are to be used in blessing humanity, in relieving the suffering and the needy. We are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to care for the widow and the fatherless, to minister to the distressed and downtrodden” (COL 370).

- “Alas, how many are appropriating to themselves the gifts of God! **How many are adding house to house and land to land. How many are spending their money for pleasure, for the gratification of appetite, for extravagant houses, furniture, and dress. Their fellow beings are left to misery and crime, to disease and death.** Multitudes are perishing without one pitying look, one word or deed of sympathy” (COL 371).
- “**Those who spend their lives in laying up worldly treasure show less wisdom, less thought and care for their eternal well-being, than did the unjust steward for his earthly support.** Less wise than the children of this world in their generation are these professed children of the light” (COL 372).
- Vs 8: “Acted shrewdly” – The Greek word is not a negative one. It means to act wisely, with insight. The manager was discerning, smart, alert.
- “‘Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness,’ Christ says, ‘that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.’ R.V. God and Christ and angels are all ministering to the afflicted, the suffering, and the sinful. **Give yourself to God for this work, use His gifts for this purpose, and you enter into partnership with heavenly beings.** Your heart will throb in sympathy with theirs. You will be assimilated to them in character. To you these dwellers in the eternal tabernacles will not be strangers. **When earthly things shall have passed away, the watchers at heaven's gates will bid you welcome**” (COL 373).
- Vs 9: Unrighteous mammon (NKJV) / worldly wealth (NIV): A reference to possessions, which are of no heavenly value unless they are used for heavenly purposes.
- Vs 9 paraphrased: “Though this unfaithful manager was a rascal, yet he used his master’s resources ‘smartly’ to gain friends in order to secure his future on earth. Without following any of his immoral practices, you too should use your monies and resources wisely, and with foresight, to advance the interests of God’s cause – and thus secure your future in heaven. And when you have thus faithfully used your resources, you can expect to be welcomed by angels into heaven one day.” Jesus does not imply that heaven can be purchased, but that we should make use of present opportunities *with a view to our eternal welfare.*
- “The lesson of this parable is for all. Everyone will be held responsible for the grace given him through Christ. **Life is too solemn to be absorbed in temporal or earthly matters.** The Lord desires that we shall communicate to others that which the eternal and unseen communicates to us” (COL 373).
- “**Every year millions upon millions of human souls are passing into eternity unwarned and unsaved.** From hour to hour in our varied life opportunities to reach and save souls are opened to us. These opportunities are continually coming and going. God desires us to make the most of them. Days, weeks, and months are passing; we have one day, one week, one month less in which to do our work” (COL 373).
- “Christ calls upon every one to consider. Make an honest reckoning. **Put into one scale Jesus, which means eternal treasure, life, truth, heaven, and the joy of Christ in souls redeemed; put into the other every attraction the world can offer. Into one scale put the loss of your own soul, and the souls of those whom you might have been instrumental in saving;** into the other, for yourself and for them, a life that measures with the life of God. Weigh for time and for eternity. While you are thus engaged, Christ speaks: ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ Mark 8:3” (COL 374).

- **“Better than all the friendship of the world is the friendship of Christ's redeemed. Better than a title to the noblest palace on earth is a title to the mansions our Lord has gone to prepare. And better than all the words of earthly praise will be the Saviour's words to His faithful servants, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34” (COL 374).**
- Five ways to be a good steward:
  - Honour God with the first fruit of all your income (tithe)
  - Spend God’s money in ways that bring Him glory (spend wisely)
  - Acknowledge that ALL the money you have belongs to God and that you were chosen to manage it (stewardship)
  - Be disciplined to pay off all debt
  - Do not be wasteful of God’s money
- A few ways that the ‘people of this world’ can sometimes outsmart believers:
  - In their passion and energy
  - Their diligence, drive and hard work
  - Their innovation and creativity
  - Their professionalism
  - Their efficiency and effectiveness
  - Their thoroughness, planning and organisation
  - Their commitment
- *Read Luke 16:1-9. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (*use only a few*). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
  - What does it mean to be faithful with our resources?
  - Why is it so difficult to keep a proper perspective on money?
  - Why do you think the master praises the dishonest manager? Is God commending his behaviour? (*ask one question at a time*)
  - How are ‘people of the world’ more shrewd (wiser, smarter) than believers?
  - What do you think Jesus meant when He said in vs 9: “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”
  - What does the parable tell us about God?
  - What does it tell us about people?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
  - If Christ were to ask you **today** to give an account of the stewardship of His resources (time, money, health, etc.) what would you say? Elaborate.
  - In which areas are you investing most of your disposable income?
  - How do you think God wants you to change or improve the way you use your resources?
  - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group’s secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. “I will buy 20 Bibles and make up 5 food parcels this month for distribution to those in need of spiritual and physical help.”

## 6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today’s lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

## 7. Closing prayer

*Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference*