

SCRIPTURES FOR 3/25/07 LIFEGROUP LESSON

Luke 16:1-13

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions.

2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.'

3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg--

4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

6 "'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.'

7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.'

8 "The master commended the dishonest manager

because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.

9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed

NOTE TO LEADERS: All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

OPENING:

ICEBREAKER or GET YA THINKIN' QUESTION: _____

OPENING PRAYER NOTES: _____

INTRODUCTION:

This week, Jeff poses the question of whether God can trust us. He suggested that there are similarities between this relationship and our relationship with our kids (if we have kids). He said, "We can't force our kids to make right choices, but we *can* ensure they have the *opportunity* to make them."

Q: How does this parallel our relationship with God? (*our free will and His revealed expectations in Scripture*)

DIG DEEPER:

(*Have someone read Luke 16:1-13*) Jeff mentioned that this is a tough parable to fully understand, partly because of the "shrewd" reference and the apparent commendation of sin. The word "shrewd" is translated from the Greek *phronimos* (pr: FRA-nee-moss), which means "wise, prudent, or intelligent," but the manager was also described as "unrighteous" or in the NIV "dishonest" (literally *adikos* [pr: ODD-ee-koss] meaning "fraudulent or deceitful"). This manager handled his master's goods dishonestly and his master commended him for trying to mend fences (with people who may not even have known they were being ripped off).

Q: Does this imply that it is "wise" to make things right with those we have wronged, or does it go deeper than that? How does this impact the master?

Q: When Jesus suggests we should use worldly wealth "to gain friends," what do you think He is saying? (*If we come into ill gain, use it for good purposes? Be culturally relevant? If we are dishonest, it is wise to make up for it?*)

APPLICATION:

Jeff suggests that if he is shrewd, the dishonest manager (or the person who is entrusted by God with some gift and squanders it) will have to face some issues and make some choices:

He must answer the charges against him (vv. 1-2).

Q: In this parable, are we the owner, the manager, or the client? Who are the others? (*we are probably the mgr*)

Q: If we are the failed manager, where did we fail? What expectations did we fail to meet? (*see v. 10*)

He must assess the situation (v. 3).

Q: Jeff says, "People will change once they hurt enough to have to." Does this square with your experience?

He must use opportunities wisely (vv. 8-9).

Q: This guy is playing "catch up." How can we avoid his dilemma? (*being honest in the first place, etc.*)

Q: Once it's too late, how can we follow this manager's example? (*look for chances to make up for it, etc.*)

He must earn back trust (vv. 10-12).

Q: How likely is it for someone to break the v. 10 cycle? Have you ever seen it? (*key words: "will also be"*)

Q: What is the difference between "worldly riches" and "true riches?"

He must be fully devoted FROM NOW ON (Matthew 6:33).

Q: If we were the manager, but now hope to have all these things given to us, what quality of God are we relying on – justice, mercy, or grace? (*people might lean to grace, but that is unwarranted; and justice requires punishment, so probably mercy; but there is no one right answer here*)

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

GROUP NEEDS: _____ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: _____

WHO'S LEADING...

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____