



# Parable of the Shrewd Manager

**Theme:** "If we were only as shrewd in our dealings with the Kingdom of God as we are with making ends meet, imagine the spiritual possibilities. We must not give up even when we are the cause of our own suffering."

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 16:8-9

**Starting Questions:** How sly do you usually are in your business? How important your transactions are for you? Do you consider the biblical principles in your dealings?

## Luke 16:8-9

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

## Reflection Reading

This parable is frustratingly mystifying, and I sometimes wonder if a key sentence or two was accidentally dropped on its journey from story to scroll. Here is Jesus telling a story that rewards dishonesty—except he calls it, "being shrewd," which I suppose sounds more virtuous. But still.

In the parable, a rich boss-man is firing his manager for being lazy and inept. The manager knows he'll never find another job like this, but instead of storming out of the office in a huff, he decides to negotiate significant discounts on customers' invoices—without the boss's knowledge or permission. He's thinking, "I'll build some goodwill with these key business players, and maybe they'll want to hire me later."

He hustles through the accounts payable list, cutting surprise deals with each customer. The customers, of course, are thrilled. The boss gets wind of it, but instead of punishing him, commends the scoundrel on his survival skills.

Huh?

Jesus is not condoning dishonesty so much as the diligence and cleverness of the manager upon facing a crisis. I'd like to think Jesus is all too familiar with our messes and mistakes and is encouraging us not to give up or give in—even when we are the cause of our own suffering.

At the end of the parable, Jesus changes gears and makes that famous statement, “You cannot serve both God and money.” The money-loving Pharisees had apparently been listening and sneered at Jesus when he said this. Jesus simply turns to them and says, “What people value is highly detestable to God.”

Maybe the story was directed at the Pharisees all along: if we were only as shrewd in our dealings with the Kingdom of God as we are with making ends meet, imagine the spiritual possibilities.

### **Dynamic Reflection**

1. How are you being proactive in taking the initiative to improve your situation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do you recognize God’s forgiveness of your shortcomings and his support of your creative energy in caring for yourself and your family?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What would it look like if you channeled your survival instincts into your spiritual life?

### **Application**

1. How did your mentality and actions change after reflecting on this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What can you do to practice this teaching in your work environment?