

Luke 16:1-13

The Trouble With Two Masters

Study Summary and Learning Objective

This study will focus on what it looks like to have a Gospel-centered view of the resources God has given us, including our finances.

Objective

- We should see money and other resources as a means to an end rather than an end in and of itself. Money is not bad, but like any other resource we have, is a gift from God to be used prudently and for His Glory.

Steps To Prepare (For Leaders)

- Read Luke 16 twice. This passage takes more than one glance to understand.
- Consider resources you have other than monetary wealth (ex. talents or abilities).

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read Out Loud: Luke 16:1-7 (NIV)

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 “‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

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.’

Questions for Discussion



What do you think of the manager’s response to losing his job?

Possible Answers: Some commentaries suggest the manager was giving away his own commission. The master would probably be angry with the manager and withhold that commission anyway. On the other hand, the manager may have been kind of sneaky. He was already accused of mismanaging his master’s money, then when he loses his job he goes on to further mismanage his master’s money by forgiving his

master's debts. Granted, he does this so that he will be provided for after he's no longer employed. So while he is being dishonest with his manager's money, he's also making sure his back is covered. We'd probably expect the master to be angry in this scenario, too, given the continued mismanagement of his money.

Read Out Loud: Luke 16:8-13 (NIV)

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?

Definition

Shrewd: Having or showing sharp powers of judgment; astute.

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

? Why does the master commend the manager? Are you surprised by his reaction?

Possible Answers: The master sees that the manager has made sure that even though he's losing his job, he's not forced to beg or do manual labor because of all the favors he can call in. The manager didn't have any resources of his own to bargain with, so he used the master's resources while he still had access to them. The master seems to have a somewhat cavalier response as if to say, "Well, I can't blame ya!"

In most parables there is a character that represents Jesus, God, or some other righteous person. This parable is unique because none of the characters are worth emulating. This means Jesus was getting at something bigger than behavior modification. He is addressing a heart attitude.

? In verse 8, Jesus says "...the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." How are our priorities as followers of Jesus different from those who don't believe? How might this impact the way we interact with each other and the people around us in comparison to those who don't follow Jesus?

Possible Answers: As Christians we are hopefully living with an eternal perspective that focuses on loving God and others before ourselves. As a result, out of love and compassion, we should act in the best interests of others so long as it glorifies God, even when it's not always in our own best interest. This brings about the tension that Jesus mentions here, that people who are not believers are likely living their lives in whatever

way will benefit them most - and potentially valuing wealth/success above all else because they lack the eternal perspective that Christians have.

? Jesus tells the disciples to “use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings”(vs. 9). What do you think He means by this? Optional: How would you rephrase this in more modern/common language?

*Possible Answers: Jesus is telling the disciples that they should use their wealth and resources to win people to Christ. A more modern way of saying this would be, “Use your resources to spread the Gospel, so that you’ll get to see these people again in heaven.” Note that there is an obvious relational component to this in that Jesus tells them to make **friends**. Offering our resources should be matched with genuine love and compassion for others.*

Read Out Loud: We’re going to go back and look at a passage we previously studied in Luke 12 where Jesus comments on wealth.

Read Out Loud: Luke 12:33-34 (NIV)

³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

? How does Jesus’ teaching on wealth in Luke 12 contrast to His teaching on wealth here in Luke 16?

Possible Answers: The passages might, at first glance, look contradictory. In one passage Jesus tells the people to sell all their possessions, which could be considered rather foolish depending on the circumstances. This would go against His teaching in Luke 16, where He tells the disciples to use their money to make friends - that would be difficult if you had given it all away. However, in both passages Jesus makes it clear that money should not be worshipped. That God is the one who gives us money and we should use it to further His kingdom. Both passages address our heart towards wealth and possessions. We should think of money and other resources we have as tools we have been entrusted with to serve God.

? How can we use our wealth to “make friends” for the kingdom? What other resources do we have that we can apply this attitude of giving to?

Possible Answers: We can use our money to care for those in need, support missionaries, support the church, be hospitable to others, etc. In addition to money other resources we have at our disposal are our time, talents, and our heart, but there are likely other unique resources that we all have as well.

? In Luke 16, Jesus says that you cannot serve both God and money. In Luke 12 Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” How does our attitude toward wealth change the way we live our daily lives?

Possible Answers: If we truly see all of our possessions, skills, and resources as God’s rather than our own, we will probably part with them more easily, consider the ways they can benefit others (even when it doesn’t benefit us), and prioritize our use of those resources differently.

For Discussion and Accountability

? What resources do you specifically have that you want to use to build God's kingdom? Are you truly treating these resources as God's, or do you see them as your own?