

Study Two - The Shrewd Manager - Luke 16:1-15

1. Read the parable found in verses 1-8. What questions do you have after reading the story? In general terms, can you determine what the *main* lesson is?

2. It's impossible to understand the details of this story without some background information. Read the following and see if the story starts to make more sense.

In Israelite culture, it was against God's word to charge interest on debts (Exodus 23:19). By Jesus' time this law was routinely ignored, and some very high levels of interest were being charged. The level of interest varied according to what was on loan. Olive oil attracted a very high level of interest due to its vulnerability as a crop—as much as 100%. Wheat's interest was lower; 20-25% or so.

However, to maintain the appearance of keeping the law, debts were not itemized in terms of principal and interest, but with one figure identified in terms of the principal only. In our parable, the olive oil debt is recorded as 900 gallons. In reality, the principal (amount lent) would have been much less than this, with the balance being the interest. Can you see what the dishonest manager is doing? He's wiping out the illegal interest that was probably added by him in the first place (hence his 'dishonesty' – he shouldn't have added the interest). The 'wastefulness' identified by his master in v 1 is probably some other issue that remains unidentified in the story. The move to reduce the debts is actually a righteous action, one that the debtors would have been very happy with.

3. Why is the master left with little else to do but commend the manager?

4. In what way was the manager shrewd? In light of the themes of this parable, in what ways might Christian people fail to act shrewdly before the future?

5. Which of the following interpretations of verse 9 make more sense? Why? Read the verse first!

a. Use money to purchase people's love, so that in the end you will enjoy heaven with them.

b. Use money in a way that is honest and therefore doesn't irritate others, and you will not endanger your eternal inheritance.

6. Have you ever seen a sinful use of money come between friends?

7. How might you summarise the warning of v10? How is this warning related to the parable in vs 1-8?

8. How do vs 13-15 diagnose the issue lying underneath our misuse of money? When do you feel the tug of war between these two masters?

9. In light of the passage, what is distinctive about how a true worshipper of God handles money?

10. Spend some time in personal prayer confessing any use of money that has been dishonest. Ask for God's help in using money in a way that demonstrates a more eternal perspective.