

The Stories of Jesus- Week 1

God Time – The Dishonest Managers

These scriptures are selected to help you gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. You can read them each day or listen to the daily audio that is sent to you. They are intentionally designed for you to engage in your time alone with God. You will find them complementary to the teachings on the weekend (gatherings) and to the LIFE Group materials.

Some tips:

Use a Bible that is easy to read. The ESV or The NLT are both good translations.

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while reading. Then take a few minutes to write a prayer response to what you have read.

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: 1 Timothy 5:8

Tuesday: Acts 20:35

Wednesday: Matthew 25:20-21

Thursday: 1 John 2:15-17

Friday: Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Diving Deeper

The Stories of Jesus – The Dishonest Managers Luke 16:1-13

This is one of the most difficult parables to understand because it contains what seems to contain several internal contradictions. The master is ready to fire his manager for mismanagement, but then the master praises the manager for being shrewd in what appears to be a scheme to cheat the master out of even more money. The manager appears to be a very

detestable person with a shady character. And then in the end, we see Jesus seems to be praising his behavior. Immediately, you begin to wonder why Jesus would say that “the master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.” What is Jesus telling us?

So, I ask, does the manager work for nothing or is he paid from the accounts that he collects? No manager would work for nothing, and under Jewish law, the master would be forbidden from charging usury (excessive interest). To avoid that problem the master hired a manager to collect his debts, and in so doing, the manager could impose whatever fee he desired for his efforts. This manager had been unsuccessful in collecting the master’s debts and had probably placed an unreasonable fee for his services. But when he did collect money, he made more than he was entitled to. The master had reached his tipping point and when he called the manager in, he made it clear that he was going to fire him, but before he did, he wanted a full accounting. Well, the manager was in a predicament. He did not have any other skills and would be destitute if he lost his position. The manager was shrewd and went to each of the debtors and forgave them the amount that he was due for collecting the debt. What he sought to do was gain the favor of the debtors who would not have to pay an excessive collection fee, and he sought to gain favor from the master who would receive his full payment of the debt.

How does Jesus see this shrewd scheme? Jesus isn’t praising the manager’s previously prior management style. He simply praises the manager’s shrewdness in knowing how to use money for the greatest gain in the world. And here is where the parable gets tough. Jesus says that the sons of light could learn a few things from how this manager responded to the situation. Jesus is saying that the unbelievers are shrewder than Christians. What Jesus is praising is the creativity in light of the manager’s limited opportunity. Jesus tells his disciples that we should use the wealth of unrighteousness to make friends for the sake of eternity. The key to understanding this is in understanding what Jesus means by the wealth of unrighteousness. The wealth of unrighteousness does not mean wealth gained through dishonest means. No, it means the money of this world – the treasures of earth. The money that people store up here rather than in storing up treasures in heaven. It is unrighteous because it is the money that the unrighteous world values. What Jesus is saying is that we can learn from how

the unrighteous use their wealth. We should be using the money we gain in this world in a way to turn it into real treasure in heaven. How do we do that? We spend it on the work of the kingdom now. We use it to make friends with other sons of light. The eternal friends we make will bring eternal benefits. We help when we fund outreach ministries, fund Christian organizations, provide financial help to the poor and sick, or just place extra help in the offering plate at church. That is the message Jesus is telling us. To use our earthly treasures to advance the kingdom of God for His glory. What we spend today will be with us as treasures in heaven.

Questions:

1. Jesus says in verse 13, that “No servant can serve two master, for either he will hate the one or love the other.” What is the test that Jesus is challenging us with?
2. Ask yourself, do I see money as a tool – a means to pleasing God or as my God?
3. What are some factors that you could discuss that would help you in putting money in its proper perspective?
4. When Jesus calls us to store up treasures in heaven, do you fully understand what that means?
5. What are some things you could invest in that would help advance the kingdom of God?