



## OASIS: HOW TO BE SHREWD

Done in sync with  
our "LOADED" series  
The Passage – Luke 16:1-13

***Preface:*** Welcome to our LC Bible study in our January sermon series "Loaded." These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. The italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading – not to be distributed to the entire group (it limits conversation).

Decide beforehand how far you will go in this passage. There are two good options of either doing all 13 verses, or just focusing on the parable of vv. 1-9. You can choose based on time or your LCs talkativeness.

### Study's BIG Idea: Money is a good servant, but a lousy master.

**Opening questions and transition:** People tend to think of wealth differently – as a blessing or as a curse.

- What is your reflex response—blessing or curse?
- In what ways can it be a curse? ...a blessing?

Today's Bible discussion dives into a complex and controversial parable taught by Jesus. While most scholars admit that there are a variety of plausible interpretations, they do agree that the applications are pretty clear. Therefore, while we will identify together some of the various possible ideas and uncertainties, we will work hard on the major principles and their application to our lives.

#### **Luke 16:1-13 (NIV © 2011)**

*Since different Bible translations for this parable are very different, I strongly suggest you all stay in the NIV. Read aloud (if providing 5 minutes for individual study, ask people to look for major ideas and applications).*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. <sup>2</sup>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.'

<sup>3</sup>"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— <sup>4</sup>I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

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

<sup>6</sup>"'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.'

<sup>7</sup>"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.'

<sup>8</sup>"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. <sup>9</sup>I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

<sup>10</sup>"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. <sup>11</sup>So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?

<sup>13</sup>"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."

Vv. 1-7 – Jesus tells the parable

O – In vv. 1-2, what do we learn about the owner's status and concerns?

O – In vv. 3-4, how does the manager "process" his imminent dismissal (firing)? What thoughts does he have?

O – In vv. 5-7, what actions does the manager take?

I – What is your reaction to what the manager thinks and does?

Vv. 8-9 – Jesus clarifies his point

O – In v. 8a (first sentence in verse), what is it that Jesus clarifies about the manager?

*NB: People can easily be disturbed by the word "shrewd," since it is often used with negative, pejorative connotations. It is helpful to state that in most dictionaries, there are two definitions. The American Heritage College Dictionary (1993) gives this as its first definition: "marked by keen awareness, sharp intelligence and often practicality."*

*NB: The master is not commending the manager's dishonesty, but his shrewdness, wisdom, and astuteness.*

I – What aspects of the manager's response are shrewd or wise or commendable?

*NB: It is possible that the "dishonest" activity is not the discounting, but simply the wasting (v. 1). Some scholars argue that the manager's discounting was: a) his legitimate action within his authority, or b) his decision to remove an unlawful interest charge, or c) his decision to give up his commission.*

O – In v. 8b (2nd sentence in verse), what generalized observation does Jesus make about the "people of the light"?

I – Since Jesus told this parable to his disciples (v. 1), what do you think Jesus' agenda or hope was?

A – What specific application did Jesus give to his disciples? How might they have applied it? In what ways might they have been or become more shrewd or opportunistic?

A – Let's think of some past ways or future ways we can be more shrewd and opportunistic so to "gain friends" as people of the light.

Vv. 10-13 – Jesus adds a few related lessons (sayings)

O – In vv. 10-12, what are the repeated words/ideas? What contrasts do you see?

I – In your opinion, what is the central principle of this chunk?

A – What does it look like for you to handle worldly wealth?

O – In v. 13, Jesus contrasts opposing masters. What responses do these masters trigger?

I – What is your summary?

I – What is the problem with serving or "trying to balance" two such masters?

A – How are you doing on this continuum? When do you feel vulnerable to leaning in the wrong direction?

Conclusion: If you have money ☺, what are one or two ways you can shrewdly (or more shrewdly) use it?

Prayer: For our continued growth in generosity and our sacred stewardship of our resources for the Kingdom's sake.

**Key: O – Observation. I - Interpretation. A – Application**

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.