

## Parables of Grace

### “THE SHREWD MANAGER: GRACE APPLIED”

(Luke 16:1-8)

Parables are stories to challenge the listener to respond to new truth. The Shrewd Manager is considered to be one of Jesus’ most difficult parables to understand.

**Question:** Why would Jesus use a dishonest schemer as a hero of the parable?

#### THE CRISIS (16:1-2)

- Accusation of mis-management – his actions exposed
- Accountability required – he acknowledges his guilt
- Authority terminated – he deserves punishment

#### THE STRATEGY (16:3-7)

- Explores options
  - Manual labour – too weak
  - Begging – too proud
  - Designs a scheme to - win friends of debtors
    - risk everything on the mercy of the master
- Scheme – act quickly to - reduce the debts
  - take credit for the generosity

#### THE RESULT (16:8)

- The master discovers the scheme
  - His options - tell debtors the manager had been fired and his offer now null & void or accept the praise for his generosity and commend his fired manager
- Chooses to praise the manager for his shrewdness - wisdom – can be understood as “instinct for self-preservation”

## THE MEANING

### THEN

Disciples heard the parable → their natural response would welcome the victory of “the little guy”.

Western readers wonder why Jesus would use a dishonest hero. Eastern readers wonder why such a hero would be criticized.

### NOW

1. Jesus uses a rabbinic principle – “how much more” in this parable

*If the shrewd manager trusted in the mercy of his master to solve his crisis “how much more” will God help when you trust his mercy and grace.*

2. God (like the master) is a God of judgement and mercy/grace.

*In the light of the kingdom principles we have no excuse for our sin. We can only trust in the unfailing grace of our generous Master*

3. The manager is commended for his wise choice to trust in the mercy of his master not for his dishonesty
4. An example of the difference between what the Bible relates and what the Bible teaches.

### The GRACE PARABLE connections

In chapter 15, the son throws himself on the mercy of his father. In chapter 16, the manager throws himself on the mercy of his master.

Both the son and manager:

- Betray a trust and can make no excuses
- Experience extraordinary mercy

The final scene is missing forcing the reader to make their own choice.