



WEEK 4 STUDY GUIDE

Read [Luke 16:1-14](#).

The parable of the shrewd manager is one of the tougher parables to understand and figure out how to apply to our daily lives. A parable is a story—not a real account, though often based in the experiences of everyday life—with a moral or an eternal truth. Part of the confusion with this particular parable arises when we lose sight of the moral and look to this story for instruction on financial advice. Don't get lost in the details of the financial dealings, because honestly what the manager does is pretty shady; you should step back and look at the bigger picture.

Jesus' intention in His parable wasn't to give the blueprint for business dealings, but to share a strong lesson—and warning—about money. Those who are faithful with little will be faithful with large amounts. As we are growing in faithfulness, we can be susceptible to a love of money. Jesus wants us to be careful because money can compete with God for the top priority in our lives.

Since this parable can be confusing, we are going to use a second Scripture to help us understand it. Scripture can help us understand other Scripture.

Read [Matthew 6:19-21](#). This Scripture compares two treasures: one on earth and one in Heaven. It also gives a similar warning to the parable to not let our hearts be consumed by the lesser treasure.

WEEK 4 OVERVIEW

THE MAIN POINT

God is faithful to us,
so let's be faithful to Him.

THE BIBLE

[Luke 16:1-14](#) &
[Matthew 6:19-21](#)

TOUGH PARABLES

Wrestling With Jesus' Challenging Stories

Week 4: The Parable of the Shrewd Manager

Main Point: God is faithful to us, so let's be faithful to Him.

Main Scriptures: [Luke 16:1-14](#) & [Matthew 6:19-21](#)

THE WHAT

ME

Share about a funny moment about a time where someone you love played a prank on you and temporarily lost your trust. For example, when my sister she learned about child abuse at school and how she could call the police to report it. Well, for weeks after this she would threatened to call the police anytime my parents asked her to eat her broccoli, go to bed, or anything else she didn't want to do. My dad is a funny guy, so he came up with a brilliant idea. He finally one day said, "Fine, do you know the number for the police?" My sister scrunched up her face and said no. So he wrote down 116, flipped it upside so it looked like 911, then showed it to my mom (who he knew wouldn't join his prank and asked) "Mom, is this the number for the police?" My mom said yes. Then he flipped the card again and showed it to my sister. For about a year she thought the number for the police was 116. When she found out, she felt like she couldn't trust my dad for a while.

WE

Have you ever been there, where you wonder if you can trust someone? Maybe even someone close to you? I'd bet we all have! Thankfully, God is someone we can always trust. He is always faithful, loving and kind to us.

TRANSITION

But a big question I have for all of us today: can God trust you? We are going to study a parable today Jesus told where a boss wasn't able to trust his manager - and Jesus encourages us to learn from the manager mistakes and live our lives faithful to the God who is always faithful to us.

SO WHAT

GOD

This parable definitely can be confusing. But as we dig into it, we can see how the shrewd manager teaches us about faithfulness—to authority, to friends, and in the little things of life. As we read it, try to not get too focused on the details but step back and try to see the bigger picture.

Read [Luke 16:1-14](#) together.

1. We can learn from the manager's mistake and be faithful to authority.

No matter how young or old we are, we have authority figures in our lives—teachers, parents, bosses, police, and so on. There are times when we like the people in authority and agree with them. There are times we don't agree. But Jesus calls us to living faithfully—even with authorities, even when it's hard. Your actions might create an opportunity to share Jesus, or help you understand the pressures facing people in authority, or give you a stronger level of trust and respect.

2. We can learn from the manager's shrewdness to be faithful to our friends.

The manager wasn't 100% the worst guy ever, he was actually pretty clever and he knew something: we were created to need each other. A healthy friendship is a two-way street—both people give and take. Things become difficult and unhealthy when the friendship is one-sided. We should be friends who look out for our friends and help when they are in need.

3. Big faithfulness to God shows up in the smallest little ways.

Your parents may have told you that the best way to get more independence is to be responsible with the freedom you have now. Jesus shares a similar idea when talking about being faithful in the little things. Sometimes it's the things we do when we think no one is watching that really show us if our hearts are in good places. Jesus talked about this by comparing two treasures. Let's read about it: [Matthew 6:19-21](#).

Jesus gives a similar warning here as He does in the parable: watch what your heart desires most. If your heart desires to be faithful to God the MOST, then you WILL have to make sacrifices, but you can do so knowing it's worth it. If your heart is caught in a different place, then you will really struggle to make sacrifices and might end up making selfish choices.

GOSPEL MOMENT

To be honest, we've all done that. We each have two sides of us: our selfish/sinful side and our godly/spiritual side that battle each other out ALL THE TIME. Even after you accept Jesus into your heart, you will have this struggle. BUT if you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are no longer a slave to your sinful side. God's love and forgiveness is SO HUGE that, when we believe in Him, He covers the sins we make before we accept Jesus and even after. Jesus is just that amazing!

TRANSITION

Jesus loves you. Jesus is faithful to you, even knowing that you won't be 100% faithful to Him.

NOW WHAT?

YOU

Idk the last time you messed up and sinned. When you put what you wanted ahead of what you knew God wanted for you. I make these choices more often in life than I like, but we don't have to give up. Jesus wants us to grow to be more and more like Him.

WE

We can choose to turn our hearts back to Jesus every time we realize we've let an earthly treasure become more important to us than an earthly one. Every time we mess up, Jesus is there to give us a hand up, clean off our scrapped knee, and help get us walking on the right path again. The more and more we realize this and turn back to God, the more and more we will become faithful in the little things. And as we've learned in this parable: Big faithfulness to God shows up in the smallest little ways.

PRAY

God, thank you for being faithful to us. Thank you for being a God we can always count on to show us love, kindness, and forgiveness. Help us to be people who are faithful right back to you. When we go astray, turn our hearts back to you God. YOU are our biggest treasure! Nothing in our lives is more important than you. Please be with us and set our hearts on fire for you above all other things. Help us to be faithful in the little things. Amen.

WEEK 4 TOUGH PARABLES DISCUSSION GUIDE

This guide is a suggestion; Adjust as needed to fit your group. Don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here. Let the students and the Holy Spirit guide the conversation, too.

THE MAIN POINT

God is faithful to us,
so let's be faithful to Him.

THE MAIN SCRIPTURE

[Luke 16:1-14](#) &
[Matthew 6:19-21](#)

GET THEM TALKING

- Did you ever look for buried treasure as a kid?
- What kinds of things do people really care about when money is their top priority?

READ Luke 16:9-14 and answer the following questions:

1. We can learn from the manager's mistake and be faithful to authority.

- What do you find most confusing about this parable, and why?
[PRO TIP: Don't feel like just because you are leading the discussion you have to have all the answers. This is a tough parable, if someone asks a question you don't know - open it up and ask the group what they think. If you all still don't know, as a group take time on your own to research the question and share what you find via text or next week.]
- When is it most difficult for you to respect authority?
- What does it look like to be faithful to authority?
- Why would Jesus care if we respect authority figures in our lives?
- How can you be faithful to authority even when you disagree?

2. We can learn from the manager's shrewdness to be faithful to our friends.

- Describe the friend you've known the longest. Why have you stayed friends for so long?
- Has a "friend" ever used you for his or her own gain? If so, what did that experience teach you?
- Describe how you feel when you get nothing from helping someone—no thanks, nothing in return.
- What does it look like to use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends? (verse 9)
- Is it easier to do something to benefit others or to make friends? Why?

3. Big faithfulness to God shows up in the smallest little ways.

- Give me some examples of how people who are known for doing big things might have gotten started with little things. *[NOTE: Examples might include a professional athlete who had to work and train hard for years, an owner of a huge business who started with just one small store, and so on.]*
- How do you feel when your parents say you're not ready for a step in independence?
- How does faithfulness in little things prepare you for faithfulness in big things?
- What's the next big step in independence that you're most excited about? How are the things you're doing now preparing you for this next big step?
- At the end of this parable, Jesus transitioned into the topic of money—why is that significant?
- How would you explain verse 13 to a friend who isn't a follower of Jesus?

NEXT STEPS

- When you read a passage from the Bible that seems confusing or unclear, how can you make sense of it? Who can help you with that?
- What is Jesus teaching you about your attitude toward authority, or about the friends in your life?
- How can you creatively help someone this week?
- Tell us about one specific area of "little responsibility" where you can be faithful this week. What might Jesus be speaking to you during that act of faithfulness?

PRAYER GUIDE

Ask your students to share any prayer requests, and close together in prayer.