



# *The* ROAD LESS TRAVELED

## The Road Less Traveled (Luke) Oct 1: Stewards of the King

**Series Summary:** In the middle section of the Gospel of Luke, we see a unique aspect of Jesus' ministry- his life and ministry on the road. We see him interact with strangers, answer difficult questions, and teach with boldness. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples—and us as well—what the Kingdom of God is and what it means to follow Him.

**Big Idea:** As Christians, we are called to be steward, or managers, of what God has placed in our lives. What do I do well? Where do I need to do better? What is the heart behind my stewardship?

**Schedule:**

- Video teaching
- Small group

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## LIVE TEACHING

**Set up the passage:** Today, we will be reading about a passage (a parable) in Luke that has confused many people over the years. I can remember the first time I read it thinking, “I don't know what to do with that.” Anybody else read a Bible passage and said that? It's okay. But, have no fear, this passage has a point, and it is relevant for us today.

**Luke 16:1** Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager (steward) was accused of wasting his possessions.

**What is a Steward?** A steward was a trusted servant, usually someone born in the household, who was in charge of managing the household. He provided food for all the other servants, thus managing his master's resources for the well being of

others. He acted as an agent for his master, with full authority to transact business in the master's name.<sup>1</sup>

- This particular steward in the parable was a bad one. He was wasteful. No one has a use for a wasteful steward.

**Luke 16:2-7** 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.' **3** "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—**4** I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.'

- The servant is now worried about his future since he's lost his job. He doesn't want to be a beggar, nor does he want to do any hands-on jobs.
- So he comes up with this plan to make friends with those who owe his boss something...

**5** "So he called in each one of his master's debtors (someone who owed his master). He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' **6** " '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.' **7** "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.'

- He takes what is owed to his master and cuts everything in half. Imagine being owed \$1000 and you only get back \$500.
- We read this and think, "I would throw hands right there". He was a bad manager before. He is a borderline criminal now. He had added to his laziness and mismanagement, deception, and swindling.

**Transition** - We wait for this terrible man to face the music. But much to our surprise...

**Luke 16:8-9** "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. **9** I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

**Say what? I should be lying for Jesus? Okay...** That is not what Jesus is saying. To help, let's look at what the manager got right and how that points towards an eternal mindset that we must have as believers.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1547.

**#1 The manager believed the king when he told him he would have to give an account** (2 Corinthians 5:10). One day, we will as well (Luke 19:11–26). The question is, do we act like it?

**#2 The manager acted as someone who would have to give an account... and soon.** Likewise, we must live as if Jesus' return is imminent (Romans 8:19-25, 1 Corinthians 1:7, Philippians 4:5 & Jude 21)

**#3 The manager recognized that the money would not sustain him in the end.** Rather than trying to hoard as much wealth as possible, which he could have, he instead relied on building relationships that would matter in the end. Did he do it in a God-honoring way? No. But Jesus used that point to help us see that even worldly sinners acknowledge spiritual truths that we miss.

**Luke 16:10-12** “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. **11** So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? **12** And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”

**What have we been given?** All of us have been entrusted with things by God.

- Our time
- Our gifts
- Our money (with what little we have)
- Our hurts
- Our strengths

**Have we been good stewards of what God has given us?** If the answer is no, we should not be surprised when God does not trust us with more.

**Segway to Small Group:** If we are to be good stewards of all that God has given us, we must ask a couple of key questions. What has God entrusted me with? How can I steward it well?

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## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**What would you have done if you were the master in the parable, and heard that your worker intentionally robbed you of half of what you were owed?**

**Read Luke 19:11-27 as a group**

**As with any parable, the first step is to identify who the different people or objects represent. What do the characters in the parable (the nobleman, the servants, and the citizens) represent?**

**Leader Note:** The nobleman is obviously Jesus. The time away in another land represents the time interval between his earthly ministry and the time when he will return at His second coming. The distant kingdom, then, is referring to heaven. The subjects who sent a delegation to reject the king's rule are referring to non-believers, specifically the Jews of the day, who had rejected Jesus. The servants who were given responsibilities and wealth (minas) to use well represent all believers, as we have all been entrusted by Jesus to be good stewards.

**What does the nobleman expect of his servants while he is away? How does this relate to Jesus' expectations of His followers while we wait for His return?**

**Leader Note:** The servants were to invest or put to good use the resources they were entrusted with (Minas/coins/their wages). Likewise, we are commanded to use all that God has entrusted to us. If we refuse to be good stewards of all that God has entrusted us with, we are living a life of rebellion.

**What has God entrusted us with? To put it another way, what should we be very intentional about stewarding well? Write the answers down as you go.**

**Possible Answers:** Talents, our time, any money that we may have, our emotions, friendships/dating relationships, our educations, spiritual giftings, our jobs (primarily for high schoolers), etc.

**Note:** I would encourage your students to write down these answers as they go. We want them to fully understand what they have been entrusted with. Seeing them listed out on paper helps them do just that.

**Vs 20. Why did one of the servants refuse to invest and grow what the master had given him? What reason did he give?**

**Leader Note:** The servant who did nothing with the money described the master as “a hard man who reaped what he did not sow.” Is this an accurate description of God? No. Jesus is anything but harsh and unfair. However, as believers, we are ultimately held accountable for our actions. This is referred to as the Bema Seat or Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom 14:10-12 & 2 Cor 5:9-10). The unfaithful servants' misunderstanding of God should remind us that how we view Jesus will dictate our every action. We cannot faithfully respond to Jesus if we fundamentally misunderstand who He is. Bad theology hurts people. Any self-made misconceptions we make about God are included in this. Is there any fear, doubt, or misconception about God that keeps you from being bold in serving Him?

**What would it look like for someone to repeat the same mistake as the servant in verse 20?**

**Leader Note:** This would resemble a Christian who has professed faith in Jesus but then fails to take any action in their faith. They sit on the sidelines and refuse to go and do the very things that Jesus commanded us to do, such as making disciples, loving our neighbor, or using our spiritual gifts. What is scary is that it is so easy for us to do just that.

- This may be a good time to evaluate any students in your group, and see who is a Christian, but they're lacking growth or a willingness to live out their faith.. This may lead to a great conversation with you encouraging them considering that they may have doubts or fears that are holding them back.

**What reasons or ways could we easily justify a faith of sitting on the sidelines rather than being a good steward of all that God has entrusted to us?**

**Leader Note:** Here are a couple of reasons (lies) that we can believe in to justify staying on the sidelines.

- Sideline sitting is easy. It keeps me comfortable. Being a good steward of what God has entrusted us with takes work, time, and effort.
- A faithful life of good stewardship and obedience is not the norm. We will ultimately separate ourselves from any worldly communities or lifestyles that we might enjoy. Living a life to please God and one day hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” will set us apart from society.
- For some people, their insecurity and fear of messing things up keep them on the sidelines.
- The excuse of “I feel like I have nothing to offer” or “I feel like I’m not good enough”. No one is “good” the first time they try something. We have to continue to make efforts, learn, and press forward even if we may fall sometimes.

**Working to please God doesn't necessarily lead to loving Him more. Why is this so important to keep in mind?**

**Note:** Wanting to please God and make Him proud is a great thing! But remember that we can't earn His love. This is a standard a lot of people are used to living by in their families, friend circles, or their jobs. If we ever fall short or fail in our faith, then it can lead to a dangerous mentality that God doesn't want anything to do with us. We don't serve and steward so that God will love us; we serve and steward as a byproduct of already loving the Lord.

**How can we, as a small group, encourage one another to be faithful stewards of what God has given us?**

#### **PRAYER TIME**

Today's discussion provides a great opportunity to pray for one another that we may be good stewards of all that God has given us.