

**Lesson 16:  
“The Unrighteous  
Steward”**

Luke 16:1-13  
September 29, 2021

**THE UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARD**  
**LUKE 16:1-13**

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**Shrewdness of the Sons of  
this Age**

**The Unrighteous Steward**     *“He Had Done Wisely”  
(Shrewdly NASV)*

**Luke 16:8**

- “Intelligent, wise ... prudent”
- “Mindful of one’s interests” Matthew 10:16
- Lessons to be learned from the sons of this age. Luke 16:9 (Matthew 6:19-21)

**The Unrighteous Steward**

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Context: Spoke to the disciples.  
Note the characters:

- Luke 16:1, “There was a *certain rich man*”
  - Owner of the property who leased it for profit.
- Luke 16:1, “... who had a *steward*.”
  - Manager who was charged with the oversight of the oil and wheat that were produced by workmen. Probably the servants under his direction and oversight.
  - Also, responsible for the sale of the product and return of profits to the rich man.
    - Unlikely, he was a slave. He could be fired! A slave would be punished or even executed. (cf. Luke 12:42-44)
    - Jesus used stewards as illustrations in His parables. (Luke 12:42; Matthew 20:8; 24:45)

**The Unrighteous Steward**

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Context: Spoken to the disciples.

- Jesus used stewards as illustrations in His parables. (Luke 12:42; Matthew 20:8; 24:45).
- Apostles refer to themselves as stewards (see 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10).
- We are stewards of our time, money, opportunities, abilities, and even our very lives. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 12:1)

**The Unrighteous Steward**

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Context: Spoken to the disciples. (Note the change of audience from Chapter 15)

**Accusation:** Luke 16:1, “And he said also unto the *disciples*. There was a *certain rich man*, who had a *steward*; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods.”

**Accused.** *diaballō* is defined as:

- “Slander, accuse, defame ... Not only of those who bring a false charge against one ... but also of those who disseminate the truth concerning a man, but do so maliciously, insidiously, with hostility” (Thayer).
- It involves bringing “charges with hostile intent, either falsely or slanderously” (BAGD, page 180).
- The word does not imply, however, whether the accusations are true or false.

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Context:** Spoken to the disciples. (Note the change of audience from Chapter 15)

**Accounting:** Luke 16:2, "And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward."

- This would require presenting up-to-date books and ledgers on the status of all the assets and liabilities involved in the management of the property overseen.
- This expression is used elsewhere to refer to persons rendering account of actions at the final judgment (see Matthew 12:36; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 4:5).

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Context:** Spoken to the disciples. (Note the change of audience from Chapter 15)

**Dilemma:** Luke 16:3, "And the steward *said within himself*: What shall I do, seeing that my lord taketh away the stewardship from me? I have not strength to dig; to beg I am ashamed."

- NOTE:** Like the prodigal (Luke 15:17-19), the steward spoke within himself (reasoning and rationalizing). There is no evidence here of true repentance or remorse; just more scheming.
- Unable or unwilling to dig (manual labor).
  - Too proud to beg.

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Context:** Spoken to the disciples. (Note the change of audience from Chapter 15)

**Solution:** Luke 16:4, "I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."

- He would scheme to involve his master's debtors so they would take him in when he was fired.
- He could live with or perhaps even work for them without having to beg.

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Plan for his lord's debtors: Luke 16:5-7**

*5 And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?*

*6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bond, and sit down quickly and write fifty.*

- Olive oil was valuable for lighting lamps (Matthew 25:3-8); treating the sick and wounded (Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34); preparing food (Revelation 18:13).
- Probably, this man owed the value of between eight and nine hundred gallons of olive oil, "the yield of nearly 150 olive trees" (Bock, 1331; Plummer, 218). (see: C.G. Caldwell, *Luke, Truth Commentaries*, pages 861-862)

The NIV translates the original amount "eight hundred gallons of olive oil" and the subsequent suggestion of the steward, "make it four hundred."

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Context:** Plan for his lord's debtors: Luke 16:5-7

*5 And calling to him each one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?*

*7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He saith unto him, Take thy bond, and write fourscore.*

- A measure (kor) of wheat was worth between 25 and 30 denarii (Marshall, 619; Bock, 1331). Since a denarius was paid to the common laborer as a day's wage, one kor of wheat was approximately equivalent to a month's salary. This man had one-hundred kor. (see: C.G. Caldwell, *Luke, Truth Commentaries*, pages 861-862)

➤ The NIV roughly translates the man owed one thousand bushels and the steward's command, "make it eight hundred."

## The Unrighteous Steward

**Context:** Plan for his lord's debtors: Luke 16:5-7

- His lord's debtors were probably merchants who had accepted oil or wheat on consignment and signed notes for it in their own handwriting.

➤ **NOTE:** The steward instructed the debtor to use his own hand to change the bill. He told the debtor to lie about the amount of commodity he had owed all along!

## The Unrighteous Steward

Context: Plan for his lord's debtors: Luke 16:5-7

### The Plot Thickens:

#### ➤ The Effects Of This Shrewd Scheme:

- First, it would cause the debtor to be grateful. He would certainly think of the steward as a friend and take him into his house.
- Second, if the debtor later did not respond as the steward wished, the fact that he had personally written the reduced note would involve him in the misdeed against the master's net worth.

➤ The steward could blackmail him for having altered the bill. The new note would be in the debtor's own handwriting, not in the steward's hand.

## SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD

Luke 16:8, "And *his lord* commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely: for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light."

## SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD

- Sons of this age are committed to survival. Luke 16:1-8 (3-4)
- Sons of light are to be committed to spiritual survival. Colossians 3:1-11

## SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD

- Sons of this age are aware of their circumstances. Luke 16:2-4
- Snakes: Preservation and protection. Matthew 10:16

## SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD

- Sons of light are to be aware of spiritual danger. 1 Corinthians 10:1
- Naiveté not necessarily a virtue. Romans 16:17-18
- In innocence, yes. 1 Corinthians 14:20
- BUT, in understanding, there must be maturity. 1 Corinthians 14:20
- Test all things, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; John 8:31-32

## SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD

- We must be watchful.
- Sons of light. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-9
- Our adversary is cunning. 1 Peter 5:8
- The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:41

## **SONS OF THIS AGE ARE SHREWD**

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- Sons of this age use their knowledge to achieve their objectives. Luke 16:3-4
- Sons of light preserve faithfulness.
  - Do not be ignorant of truth. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
  - Mature in understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:20
  - God's revelation. Ephesians 3:3-5; James 3:13