

Hard to Swallow
“Want to Be Shrewd?”

Luke 16

Small Group Discussion

Intro Questions:

- Share about a time when someone was generous toward you, and how their generosity affected you.
 - Answer at whatever level of honesty you are comfortable: when asked to give to meet a need, do you typically see it as an opportunity or an obligation?
1. Read Luke 16:1-13.
 - What questions do you have upon reading this parable? What strikes you as puzzling?
 - Who is Jesus’ audience for this story (v. 1)? How does this observation affect how we read it?
 - Note who else is listening in (v. 14). How does this observation affect our interpretation?
 2. Re-hash the story, in your own words. Make sure that your group agrees upon what actually happens in the story before moving to interpretation. Then discuss the following:
 - What terms or other cultural customs would be important for our understanding of the story? E.g., the concept of a “manager.” (Make a list if that’s helpful, then try to remember everything from Sunday’s sermon or previous Bible Studies that would help you to grasp these things).
 3. On Sunday we learned that three perspective shifts—which we can experience through this parable—are necessary for us to see the incredible opportunity that Jesus is giving us. The first is a perspective shift on **ownership**. In other words, God is the owner of all that we have, and he has entrusted it to us.
 - How does Jesus here liken his followers to managers of someone else’s money? Can you think of other times when he does this? What does that fact say about us and all the resources that we have?
 - How do you feel about the idea that all that you have—even the raw materials, such as health, opportunity, etc.—are gifts from God?
 - How does this shift in perspective affect the way we think about stewarding our resources for God’s interests?
 4. A second shift in perspective that this parable requires is in regard to **durability**, or that which is lasting. We see it as Jesus makes his major point, at the end of the story. To grasp this perspective, discuss the following.
 - For what aspect of his behavior does the master in the parable commend the manager? (Note, from v. 10, how it is not his dishonesty). The answer: shrewdness.
 - What words come to mind when you think of someone who is “shrewd?”
 - In Scripture, the concept does not have a negative connotation. It means wise, discerning, street smart, and alert to how things work.

- Jesus wants his followers (including us) to be shrewd in the way that we use worldly wealth (money and other resources). What aspect of the durability of worldly wealth does Jesus point out?
 - According to v. 9, what is a shrewd way for the people of Jesus to use their resources? What would be a lasting investment?
 - Pastor Josh said that Jesus is telling us to **spend our resources to make forever friendships**. How can we use temporary wealth to build up people and relationships in eternal ways?
 - Quoting Tim Keller, Josh listed a few ways that we can practically do this. Read the suggestions below, and discuss.
 - *Never make money at the expense of people.* What does this mean practically for your life? Is there anything you might need to stop doing?
 - *Put your money into people's needs.* (If you have time, read Luke 16:19-31 for an example). What are some needs that you are strategically positioned to meet? How could you set aside some money regularly to be able to do this? Are there ways that your small group could pool your resources to do this?
 - *Invest in ministries that bring the good news of Jesus to people.* Can you think of some examples locally? How about internationally? Do any of these especially stir you?
5. A third shift in perspective has to do with **motivation**, and it requires us to think about the person telling the parable in Luke 16. How has Jesus done what he is asking his followers to do, only to a much greater extent?
- In the past, when you have given generously to meet a need, what has motivated you?
 - Read 2 Corinthians 8:8-9. When Paul is asking the Corinthian Christians to meet a financial need, what motivation does he provide them?
 - What do you think about the following statement, from Sunday's sermon: *When we reflect on what Jesus did, that can make us so content in him that we become radically generous. We get excited about spending what we have to advance what he wants. When we have this kind of shift in perspective—about ownership, durability, and motivation—now we see opportunities to give not as burdens, but as invitations to invest in something eternal.* Can you see yourself getting excited about investing in people and relationships with an eternal perspective?

Sharing and Prayer:

- Share about any prayer needs you may have. Pray for one another based on those needs and what has been shared throughout your meeting.
- Pray that God will reveal needs in our community and around the world, to which you can give individually and collectively to make an eternal impact.