

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Dec. 26: Be a good steward of the riches God has given\_122004**

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## **Be a good steward of the riches God has given**

Lesson Passage: Luke 16:1-13

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It is wise to learn from the past and plan for the future. Planning is the first step to managing our lives. We are stewards of God to manage our lives. We are entrusted by God with many things and also held responsible for them.

Among all things, money is one of the most important possessions that either enriches our lives or destroys them. The Bible reminds us many times to handle money cautiously and wisely to avoid turning it into an evil thing (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus uses the parable of the shrewd manager in this chapter to tell us to manage money wisely.

This parable is not easy to understand since Jesus praises a shrewd but immoral steward. Definitely, Jesus does not praise the immorality of that manager. What Jesus wants to show in this parable is his shrewd management skills and the wisdom of planning for the future.

### **Consider the future**

Why did Jesus use an irresponsible and dishonest manager in his parable to teach the disciples? There may be several reasons for this. He wants to compare the worldly people with the people of the light (Luke 16:8). If the worldly people can manage their own lives so well, shouldn't the people of the light do even better?



Being stewards of God, we should plan for our future. If we want to live meaningfully today, we should have a good plan for tomorrow. The manager in this parable is very future-conscious, and he knows that tomorrow he will lose his job, so he plans for the rainy days.

I was told that American culture does not encourage people to save for the future. I also see a lot of Christians have no personal savings and no plan for their lives. Having savings or plans for our future does not necessarily mean we do not trust God. We should make a godly plan for ourselves so that we can make full use of our lives to serve the Lord.

### **Make wise decisions**

We should plan for our lives, for it is a spiritual discipline. When we plan for our future, we should examine our lifestyle to see if it is Christian. We need to define our lifestyle first and then find out what our daily necessities are.

The manager in this parable is very smart. What he does may benefit both his master and himself in the future. The debtors may work even harder for the master since their debts are reduced. These debtors also may become the future resources of this manager if he needs their help (v. 4). Making wise decisions is important for a successful plan.

It is wise and Christian to define first our daily necessities and the things that most need to be done to start the planning process for next year. We should give higher priority to the things needing to be done, and money needed to be used to take care of our family, career, church life and God's works.

Two principles guide us in planning-the principle of balance and the principle of pleasing God. The principle of balance helps make a plan that can benefit our family, career, spiritual growth and church life. The principle of pleasing God will guard our plan against putting any ungodly wish into our lives.

I encourage you to share your plan with some Christian friends for prayer support. We may selectively share part of our plan if we have some personal things in it we don't want to share. It also is good for Christian fellowship that people will help each other grow in Christ.

### **Use money faithfully**

One of the major issues in our plan for next year is money management. It does not matter if we have a lot of money or very little money under our care, we need to manage money well in order to glorify God and fulfill our responsibility as stewards. The Christian lifestyle should determine our way of using money, and our way of using money also will reflect our lifestyle.

God has entrusted us with worldly wealth. By managing this wealth to glorify God, he will entrust us with the true riches (v. 11). If money has any

value, it should assist us to live joyfully and meaningfully. But money by itself cannot achieve these goals.

We are responsible to manage the money God gives us through our work and paychecks. We need to spend money wisely and give generously to God's ministry. We need to set aside the portions of tithe and giving to mission and other ministries first before we plan to spend the money for our daily necessities. If we still have any money left, put some money into savings for the future. Then, we can plan to spend the rest of the money on our wish list.

If we can practice this spiritual discipline in making plans for next year and managing money to fulfill our responsibility as stewards, we will prevent ourselves from worshipping money and becoming its slaves (vv. 13).

### **Discussion questions**

- Have you ever made a plan for your life?
- What is your habit of using money?
- Do you think that it is possible for sharing your plan for next year with some Christian friends for support and prayer?

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