

WEIRD

[BECAUSE NORMAL ISN'T WORKING]



WEEK 1 - THE WEIRD STORY OF THE SHREWD MANAGER

Monday — A Weird Story That Makes Us Uncomfortable

Read Luke 16:1–4 *“There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions.”*

The Scene: Jesus begins with a manager who has been entrusted with someone else's wealth. But the manager has been careless with what belongs to his master. When he learns that he is going to lose his position, he begins making plans for his future. It is an uncomfortable story because we are immediately drawn to the manager's questionable behavior. Why would Jesus tell a story about someone who appears to act dishonestly?

One important detail is easy to miss: *THE MANAGER WAS NOT THE OWNER*. He was managing something that belonged to someone else.

That is an important biblical perspective on money and possessions. We often say, “This is my money,” “This is my house,” “This is my stuff.” But Scripture repeatedly reminds us that everything ultimately belongs to God.

The question is not simply: “How much do I have?”

The deeper question is: “What am I doing with what has been entrusted to me?”

Money is a tool. Possessions are tools. Time is a tool. Influence is a tool. They are means to an end. They are not the end.

Think About It:

What makes this parable uncomfortable or confusing for you? How would your attitude toward money change if you thought of yourself as a manager rather than an owner? What resources has God entrusted to you besides money? Where are you most tempted to believe, “This is mine, and I can do whatever I want with it”? What do you think God ultimately wants us to accomplish with the resources He gives us?

Prayer Focus: Pray for the heart of a steward. Ask God to help you see your money, possessions, time, abilities, and opportunities as things entrusted to you rather than things that define you.

Tuesday — Shrewdness Has a Purpose

Read Luke 16:5–8 *“The manager realizes that his situation is changing. He knows he will soon be without a job, so he acts decisively to prepare for what comes next.”*
Jesus says: *“For the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.”*

Here's the challenge from this weird story. Jesus isn't telling His followers to become dishonest. He is telling them to become shrewd, or intentional. The manager understands that his present circumstances have consequences for his future. He doesn't simply sit around hoping things will work out. He acts.

Jesus' challenge to His followers is essentially: If people can be this intentional about temporary things, shouldn't God's people be intentional about eternal things?

We can spend enormous amounts of energy accumulating things that will eventually disappear. But Jesus asks us to think beyond the temporary.

- Our money can provide a meal.
- Our home can provide hospitality.
- Our possessions can meet someone's need.
- Our resources can support ministry.
- Our influence can encourage someone.
- Our generosity can become part of God's work in the world.

The question is not simply whether we possess resources. The question is whether our resources possess us.

Think About It:

What does “shrewd” mean in a positive sense? What is the difference between being financially wise and being controlled by money? Where do you see people being extremely intentional about temporary things? Are you equally intentional about things that have eternal significance? If you had to identify one resource you could use more intentionally for God's purposes, what would it be?

Prayer Focus: Pray for wisdom and intentionality. Ask God to help you think beyond immediate gratification and recognize opportunities to use what you have for His purposes.

Wednesday — Money Is a Means to an End

Read Luke 16:9. *“Make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.”*

This is probably the most difficult verse in the parable. Jesus is not endorsing dishonesty. Instead, He uses the manager's use of temporary wealth to make a point about eternal priorities. Notice something important. The scriptures say, *“So that when it is gone...”* This is important. Jesus names a truth. Worldly wealth is temporary. Money eventually runs out. Possessions wear out. Houses are sold. Cars break down. Clothes become outdated. Bank accounts are eventually closed.

None of these things can be carried into eternity. So what should we do with them while we have them? Jesus suggests using temporary resources to accomplish something that lasts.

This is the heart of the study: *MONEY AND POSSESSIONS ARE A MEANS TO AN END. THEY ARE NOT THE END.*

- Money can purchase food—but food can become hospitality.
- Money can purchase a building—but a building can become a place where people encounter God.
- Money can purchase medicine—but medicine can become an expression of compassion.
- Money can provide transportation—but transportation can help someone get where they need to go.
- Money can support a church—but the church can become a place where lives are changed.

THE MONEY ISN'T THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE. WHAT THE MONEY MAKES POSSIBLE IS THE PURPOSE.

Think About It:

What are some good things money can make possible? What happens when money becomes the goal rather than the tool? What possessions do you have that could be used to bless someone else? How might your home, vehicle, skills, or financial resources become tools for ministry?

Finish this sentence: “If money is a means to an end, then I want my money to help...”

Prayer Focus: Pray for freedom from materialism. Ask God to help you see possessions as opportunities rather than trophies.

Thursday — Faithfulness Is Revealed in Small Things

Read Luke 16:10–12 *“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.”*

Jesus now moves from the story to a principle. “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.” We often think our spiritual lives would be different if we had more.

“If I had more money, I could really make a difference.”

“If I had more time, I would serve.”

“If I had more influence, I would help people.”

But Jesus begins with what is already in our hands. Faithfulness isn't measured only by what we do when we have abundance. Or what we do with more than enough. It is revealed in what we do with what we have right now.

- A dollar can be an act of generosity.
- An hour can be an act of service.
- A meal can be an act of hospitality.
- A conversation can be an act of encouragement.
- A home can become a place of welcome.
- A simple possession can become a blessing.

GOD DOESN'T NEED US TO BECOME WEALTHY BEFORE WE BECOME GENEROUS. He invites us to become faithful with all he have now.

Think About It:

What “little” things has God placed in your hands? Why do we sometimes believe we need more before we can make a difference? How can small acts of generosity become significant? What does your current use of money reveal about your priorities? Where is God asking you to be faithful with something small?

Prayer Focus: Pray for faithfulness in the ordinary. Ask God to help you recognize that everyday decisions can become expressions of discipleship.

Friday — Who Is Your Master?

Read Luke 16:13 *"You cannot serve God and wealth."*

Here's the real issue. Jesus ends the teaching by bringing the issue into sharp focus. The ultimate problem isn't money. The ultimate problem is worship. Money makes a terrible god because it always demands more. More security. More possessions. More success. More control. More comfort. More status. Jesus says we cannot serve both God and wealth.

That doesn't mean money is evil or that possessions are automatically wrong. The issue is who is in charge. Money can be a servant. But It becomes dangerous when it becomes the master.

The manager in this parable understood something important: *RESOURCES COULD BE USED TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE*. Jesus asks His followers to go even further.

- Use what is temporary for what is eternal.
- Use what you possess to serve people.
- Use what you have to participate in God's work.
- Use your resources to express love.

Because one day, the things we spend so much time accumulating will be gone. But the people we love, the lives we touch, the generosity we offer, and the kingdom work we participate in point toward something that lasts.

The Big Question: If everything I have is a means to an end, what is the end I am living for?

Think About It:

What does it mean for wealth to become someone's master? How can a person have money without allowing money to have them? What does your spending reveal about what you value? If someone examined your calendar and your bank statement, what might they conclude about your priorities? What is one change you could make that would put your resources more clearly in service to God and others?

Prayer Focus: Pray for reordered priorities. Ask God to help you place Him first and see everything else as something to be used in His service.

CLOSING REFLECTION — What Is It All For?

The parable of the shrewd manager forces us to ask an important question: What is the purpose of what I have?

Wealth isn't the destination.

Possessions aren't the destination.

Comfort isn't the destination.

Success isn't the destination.

They are all means to an end. The Christian life asks us to move from: “What can I get?” to “What can I do with what I've been given?” From: “How much do I own?” to “How faithfully am I managing what God has entrusted to me?” From: “What will make my life comfortable?” to. “What will make my life meaningful?”

The shrewd manager understood that his resources could help him prepare for what was coming.

Jesus invites His followers to understand something even greater: *EVERYTHING WE HAVE CAN BE USED IN PREPARATION FOR GOD'S KINGDOM.*

WEEK 2 - THE WEIRD SIDE OF GIVING

Giving isn't just about responding to what we see. Sometimes we give because our hearts are stirred by a crisis; sometimes we give faithfully to address needs we may never see. "Normal" gives when it sees a problem. "Weird" gives because it knows problems exist.

TWO KINDS OF GIVING

INTERVENTIONAL GIVING: Giving in response to a specific problem, person, crisis, or situation that moves our hearts. Interventional giving says, "I see a need, and I want to help."

PREVENTATIVE GIVING: Giving systematically and consistently to support the people, ministries, organizations, and systems that address needs before they become visible crises. Preventative giving says, "I know there are needs I will never see, so I will give anyway."

Both matter.

Monday — We give because we see

Read Luke 10:30–37 — The Good Samaritan *"But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity."*

The Good Samaritan begins with someone who has been beaten, robbed, and left beside the road. The Samaritan sees him. That's where intervention begins. He doesn't walk past the problem. He doesn't explain why someone else should deal with it. He doesn't simply feel sorry for the man. He gets involved. He provides what is needed. He uses his own resources. He pays for the man's care. This is interventional giving.

Something happens that stirs our hearts, and we respond.

We see the family whose house burned down.

We hear about the child who needs medical treatment.

We encounter someone hungry.

A natural disaster strikes.

A friend is suddenly in crisis.

Our hearts are stirred, and we give.

There is something beautiful about this kind of giving. We see a need, and we refuse to walk past it. But Jesus' story also raises another question:

What about the needs we don't see?

What part of the Good Samaritan's response stands out to you most? Why do visible needs often move us more than invisible needs? Have you ever experienced a situation where seeing someone's need changed your willingness to help? What

makes it easier to give when we can see exactly where our money is going? Is there a danger in only giving when something emotionally moves us?

Prayer Focus: Pray for eyes that see. Ask God to make you aware of people and situations that you might otherwise overlook.

Tuesday— We give before we see

Read Deuteronomy 14:22–23 *“Set apart every year a tenth of all the yield of your seed that is brought in from the field.”*

Deuteronomy introduces a different kind of giving. It isn't necessarily connected to a crisis. Nobody has to knock on the door. Nobody has to tell a heartbreaking story. Nobody has to create an emotional appeal. The people are instructed to set something aside regularly. This is the beginning of what we might call preventative giving. Preventative giving is systematic. It is intentional. It happens because we know there are needs that we may never see.

Think about the difference between the two:

Interventional giving: “I saw something, and I responded.”

Preventative giving: “I know something exists, so I prepare to respond.”

We often measure giving by what we can see. But some of the most important things we support are difficult to measure because they are the problems that didn't happen. A child who never went hungry. A family that avoided homelessness. A person who received help before reaching a crisis. A ministry that remained available because someone consistently supported it. A church that was able to keep its doors open and its mission moving forward.

How do you measure something that didn't happen? You can't easily put a number on it. But that doesn't mean it wasn't valuable.

Why do you think God instructed Israel to give systematically? What is the difference between giving from emotion and giving from conviction? What are some problems that are difficult to measure because prevention keeps them from becoming worse? How might consistent giving make it possible for others to respond when a crisis does happen? Which type of giving comes more naturally to you: interventional or preventative? Why?

Prayer Focus: Pray for discipline and faithfulness. Ask God to help you become a person who gives not only when you feel something, but because you have decided that generosity is part of who you are.

Wednesday — We give for what lasts

Read 1 Timothy 6:17–19 *“They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.”*

What Are We Building? Paul's words challenge the way we think about wealth. He doesn't simply tell wealthy people to get rid of everything. He tells them to “do good, be generous, and be ready to share.” Why do you think that is?

Here's why. Generosity changes the way we understand wealth. Money can build a bigger house. Money can buy a nicer car. Money can provide more comfort. But money can also build something that lasts beyond the moment.

It can feed.
It can educate.
It can shelter.
It can heal.
It can create opportunity.
It can support ministry.
It can strengthen a community.
It can help someone discover hope.

Paul calls this “the life that really is life.” That's a fascinating phrase. Maybe the weird Christian approach to money is this:

WE DON'T MEASURE WEALTH ONLY BY WHAT WE ACCUMULATE. WE MEASURE IT BY WHAT WE MAKE POSSIBLE.

The question isn't simply: “How much do I have?” It becomes: “What can what I have do?”

What does Paul mean by being “rich in good works”? How can generosity change the way we think about wealth? What is the difference between accumulating wealth and using wealth? What kind of things can money accomplish that have significance beyond money itself? If your financial resources could tell the story of your values, what story would they tell?

Prayer Focus: Pray for a kingdom perspective on wealth. Ask God to help you see your financial resources as tools that can accomplish things much greater than personal consumption.

Thursday— We give even when we don't know

Read Matthew 6:19–21 *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

The Problem With Measurement:

We live in a world that wants everything measured. How many people were helped? How many meals were served? How many dollars were raised? How many lives were changed? These are all good questions. Accountability matters. But some things are difficult to measure. How many people never became homeless because help was available? How many marriages were strengthened? How many children grew up with stability? How many people found community before they became isolated? How many people received help before their crisis became an emergency? How many disasters were less devastating because preparation had already happened?

Preventative giving is difficult to measure because its success may be invisible.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't ask questions about how money is used. Wise stewardship requires accountability. But we also have to recognize that not everything valuable can be measured immediately.

Jesus tells us: *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Our giving doesn't simply reveal what we have. It reveals what we believe matters.

Why do we want to see immediate results from our giving? Why can preventative work be difficult to measure? How do you balance accountability with trusting that some results may never be visible to you? What does your giving say about what you value? What would it look like to give faithfully even when you may never know the outcome?

Prayer Focus: Pray for trust. Ask God to help you give wisely and faithfully without requiring that you personally see every result.

Friday — We give because this is who we are

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6–8 *“God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Giving as a Way of Life: Maybe the goal isn't simply to become people who give more. Maybe the goal is to become “generous people.” There's a difference. Giving can be an action. Generosity is a character. Giving can happen because someone asks. Generosity happens because something has changed inside us. Giving can be occasional. Generosity becomes a way of life.

That's why the “weird” Christian approach to giving includes both intervention and prevention. We respond when the Samaritan sees someone bleeding beside the road. But we also establish habits of generosity before the crisis appears.

We give when our hearts are stirred. We give when nobody is asking.
We give when we can see the result. We give when the result may never be visible.

We give because we believe our resources aren't simply about us.

Normal says: “I'll give when I see a need.”

Weird says: “I'll give because I know there are needs I will never see.”

Normal says: “Show me what my money accomplished.”

Weird says: “I trust God to use what I faithfully give.”

Normal asks: “What do I get?”

Weird asks: “What can I give?”

The goal isn't to feel guilty about money. The goal is to become free with it. Free to give. Free to share. Free to respond. Free to plan. Free to trust. Free to recognize that our money is a tool—but it was never meant to be our master. Money is a means to an end, not the end itself.

What is the difference between giving and generosity? Which comes more naturally to you: interventional giving or preventative giving? What would it look like for generosity to become part of your identity? How might consistent giving change your relationship with money? What is one specific practice of generosity you want to begin, strengthen, or rethink?

Prayer Focus: Pray for a generous heart. Ask God not simply to help you give more, but to transform you into someone who naturally looks for ways to bless others.

CLOSING REFLECTION — What Kind of Giver Am I Becoming?

The Good Samaritan saw a person in crisis and responded.
Deuteronomy teaches God's people to give systematically.
Paul tells us to be “rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.”
Jesus reminds us that our treasure and our heart are connected.

Together, these passages give us a different picture of generosity. Giving isn't merely about responding to emergencies. And it isn't merely about writing a check on a schedule. We need both.

Interventional Giving: It is compassionate. It is immediate. It is personal. It puts faith into action when something moves our hearts.

Preventative Giving: It is intentional. It is systematic. It is patient. It supports the work that prevents problems, strengthens communities, and creates opportunities before a crisis becomes visible. And sometimes the greatest evidence that preventative giving worked is that there is no crisis to point to.

The Weird Question, and perhaps the most important question isn't: “How much should I give?” Perhaps it is: “What kind of person am I becoming through my giving?”

Am I becoming someone who only responds when something breaks? Or am I becoming someone who helps build things that keep people from breaking?

Am I only moved by what I can see? Or can I trust God enough to give toward things whose impact I may never see? Am I giving from guilt? From obligation? From emotion? Or from gratitude?