

The Discipler's Commentary

Answer Outline for the Discipler

Luke 16

- Before giving the answer to the introductory statement below, ask the disciple if he or she can identify the prevailing theme of the chapter.
- Second, ask the disciple what part of chapter 16 stands out the most. In most instances, the disciple will refer to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Chapter 16 is composed of a parable, four teachings, followed by another parable. The parables are like bookends to the teachings. All the teachings and both parables focus on the issue of money.

- Help the disciple discover this by pointing out the two parables and the four teachings.

16:1-9 – First parable: this is the parable of the shrewd manager.

- Ask the disciple to read the parable and try to explain it. Most likely, there will be some questions on the part of the disciple, especially as to why the manager's master praised him for his shrewdness.
- There may need to be explanation of how masters, or businessmen, worked in those days. There are illustrations in the commentary that refer to modern-day comparisons.

- This parable is related to the parable of the lost son through the word "squanderer."

- Have the disciple refer back to the parable of the lost son (prodigal son) in chapter 15. Have the disciple identify the similarities.
- Have the disciple explain how each main character "squandered" the resources given them. (Note: in the parable of the lost son, it was his own possessions he squandered. In the parable to the shrewd manager, it was his boss's resources he squandered.)
- Have the disciple retell the actions the shrewd manager took with his master's debtors. See if the disciple can figure out why he did what he did.

- This parable is also related in theme regarding the subject of forgiveness.

- Make sure the disciple understands the concept of forgiveness.
- Have the disciple find the concept of forgiveness in this parable and in the parable of the lost son.

- The key phrase is "each one of his master's debtors."

- Have the disciple identify who are the "debtors" in this parable.
- Raise the issue of authority. Note that the master certainly had the authority to forgive debtors, and the parable implies that the manager was also given authority to forgive debtors.
- Ask the disciple how this relates to the statement about forgiveness in the Lord's prayer.
- Ask the disciple if there is anyone in his or her life whom they need to forgive.

- The point of the parable: forgiveness of the debt of others brings praise from God.

- See if the disciple can determine why the master praised the manager.
- Ask the disciple this question: "How important is it to God that we forgive those who have sinned against us?" Then ask "Why is it important to God?"

16:10-13 – First teaching: be shrewd in the use of spiritual and material resources.

- See if the disciple can follow the logic of verse 10 concerning faithfulness. Ask the disciple to give some examples or illustrations.
- Have the disciple state in his own words the meaning of verse 13. Ask the disciple if he plans to make any changes in his life as a result.

16:14-15 – Second teaching: never use wealth (“mammon”) to be praised by men.

- Ask the disciple what is the meaning of the following phrases:
 - “who were lovers of money”
 - “were scoffing at Him” (Why?)
 - “who justify yourselves in the sight of men” (How and why do they justify?)
 - “that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God”
- See if the disciple can come up with any contemporary examples. (The discipler may need to have some of his own! Examples include fame, notoriety, praise, recognition, man or woman of the year awards, etc.)
- It is important to help the disciple learn that praise from men and accomplishments in the world are meaningless to God. What is important to God are things the world may never recognize, or even scoff at, such as becoming a nameless person in an unrecognized ministry.

16:16-17 – Third teaching: these truths are clearly stated in Scripture and will be fulfilled.

- Explain to the disciple the term “the Law and the Prophets.”
- This teaching by Jesus in verse 16 will definitely need some explanation. The discipler should try to keep it more simple than the commentary!
- Explain what “one stroke of a letter of the Law” is. The point is this: everything in the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) will be fulfilled!

16:18 – Fourth teaching is a teaching to the Pharisees about divorce, a type of greed.

- This verse may raise some anxious questions by a disciple that has been divorced, and especially if they are remarried. The discipler will need to explain the context in terms of how the Pharisees were using the law to justify “serial” adultery.
- Let the disciple know that there are many, varying interpretations of this verse, especially when compared to Matthew’s version. The disciple should be aware that the opinion of some churches is that divorce of any kind is never justified. And, worst of all, there are some churches that will always accept the husband’s story, but not the wife’s (regardless of the circumstances), and the wife may be asked to leave the church. The disciple, especially if a woman, should avoid such churches.
- Should the disciple have encountered a church that teaches remarried couples should divorce because they are living in adultery, help the disciple understand how illogical the notion is that divorcing one another will solve any problem or make one any the less sinful. (In fact, the sinful party here is the church that is teaching that notion.)

16:19-31 – Second parable: this is the parable about the rich man and Lazarus.

- Ask the disciple if the parable makes him or her feel uncomfortable. Ask why.
- Have the disciple retell the parable in his or her own words.
- Ensure that the disciple understands the meaning of key words, especially what “Abraham’s bosom” and “great chasm fixed” means.
- Ask the disciple to tie in the theme of money with this parable.
- The disciple should understand that the rich man is not being condemned because he is rich, but because he did not respond to the needs of those around him, and that he hoarded his riches for himself.
- Ask the disciple if he or she grasps the consequences of being destined to Hades versus the “Abraham’s bosom.”
- Ask the disciple if he or she sees themselves as financially or materially blessed. If the answer is “Yes,” ask them what action they plan on taking after reading this parable.
- Ask the disciple if they understand the meaning of verses 30 and 31, and how that related to the Pharisees. Ask the disciple how these verses relate to people today. If people were to witness Jesus raising Himself from the dead today, would they repent?