BIBLE DISCOVERY

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LUKE: Cost of Discipleship

Luke 16:1-17

We're diving back into the Gospel of Luke. After nine chapters introducing us to Jesus and His call, Luke now takes us with Him on the road to Jerusalem (Luke 9-19). Along the way, we'll hear some of Jesus' most famous teachings and stories, as He shows us what it truly costs to follow Him and why following Him is worth everything.

The Big Idea

(What is the author's point?)

To follow Jesus forces decisions onto our lives. Ultimately, the question of following Jesus is: Will we trust Him over the powers and structures around us? Jesus uses a parable to draw out this point—in the Kingdom of God, people are of far more value than wealth. The question the manager must ask, and we are made to ask, is "Am I going to value relationships over money?"

Why It Matters

(Why is this relevant to us?)

To follow Jesus is to build your life around three things: be with Jesus, be like Jesus and do what Jesus did.

Another way to think about it is to ask how Jesus would show up in the world if He were in my context, with my temperament and skill set. We want to align our lives with the values, ethics and ways of Jesus and His Kingdom.

As a parent of three kids, it's fun to see the ways that my kids (for better or worse) latch onto and adopt the mannerisms, allegiances, preferences, habits, etc. of my wife and me. To grow up under the influence of a parent or guardian ultimately brings us to a season of reckoning where we must decide if we want to adopt the ways that our parents instilled in us or if we want to go our own way.

To follow Jesus is to choose to adopt the ways of thinking, values, ethics, habits and patterns of Jesus Himself. It's a choice to declare "His way is better."

One of the things that Jesus seemed to emphasize over and over again is the value of people over everything. Many of Jesus' critics pointed out that Jesus was wasting His time, or even worse, was in the wrong because of the people He spent time with. This parable is still a response to the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes at the beginning of chapter 15, over who Jesus was spending His time with.

In this parable, Jesus uses the strategy of "how much more" by telling a story about a manager who mishandles his master's money. In the waning hours of his responsibility, he chooses to value people over finances. Jesus then says, "There's something to be learned here…"

We need to be careful not to see this parable as a condoning of dishonest behavior, but rather a lesson in learning to prioritize what Jesus says is most important—people and relationships.

If we live in a household that makes $40,000 or more, we are in the top two percent of wealthiest people on the planet. It is so easy to allow the influence and power of money to become an idol. Money is a power. Jesus wants it to be a means to an end. Jesus's ultimate value is seeing people in the Kingdom of GOD, and money can be an instrument that serves that greater mission.

Like the manager is forced into a crisis decision when he is let go, so too must we decide; am I going to trust in my wealth or will I trust my King and use money for His eternal purposes?

Good to Know

(What are some helpful insights into this passage?)

When Jesus taught parables, there are three big categories under which you can place them (thanks, Tim Mackie and Bible Project):

- First, parables about the nature of the Kingdom of God.
- Second, parables about the values of the Kingdom of God.
- Third, parables that are crisis of decision forced upon us.

The parable Jesus tells here is the third type.

What exactly was the manager doing that was dishonest? We don't know. In fact, it seems like Jesus just brushes us over that point to get us to the crisis of decision moment.

When reading parables, it's always important to see what human interactions precede and follow the parable. That helps to give context and the point of the parable.

Luke tells us that the Pharisees were "lovers of money," which gives us insight into the motivation of Jesus' parable here.

This is considered a "two-character" parable with the rich young man and the manager. The rich man is simply a neutral character in the story, and the manager represents the decision that the Kingdom of God places on all of us.

There's a funny twist in the parable where the ruler compliments the manager, all the while he is still dishonest, and he still gets fired. It's almost as if he said, "Hey, that was a good move, but you're still canned."

Oftentimes, what's confusing in this parable is that it seems that the point is praising dishonest gain or cooking the books…but that simply isn't the case. This is a classic "how much more" parable. There's something we can learn here, even if in the story the character is wildly imperfect.

Jesus uses the phrase "sons of this world" here. This goes along with the motif of all of Scripture that there really are two paths/ways (think Genesis 1-3, Psalm 1, Matthew 7). You are either in the Kingdom of GOD or not—that's it!

THIS WEEK'S
Bible Discovery Author
Pastor Steve Berg

Group Guide

Following the series with your group?

- Start with some **icebreaker questions**.
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

Conversation Starters

1. What was your initial reaction to this parable?

2. What do we learn from Jesus highlighting the man's shrewd planning and not his dishonesty?

3. What does this passage teach us about stewardship?

4. How is this different than what today's culture tells us about money?

5. How might we remind ourselves that money is a tool to steward rather than a treasure? Are there any immediate actions we need to take?

Prayer

Gracious Father, help us to treasure you and the people you love more than money. Help us to use any money or talents you've given us to further your Kingdom. Thank you for giving us all that we need. Amen.