

TEXT Luke 16:1-13

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that the time is coming when we shall be called to give an account before God concerning the use we have made of the good things with which He has entrusted us.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. — 1 Corinthians 4:2

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. — Matthew 25:21

ANSWER TITLE: **Which Prince Should Be King?**

SEARCH TITLE: **The Unjust Steward**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

There is a considerable amount said about stewardship in the Word. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." This is a prime requisite for a steward and is absolutely essential whether the stewardship is an earthly occupation or a spiritual calling.

The lesson before us portrays the story of a man who was employed as a steward. Most of us will not be hired as stewards, but whatever may be our employment, as Christians we should be good stewards of our time, of the equipment we use, the supplies that are furnished, etc. Jesus said that we are lights in this world. If our employer or the ones with whom we work cannot detect that we are faithful workers, our light isn't shining very brightly.

In the spiritual realm we must realize that it is not only the pastor who must be a good steward for the Lord, but

all are included. Are we found faithful in whatever we are called to do in the service of the Lord? Pastors, ministers, teachers, workers, musicians, singers, gardeners, janitors, or any who are called into the service of the Lord will someday answer to God for the way the service assigned was performed. May we hear, "Well done," when our names are called.

The first mention of a steward in the Bible is found in Genesis— he was the steward of Abraham. It is very evident that Abraham was able to trust him completely, for we read that all the goods of his master were in his hands. When it was time to find a bride for Isaac, Abraham sent his steward to Mesopotamia to find a bride among Abraham's kinfolk. The story of Abraham's steward is an excellent example of one who complied with the key verse for ANSWER although he lived centuries before it was written.

YOUR OPENER

The Unjust Steward

TEXT: Luke 16:1-13

KEY VERSE: His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. — Matthew 25:21

RESPONSES

1. He reduced their debt, thereby making them indebted to himself. Discuss with the class how the steward expected his scheme to work. He was either unable or unwilling to work manually for a living, and he was ashamed to beg; so by reducing the size of the debts owed, he would gain a favorable acceptance from the debtors and they would take him into their homes when he was put out of the stewardship.

2. With class participation, bring out how worldly people often put their minds to work on things that will benefit themselves. A good example is the way manufacturing companies offer a cash reward for suggestions or methods that will save the company time and money. People will work long and hard if there is some personal benefit to be received.

Jesus gave an account of a man who was steward for a wealthy and influential lord. The steward had absolute and complete control over the goods of his master. He was accused of wasting his master's goods, and when he heard that he was going to be called to give an account of his stewardship, he began to scheme how he could provide for his immediate future. His plan was clever enough that even his lord commended his foresight. Jesus added that often the children of this world are wiser than the children of Light (God's children). They spend more effort in securing their immediate future than some children of Light spend in making provision for their eternal future.

1. What was the method the steward used to gain favor with his lord's debtors?

2. The lord spoken of in this parable is the owner of an earthly estate, not the Lord of Heaven. The lord recognized that, though the steward had not been faithful in the management of his goods, he had acted wisely in his own behalf. Draw a parallel between the steward's actions and the actions of worldly people in our day.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

3. Worldly people often take advantage of present opportunities. The children of light have spiritual and eternal advantages promised to them, but they are sometimes seemingly indifferent and slow to take positive actions. Why did Jesus emphasize over and over again that spiritual values are more important than earthly rewards?

4. Fill in the blanks: "He that is faithful in that which is _____ is faithful also in _____." Is this true in a physical sense as well as in a spiritual sense? Give examples. See Luke 19:17-19.

5. In your estimation what are the true riches?

6. Give the meaning of verse 12, using your own words.

7. According to verse 13, how many masters can we serve? Why?

3. Your students' answers should bring out that Jesus repeated this over and over because many people seek so diligently the things of earth. Bring out that this is probably true because earthly things are here and now, while spiritual values seem more indefinite. A small hill, close at hand, may block the view of the distant, beautiful mountain peak. We should not allow things close at hand to obstruct our attention, knowledge, and action toward eternal matters.

4. "He that is faithful in that which is *least* is faithful also in *much*." This is true in both a physical and spiritual sense. Examples are the faithful servants who received and used the pound (money) given to them. Ask your students if everyone they know is equally diligent in performing the duties of life. Of course the answer is no. Some people work willingly no matter what the task, while others perform only when someone is watching. Jesus pointed out that to receive the ultimate heavenly reward we need to be faithful in all aspects of Christian living. Many Christians have found that being faithful in lesser things brings greater responsibility and privileges. In most cases the "much" of responsibility is not given until the person has proven faithful in the "least" in God's service.

5. In verse 11, the true riches are contrasted to unrighteous mammon, therefore the true riches point out the eternal treasures. Referring to the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), ask your students to list some of the indications of the rich man's affluence. Now have the students list the assets of Lazarus. What sign of wealth did he have? What was his wealth, and how do we ascertain this? Lead a discussion centered around the thought of the superior value of the eternal riches and our absolute need of them. Point out that we cannot live in this life as the rich man did and then be like Lazarus in Heaven.

6. Your students should conclude that verse 12 implies that true stewardship regarding the things of others indicates one deals honestly with his own affairs. God is aware of it when we care for the things of others as carefully as if they were our own. If we are trustworthy in this regard, He may bless us with material advantages of our own. But we must never lose sight of the fact that all material possessions are just loaned to us; they really belong to God.

7. We can serve only one master. One cannot be loyal to conflicting masters at the same time. God imploringly calls for the individual to make a decision for Him, whether it be to give one's life, service, or material treasure to Him. God has set before us "life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). We cannot serve the world and God at the same time. See Romans 12:2; also 1 John 2:15. Have your students rehearse the thought that we will be called upon to give an account to God concerning the use we have made of the things with which He has entrusted us.

YOUR WRAP-UP
