

## **Parables – Manager – myfishbites.com**

### **Intro**

This can be found in Luke 16.1-9. A great translation can be found in The Message of this. It's reproduced below:

### **The Story of the Crooked Manager**

Jesus said to his disciples, "There was once a rich man who had a manager. He got reports that the manager had been taking advantage of his position by running up huge personal expenses. So he called him in and said, "What's this I hear about you? You're fired. And I want a complete audit of your books.'

"The manager said to himself, "What am I going to do? I've lost my job as manager. I'm not strong enough for a laboring job, and I'm too proud to beg. . . . Ah, I've got a plan. Here's what I'll do . . . then when I'm turned out into the street, people will take me into their houses.'

"Then he went at it. One after another, he called in the people who were in debt to his master. He said to the first, "How much do you owe my master?'

"He replied, "A hundred jugs of olive oil.'

"The manager said, "Here, take your bill, sit down here--quick now--write fifty.'

"To the next he said, "And you, what do you owe?'

"He answered, "A hundred sacks of wheat.'

"He said, "Take your bill, write in eighty.'

"Now here's a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than law-abiding citizens. They are on constant alert, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way--but for what is right--using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior."

### **To Start**

Talk about the fact this Bible passage is amazing because it seems that Jesus is bigging up someone who is corrupt. But this isn't the case. Jesus points out that many non-Christians have more streetwise survival instincts, are very creative. Jesus points out that Christians should be like this, but for good - not for dishonest or evil purposes.

I love this because as a Christian I put myself on the edge of things, I relate really well to young people on the edge. As Christians we need to be out there, being creative, being radical for Jesus, doing mad stuff, challenging for the sake of Jesus, challenging people, each other, ourselves and the church. When I look at Jesus I see someone different to the world, someone prepared to stand up and stand out. This is the life of a follower of Christ, not some boring life stuck asleep in Sunday church

## **Personal Testimony**

If you have a story of being challenged by God then tell it here. When I became a Christian I had a passion to do a big media and music event to reach young people. It was way beyond me and I had no idea how to do it but I just told my church and started it. The event was called Revelation and we did over 20 of them. They were full of young people taking part and hearing the Gospel, amazing visuals and urban music. They were amazing and one of very few events like it in the UK at the time and led to several other events being started by others – that were even better.

Why were they amazing? Because they were all about God. It's about stepping out in faith and God blowing us away with what does with a small seed. The rapper KJ52 (pronounced Five Two) is called that because he offered all he had and was to God, just as the 5 loaves and 2 fish were offered to Jesus. Look what Jesus did with that - fed way over 5000 people. It's the same for you when you respond to God and act in faith.

## **Exercises**

We're going to start out by looking at what people think of Christians. Have a lot of different words spread around - all kinds of words - and get people to put them in order of what they think a Christian should be like. We then listed those words.

Another exercise is to get them to talk, write, draw the kinds of things other people think Christians are like. The kinds of words we came up with were 'stuffy, boring, dull, religious, fluffy, holy' etc. If you want get the young people to draw pictures of stereotypical Christians.

The final exercise is to look at different kinds of youth culture in the UK. We then listed the youth tribes and cultures that we could all think of. We then looked at what defines these groups - their language, fashion, dress code etc.

Point - is that as Christians we have to fight quite the impressions of Christians that have (often understandably) built up against us. But also as Christians we have our own culture and our rules come from the Bible. This isn't some fashion cult but the Words of God, guiding us into a life of 24/7 discipleship.

If we are into hip-hop we'll probably buy rap CDs, DVDs, wear baggy pants and hoodies, wear some bling and hats and so on. We'll learn words and probably use them.

If we're a Christian, we need to get into the Word, learn God's words, his culture, what God would have us do, how we follow the God culture. This is the life of a disciple.

## **The Parable**

There is some different interpretations about this parable.

Basically the steward of the money was about to be sacked so he went round to all the people who owed his master money and reduced their debt to the master. This would stand him in good favour with them when he lost his job.

It's also worth noting that some modern interpretation has suggested that a lot of the money the people owed would have been illegal interest repayments so the steward was not acting dishonestly but getting people to repay only what they actually owed. (The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Western World - and other similarly corrupt institutions of our day - are you listening?)

## **So what was Jesus saying?**

Jesus was praising the steward for being astute, for being streetwise. Jesus was also urging his disciples to show the same level of commitment towards the Kingdom of God. We should be using our money wisely for God so that when we die and need our money and possessions no more, we can be received by God. It is also possible Jesus is saying that we can gain some measure of favour with God by acting honestly and using our money for God. There seems to be a lot of uncertainty exactly what the parable means. It probably means all of the above!

## **How do we respond to this teaching?**

Have a piece of paper for each person and have 3 questions on there.

**Question 1 - How do we live out a more effective life for Jesus?**

**Question 2 - What can you specifically do to be more creative and radical God style?**

**Question 3 - What area of your life do you need to make a change in?**

Play some music or a video/DVD clip of Jesus on the Cross or similar just before this if you want or can!