



TAMEONTA

God chose what is low and despised in the world, even *things that are not*, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:28-29 ESV)



The Parable of the Dishonest Manager

Interpreting & Understanding the Parables with Jeremy Loyd (ex-prisoner)

He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him,

‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:1-13 ESV).

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Several scholars have deemed the Parable of the Dishonest Manager the most difficult of Jesus' parables to understand. It contains a couple of somewhat confusing passages. I was also a bit alarmed, if you will, by some of the words Jesus chose to use in this discourse. For example, in verse 9 Jesus says, "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings." The words in question here are "unrighteous wealth." Is Jesus, who has never sinned, telling us to somehow acquire wealth in an unrighteous manner or by unethical means? Certainly not. God is not the author of confusion. Knowing what we know about Jesus Christ, He would never teach us to do something that would be considered underhanded or wrong. Keeping that in mind, we need to search a little deeper to fully understand what Jesus is telling the disciples.

"Money itself is neither good nor evil. It is, however, oftentimes – and especially today – made to be an idol to some, and in many cases it is worshipped. What we do with money can be either good or evil."

The word "unrighteous" in the original Greek (*ἀδικία, adikia*) actually means "that which is wrong; unjust; what ought not to be." In the context of verse 9 it is referring to money, which oftentimes is used for unrighteous purposes. Money itself is neither good nor evil. It is, however, oftentimes – and especially today – made to be an idol to some, and in many cases it is worshipped. What we with money can be either good or evil.

In his book *Glory Veiled and Unveiled*, Gerald M. Bilkes restates Jesus' teaching in verse 9 this way: "Even though many use money wickedly and even worship it as a god, my disciples ought to use money in a way that promotes true and lasting friendship in and through Jesus Christ" (Bilkes

2012, 126). Christians should be ever mindful of how they behave on earth so that they may find a welcome in eternal habitations. As followers of Jesus we should use money to further the Kingdom of Heaven.

We will look to other scholars for more information on this passage. In his commentary on Luke, Darrell L. Bock states, "Mammon is called unrighteous not because it is inherently evil but because of the unrighteous attitudes the pursuit of money can produce" (Bock 1994, 266). Now, we know that God is sovereign over all things. So we all need to realize that inevitably God owns everything. Without Him there would be nothing. Often people of the world tend to take care of each other better than people of the Kingdom of God take care of one another. This ought not to be, brothers and sisters. Norval Geldenhuys comments, "They [Jesus' followers] must be so free from the low, selfish and covetous motives that dominated the unjust steward of the parable that they will use the worldly goods entrusted to them by the Father in a manner that will bring blessing to others and be conducive to their own eternal welfare" (Geldenhuys 1951, 416).

He goes on to note, “A sharp contrast is formed between this future welcoming of the faithful in the eternal dwellings where they will be with God, and the fate of the unjust steward who (suffering under the weight of a guilty conscience) would be received in the homes of fellow-sinners, and this only for a short time – as long as his ‘benefactors’ remain well disposed towards him and he remains alive” (Geldenhuys 1951, 416).

I want to take this one step further. Many of us may not have money at this point in our lives. I was incarcerated once for many years – over 13 to be exact. I did not always have extra money after getting the things I needed to survive in that environment. But in 1 Corinthians 12:4-8 Paul tells us, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit...” (ESV). Paul is saying that we, as God’s chosen vessels, are given the Spirit of God, also known as the Holy Spirit. And by this Spirit who dwells within us we are each given spiritual gifts. We may therefore consider the Parable of the Dishonest Manager as a call to get each and every one of us to use these gifts to further the Kingdom of God. This is all in the essence of “wealth” as we see it.

“Jesus is actually telling the disciples that “unrighteous wealth” is not really of great importance. He is talking of ‘true riches.’ These are the things that truly satisfy and will not perish.”

Now, let us take a look at Luke 16:11: “If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?” Jesus is actually telling the disciples that “unrighteous wealth” is not really of great importance. He is talking of “true riches.” These are the things that truly satisfy and will not perish. Moth and rust cannot destroy these true riches; they are everlasting. They are not temporal things of this world. According to Bilkes, “Christ speaks this parable so that the covetous and self-righteous Pharisees would realize that they have mismanaged their stewardship as profoundly as the publicans and sinners and to show how they need gospel prudence to abandon their self-righteousness and press into the Kingdom” (Bilkes 2012, 130). All of us must press on towards the mark, looking to further God’s Kingdom in a myriad of ways. We must be true in the little things, so that we can be worthy and ready to be entrusted with the greater things.

Finally, Jesus sums up this parable with a statement that will surely separate those whose heart is untrue and those whose heart is true to God. Verse 13 says, “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” So there we have it. If

your world is ruled by money or material things, by how many “shiny objects” you can acquire, then surely your heart will be far from God.

God wants us to be blessed; He knows that we need things, or even want things. He is not telling us to have nothing. He is, however, telling us to never let ourselves be so caught up in acquiring wealth or material possessions that we begin to make modern-day idols of these things – including, but not limited to, money. That we must never worship the “mammon of this world” instead of the only One worthy to be worshipped – the living God. God must be first, or we will be last.

Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (ESV). So as I close, I implore all of you to serve God with all that you have, because He is the reason you have anything at all. May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be upon us all. Amen.

References:

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Who Am I

By Terry G.

The following testimony was received by The Cell Church in response to our offer of study Bibles in exchange for prisoner’s stories of the work of Christ in their lives. It represents the author’s own work and has not been edited for content.

When I first arrived at this facility I was very angry and upset because I was sentenced for something I did not do. Twenty-plus years. I hardly spoke to anyone, and even dared anyone to say something crazy. And I called myself a Christian.

And yes, I was mad at God Himself. I mean, how can a loving God allow an innocent child to end up in prison for something he did not do? I didn’t want to be touched, I didn’t want to be talked

to, and I didn’t want help from anyone. Although I never started a fight or threw the first punch, I always finished the fight. Whenever someone would say something crazy to me, another offender would say, “Leave T alone, the man’s crazy. He’s already beat some young punks that tested him.” I didn’t care if you were an officer or an offender, it didn’t matter; I would curse you out and call you all kinds of names. Yet I continued to claim myself to be a Christian.

And yes, I was studying the Bible by myself, and even doing Bible correspondence courses. And as I continued to study and to call upon God, slowly I started to change. I had even gotten to the point where the Lord would show me those that were in need, but

with many of them being gay I would not lift a finger to help them.

Then one evening, without knowing the reason why, I bought four pints of ice cream. When I returned to the cell house, there were all kinds of people asking for ice cream and even offering to buy one or two. I did not respond to any of them. But just before I walked into my cell I saw three gay guys sitting together. And every now and then one of the guys would whisper something in the others' ears. I went on into my cell, but just before I sat on my bunk I looked out my cell window and I knew what I needed to do.

I walked out of my cell, walked up to the three young men, and asked them if they would like an ice cream. One of them looked at me and told me that they didn't have any tokens to pay with. I then explained to them that if I offer them something I do not expect anything in return, nor did they have to pay me back. After handing them the ice cream, as I turned toward my cell, I noticed about fifteen people looking at me with their mouths open in surprise. As I sat on my bunk I smiled to myself and thanked the Lord.

The next day, when these three young men saw me, they walked up to me and thanked me. Then one of them asked if it was okay for him to call me dad. And without thinking about what he had just asked, I said "yes." From that moment on all three of them started calling me dad. Plus, all the other guys stopped giving them a hard time. I helped them when they needed something and when I could.

Although I helped to put a smile on someone's face, I was still a very angry person. But still I continued to study the Word of God and pray to God to change my heart, because I was starting to hate what I was becoming and how I was

Although I helped to put a smile on someone's face, I was still a very angry person. But still I continued to study the Word of God and pray to God to change my heart, because I was starting to hate what I was becoming and how I was treating those around me.

treating those around me. I didn't really want to talk to anyone because I didn't know how. But whenever I was able to help someone who was really in need I felt really good.

There was a guy about my age that was here when I arrived, and he was gay. When I first arrived all kinds of guys used to talk to him and hang out in his cell. But then, about a week had gone by when his friends started spending less and less time with him. So one night I came in from work to see him sitting at a table by himself. I also noticed that it looked as though he'd been crying. So I walked over to him and asked if it was alright if I joined him. He asked me if I was sure that I wanted to sit with someone with full-blown AIDS. My response? Jesus would. From that moment on I would sit and talk to him in the morning until he went to work. And I would sit and talk with him after I got off

from work. This lasted for about a month and a half, until he died. None of the offenders said a word. I had one of the officers tell me that he had passed.

In all my years, this was only the second or third time that I had cried because of someone's death. The first time was when a sixteen-year-old young lady that I called my daughter had gotten mixed up with some major drug dealers. I don't know why, but they murdered her by pushing both her eyes into her head. When I found out, I cried like a baby. The second time, while living on the streets of Denver, the husband of a good friend of mine called to tell me that they found her dead in a hotel room. After receiving the news I couldn't take another step. I just sat on the sidewalk for about an hour and cried. When my grandparents died there were no tears. When my mom and my dad passed away

Although my heart has been broken countless times, I can feel that my broken heart is now being healed by the mighty hand of God. Although I am a new man in Christ Jesus, I am still – and always will be – a work in progress until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

there were no tears. Although I've changed a lot since I've been here, there are still some here who speak evil against me to others. But now people stay away from me, not because of how I act, but because they don't want

others to see them talking to me. But my faith in the Lord continues to grow. I have hope for a better tomorrow. And although my family and friends have walked away from me, I am trusting in the Lord for a new family and a new home.

Although my heart has been broken countless times, I can feel that my broken heart is now being healed by the mighty hand of God. Although I am a new man in Christ Jesus, I am still – and always will be – a work in progress until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has brought me a long way from where I used to be.

I write this as I sit in segregation. The other day, after I finished my work, I returned to my cell. As soon as I walked into the cell, my cellie told me that I had to turn off my fan. I looked at my fan, but it was not pointing in his direction, and I let him know that it wasn't. He then told me that it was way too loud. So I asked him to put in his earplugs. But instead he got off of his bunk, grabbed his cane, then hit me upside the head with it. Then he swung his cane again, but I blocked it with my left arm. As I stood up, I raised both my hands over my head and started towards the door. As I did so, he backed out the door with his cane ready to swing at me again. But when there was enough space between him and me, I headed right to the control center and let the officers know what had just taken place.

I don't care if I'm called a rat or a snitch. What matters to me is that I did what was right in the eyes of God. It's been a long road!

Ministry after Prison: Nathan Cothorn

By Mark Walker

The Cell Church has known Nathan Cothorn since 2014, when we first made contact with him while he ministered as a prisoner in the church at Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF). During the years we were privileged to support Nate in his ministry we recognized his gifts for writing and evangelism, and our ministry published his [testimony](#) and other writings, including "[That Guy's an Evangelist?](#)" and "[Even as He Walked.](#)" We also did our best to walk with him as he served in music ministry, produced [beautiful artwork](#), pursued a biblical education, taught and developed young leaders, and served the body of Christ at Sterling.



Nate has been out of prison for several years now, so we wanted to update all of you who have benefited from his ministry on how he is doing. He currently lives with his family in Northern Colorado. He goes back into SCF as a volunteer to preach in chapel services once every month or two. He also goes to the local community corrections facility (or "halfway house") to share advice with the men there, particularly those who spent a long time in prison.

Moreover, Nate mentors former prisoners one-on-one and serves leading worship at his home church.

Brother Nate is a great example of a faithful believer and gifted leader who was honed and prepared by God through his experiences in the prison church, and is now using those gifts and skills in ministry to the church of Jesus both in prison and in his community. The vision of The Cell Church is that the Lord would work through us to help multiply believers like Nate, who are gifted, prepared, equipped, experienced, bold, and willing to pour out their lives in the ministry to which God calls them. We praise and thank God for the former prisoners, the prison administrators, and the church leaders who have been willing to open themselves and their organizations to Nate's ministry. I believe God has blessed, and will continue to bless, these men and women greatly through Nate because they have chosen to see him through God's eyes and to honor God's call on his life. Please pray for God's ongoing blessing on Nate's life, family, and ministry!



MINISTRY UPDATES

An Update on the Work of God at AVCF

By Dave Bean (AVCF)

A little over a year ago our church here at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility was called the Arkansas Valley Christian Fellowship. Our programs consisted of Sunday morning worship services with a different volunteer preaching on a monthly rotation. We had a regular Monday night Bible study led by Chaplain Larry Walker from the Grace Without Borders ministry. We also had a Tuesday night Bible study that was overseen by some

regular volunteers but actually planned and executed by our lay ministers/leaders (inmates) in here. This Tuesday study gave us the opportunity to lead our peers in subjects that we felt were most appropriate for them. These regular Bible studies continue. In addition, we have an occasional weekend seminar.

The only regular weekend activity, other than Sunday worship, was a Saturday afternoon program put on by a faithful volunteer from Woodmen Valley Chapel. We would meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays. The program was listening to a message from the Senior Pastor on DVD and then discussing the message. This program went on for approximately 8-10 years, and the average attendance was 25. Our volunteer, Ron D., was determined to have us personally meet the new Senior Pastor, Josh Lindstrom. It took him several years to get a time on the Pastor's calendar, but on January 18, 2018 we spent the day in a seminar with the Pastor. It was exciting to meet him and hear his testimony.



About a month later, our volunteer Ron D. came to us and asked us if we (our church) would be interested in becoming a full-fledged campus of Woodmen Valley Chapel. Woodmen Valley Chapel is a 6,000 member multi-campus church in Colorado Springs. At the time of our invitation, they had three campuses on the north end.

We were excited about the invitation to become a campus of such a church, so we prayed about it, met and discussed it, and traded doctrinal statements with Woodmen. At the end of this, we accepted the invitation to become an actual campus of their church. Now please understand, they asked us to become *an actual campus of their church*. This was not the traditional situation in which a church sends a team into a prison to minister to us.

Our first event to kick-off this new relationship was a yard event in August of 2018. After that we began worshipping "live" with Woodmen on Saturday evenings. The other Woodmen campuses have worship on Saturday evenings, and twice on Sunday mornings. The senior pastor travels from campus to campus and the other campuses are linked electronically so that all campuses worship together. They asked us which time would be best for us to go "live" via the internet so that we would be worshipping "with" them. Even though they bought the technical equipment for us to worship live and donated the equipment to CDOC, it has not been connected yet. In the interim we are using a DVD and worshipping one week behind the other campuses. Our campus has a full-time pastor, administrator, and coordinator (3 people). So Woodmen has given us similar support that the other campuses have.

Here at our campus we have grown from averaging around 80 in the Saturday evening worship service to around 110 now. Our facility has 1,080 inmates and around 180 of them are in protective custody, so our general population is about 900. In other words, more than 10% of our population is attending the Woodmen worship service regularly.

Study Bibles for Testimonies

Thanks so much to those of you who have sent us your testimonies! We have already sent out over fifteen study Bibles and received some very encouraging stories of the work of Christ in your lives. We are deeply grateful to brother Jeremy for suggesting this initiative, and to his employer for donating to cover the cost of the Bibles! Please keep those testimonies coming, brothers and sisters!

The other key part of the campus ministries, other than worship, is to conduct weekly Community Groups. These are small groups of people that meet weekly in their neighborhood and discuss the message from the previous week's worship service. This is the way for people to be plugged into the larger church through a small group. Of the 6,000 members in Colorado Springs, approximately 2,000 attend community groups. We are really excited about what is happening with our Community Groups at this campus. We have a Community Group in every living unit and in every pod. We even have a Community Group that meets in the kitchen on their break time. We are averaging from 80-100 men in Community Groups every week. This is an exciting new phenomenon that we have never had

before. Our Community Groups have been meeting since last September and are continuing to be a presence where men live. The number of men attending our Community Groups is nearly the same as the number that attend worship!

In addition to our worship services (8 per week) we are in the final stages of developing a discipleship program, which has been sorely missing in our overall ministry. The discipleship is geared toward consciously mentoring and teaching men in the fundamentals of faith and practice so that we develop a culture of disciples making disciples continuously. WoodmenU is now the biblical education arm of our church, and we have revamped our Tuesday evening Bible Studies with Third Millennium curriculum which has improved the quality and depth of that weekly study. We also recently received approval and support from Woodmen to move forward with our PARADIGMS discipleship program. We are nearly ready to begin a weekly discipleship class on Saturdays that will teach the fundamental disciplines of discipleship that results in living the victorious Christian life. We still have a few more things to collaborate on with our programs department to get this implemented within the facility. However, we are looking forward to having a formal training/discipleship program available to equip men for biblical life and ministry.

Our goal is for this discipleship training on Tuesdays and Saturdays to eventually lead us to developing a group of men that are mature and ready for more leadership training. This is where TUMI comes in. Our concept is that when men master growing as disciples and learning deeper Spiritual principles in these studies, they will progress into advanced leadership class, which is TUMI. We anticipate that our TUMI classes will significantly increase by these men that have grown in their faith to the point of studying and practicing the Christian leadership principles taught in the TUMI curriculum. With all this in mind, TUMI is a vital and important part of our overall ministry here. Admittedly, our TUMI class is small now, but we are working on this long-term plan in which we expect TUMI to grow. TUMI is and will be the capstone leadership course at the height of our ministry and leadership development pyramid.

We are capping off our first year as the Ark Valley Campus of Woodmen with another yard event on August 10, 2019. There is a lot of excitement around here because, unlike last year, we are barbecuing and feeding everyone a hamburger and hot dog. I'm sure your prison experience tells you that this will draw a larger crowd than last year when the snack was chips, cookies, and a drink. Of course, the emphasis is not the food, but it will be great if we can get a lot of unbelievers to this service/yard event.

We hope this report gives you a better idea of what God has been doing here. We are very excited and continually amazed. Thank you for your continued prayers, love, and support for the development of our leaders and church, and for the furtherance of the Kingdom. God bless and keep you!

LUKE 16:1-13 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Our prayer is that *Interpreting & Understanding the Parables with Jeremy Loyd* will become a regular feature in upcoming editions of *Tameonta*. For those who are interested, here are some questions you might use to prompt further thought and discussion:

- What other scriptures can you find that talk about using “talents” or “gifts” to further God’s Kingdom?
- What personal gifts/talents do you see in yourself?
- Personal challenge: are you using your personal gifts/talents to help your church? If not, why not? If so, how can you help others around you to recognize and utilize the gifts that God has given them to further the Kingdom of God?
- Why does the Holy Spirit give different gifts to different people?

We are one body brothers and sisters, with Christ as the head. Use what God has given you and watch the Spirit move! Amen.

