

# Episode 60

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*“Now here’s a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself.”*  
– Luke 16:8

I don’t know if you had the same experience, but I had to read this parable numerous times in various translations before it began to make sense to me. Actually, only once I realised that the parable and its sidenotes span the first 18 verses, did I get it for the first time.

What Jesus is addressing is that the very things the world approves of and applauds are the things God despises. Or as Eugene Peterson puts it: “What the world sees as monumental, God sees as monstrous.” Shrewd, unrighteous, devious, devilish, and crooked. These are some of the words used to express the self-centered, self-preserving behaviour of the manager, and I know of a few managers like this.

I heard of a group of car dealerships who withheld TERS payments from their staff because they were worried the owner would have to take a salary cut. Yes, the guy with the yacht, holiday homes, and helicopter, may have had to fight traffic to get to the office if they hadn’t acted shrewdly! Then there’s the group of car dealerships whose CFO told me how the owner emptied his bank accounts and liquidated assets to ensure that none of his staff struggled in this time. Which company would you want to work at? Which manager would you happily give some overtime to and go the extra mile for?

Which manager are you?

Times like these, just like the times the shrewd manager faced, have a way of exposing what’s in our hearts. Are we so business-minded that our fixation on the bottom line blinds us to the needs right in front of us, or are we using our resources at this time to carry and care for those we work with?

It’s remarkable what inroads the gospel can have in peoples’ lives in times like these. Even the simplest act of kindness stands in stark contrast to how the world behaves. But it takes a willingness on our part to take our eyes off ourselves, and steward what God has given us for the benefit of others.

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