

SHREWDNESS IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Luke 16:1-9

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SHREWDNESS in spiritual matters, as taught in **Luke 16:1-9**, is not a call to dishonesty but to urgent, strategic, and creative stewardship of earthly resources to advance the Kingdom of God. Jesus encourages believers to be "SHREWD AS SERPENTS" (**Matthew 10:16**), using time, talent, and finances to invest in eternal, rather than temporary, treasures.

Shrewdness" in spiritual matters, from a biblical perspective, is not about manipulation or deception. Instead, it is defined as divine wisdom, strategic foresight, and practical alertness in managing earthly resources to advance eternal goals.

Jesus calls for a form of sagacity that is as sharp as a serpent's but as pure as a dove's, blending cleverness with moral integrity.

Shrewdness in spiritual matters (Greek: *phronimos*) is the sanctified application of divine wisdom, foresight, and strategic acumen to advance God's kingdom and manage stewardship responsibilities. It is not deceitful, but rather "*wise as serpents*"

(**Matthew 10:16**)—using godly discernment to navigate a hostile world without compromising integrity.

1. THE CORE MEANING: "AS SHREWD AS SERPENTS"

THE COMMAND (**MATTHEW 10:16**): Jesus instructs his disciples to be "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves". This means being perceptive, cautious, and wise in dealing with a hostile world, while maintaining purity and avoiding malicious manipulation.

Spiritual shrewdness recognizes that believers are "sheep among wolves," meaning they cannot afford to be gullible or naive about potential dangers.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE SHREWD MANAGER (**LUKE 16:1-13**)

This passage is the primary text regarding spiritual shrewdness, despite featuring a dishonest steward. The manager is fired and uses his remaining time to secure his future by reducing the debts of his master's clients, winning their favour.

The master (and Jesus) praises the manager for his shrewdness (foresight and action), not his dishonesty. The lesson is that if worldly people can be so proactive and clever about their temporary security, followers of God should be even more so about their eternal security.

Jesus urges using worldly wealth to make "friends" (by blessing others, providing for the poor), so that when earthly life ends, these actions result in being welcomed into "eternal dwellings". (I WAS SICK YOU CLOTH ME NOT)

KEY ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL SHREWDNESS

Shrewdness understands that earthly resources are temporary and investments should be focused on eternity. It entails using whatever is in one's hand—wealth, influence, time, or talents— as a tool for God's kingdom.

Shrewdness acts quickly to seize opportunities to advance righteousness before the opportunity passes. While utilizing money strategically, true spiritual shrewdness refuses to serve money, keeping its heart centered on God.

SHREWDNESS VS. WORLDLY CUNNING

While sharing the same "skill" of foresight, godly shrewdness is distinct from worldly cunning:

The world is shrewd for self-aggrandizement; the believer is shrewd for the Kingdom of God.

Godly shrewdness never abandons integrity. It is "innocent," meaning it doesn't utilize.

KEY ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL SHREWDNESS:

The Mandate (**Matthew 10:16**): Jesus instructs believers to combine shrewdness with innocence being "wise as serpents and harmless as doves". This means acting with acute, calculated perception while remaining pure.

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (**Luke 16:1-13**): Jesus commends not the dishonesty, but the foresight of the manager who uses temporary resources (worldly wealth) to secure his eternal future. Shrewdness means using time, money, and talents now to build for eternity.

Foresight and Planning: It involves preparing for spiritual realities, similar to the five wise bridesmaids in **Matthew 25:1-13** who brought extra oil for their lamps.

Strategic Engagement: It is a, "street smart", practical wisdom that uses creativity to advance the gospel and manage spiritual tasks.

SHREWDNESS VS. DECEPTION:

While worldly shrewdness can be manipulative, spiritual shrewdness must be guided by a heart to serve God and others. It is "shrewdness for the Kingdom," designed to be proactive and strategic, rather than passive or naive.

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS ON SPIRITUAL SHREWDNESS

The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (**Luke 16:1-9**): Jesus uses a seemingly dishonest manager to illustrate that the "sons of this age" are often more strategic regarding their future than "sons of light". The manager is commended not for his corruption, but for his foresight, quick thinking, and decisive action to secure his future.

"SHREWD AS SNAKES, INNOCENT AS DOVES" (**Matthew 10:16**): This command pairs wisdom with integrity. It demands that Christians are not naive, but alert and discerning in a hostile world, avoiding traps while maintaining moral purity.

Definition of Spiritual Shrewdness: It means being "wise," "prudent," and "thoughtful" (Greek: *phronimos*). It is the ability to see the eternal reality behind daily, material choices.

KEY ASPECTS OF SHREWDNESS IN FAITH

Using "*Unrighteous Mammon*" for Good: Believers are instructed to use money—a temporary, worldly

resource—to build relationships and support the gospel, effectively turning it into a tool for eternal investment.

Foresight and Urgency: Shrewdness understands that earthly time is short and that one must act immediately to build lasting treasure in heaven.

Accountability and Stewardship: It recognizes that all resources are entrusted by God, and a day of reckoning (audit) is coming, requiring wise, responsible, and imaginative management. Discernment in Relationships: It involves being aware of potential dangers, knowing when to speak, when to remain silent, and how to navigate challenging situations for the sake of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual shrewdness is essentially the ability to apply divine wisdom to everyday decisions, ensuring that one's life, resources, and relationships are aligned with eternity, rather than just the fleeting, temporary gains of this age.

Spiritual shrewdness is ultimately about maximizing one's impact for the Kingdom, ensuring that one's life is invested in things that will last for eternity. It is the opposite of a passive, naive, or wasteful faith.

Shrewdness in the spiritual sense is a call to, "*level up*" in, our Christian walk, using resources judiciously and acting with bold intention to make an eternal impact.

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HYMN 9

W.M GOLDEN

"A BEAUTIFUL LIFE"