

## Who then is the Faithful and Wise Manager?

By Carrie Cavanaugh

### **Luke 12:40-48**

*"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."*

*Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"*

*The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers."*

*"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."*

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Although this passage is a parable, it has direct implications in regards to Christian management. Jesus is warning his disciples to always be ready since the time of his return will be unknown. But then he goes on to tell the disciples that they especially, as leaders, need to be mindful of God's imminent return as they interact with those they lead and use the resources at their disposal. These truths apply to you, the men and women in positions of authority over others at Christian workplaces.

The first point of note about what the faithful and wise manager looks like is that he, although in a position of authority, is ultimately the servant of God. Indeed, God is the one who places people in positions of authority (Romans 13:1) and He is the Lord of lords. Recognizing this truth is the starting place for managers to have the proper attitude of humility and knowledge of their accountability.

God entrusts great responsibility on those he leaves in leadership over his people. Although, this is most directly addressing those in spiritual authority over the church, Christian business leaders likewise will be held accountable for their position of authority. For, while God is "away", these leaders are his representative to His people.

Specifically those in leadership carry out God's role of provider. They are to care for God's people by faithfully providing for their needs. For a Christian manager, this means making sure that employees are provided for financially, both now and when they go on sick leave or retire and have adequate insurance and a comfortable work space. But it also means that employees are properly trained, receive helpful



feedback, are appropriately praised for their work, are supported in their efforts to love and provide for their family and their church. It means taking time to listen to employee input and regularly acting on employee suggestions, making sure that employees are involved in the decision making process for any changes that may impact them. It means communicating everything from the reasons behind decisions to expectations of work performance. Showing grace, entrusting others with responsibility just as God has entrusted you with things, being accessible, genuinely caring about the whole person and allowing staff to share in the joy and fulfillment of the work are all ways to live out God's prerogative of providing for those you oversee. Again, you can apologize for mistakes, give recognition for success to those responsible and to provide some degree of job security, all because you are giving your employees what they need for life. However, this is just the beginning of a list. What this means for you with your staff will be a unique incarnation of obedience to this precedent. Clearly, God cares about His people. He is loving and faithful, the giver of all good gifts. Let Christian managers likewise love God's people and provide for their needs.

There are two reasons to act thus. The first is the hope of God's pleasure and the promise of being given even more authority when He returns. The second is the fear of God's punishment and even damnation should one mistreat His people. Together these comprise a compelling argument to be a faithful and wise manager.

But lets be honest, it is hard to treat people well all the time! Some staff rub us the wrong way, budgetary demands are pressing, and returning e-mails consumes a lot of your time. But Jesus reminds us that He could return at any moment and so we should live every moment in a way that would please Him. We need to know His nearness. We need to remember that the day of account is approaching.

This passage reveals that those in leadership positions have an added degree of responsibility. You have been entrusted with much and so much is expected of you. To be first, one must be last. To lead means to serve. For, just as the bridegroom greets those waiting for him by serving them, so too should you, as Christian leaders, take up the attitude of serving those under your supervision. This necessary selflessness means giving up your own status and ambitions. It will probably mean giving up something of your own pleasures in order to provide for those God has entrusted to you.

In conclusion, there are many demands upon managers today. But for Christian managers, God has laid out a clear guide to help them prioritize their responsibilities. God expects Christian leaders to be responsible in the way they care for those under them. Christian managers should be actively and faithfully caring for those whom they oversee. For as important as your organization's vision may seem, it is your staff's souls that will exist for eternity. In other words, in addition to the external activities, like fundraising, Christian leaders are responsible before God for caring for their employees.

