



## Middle Managers Might Find This a Bit Scary

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### Article:

People say they love the parables of Jesus, which is understandable. Jesus was a wonderful storyteller. But I sometimes wonder if anyone is actually reading them. I find many to be rather frightening. In fact, the harshest judgment is for those who call themselves children of God and do not live faithfully in their daily lives.

I sometimes think the parables should carry a warning. "Let the reader beware." One such parable is found in [Matthew 24: 45-51](#). It is often called "The Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Steward."

*"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

The story is simple enough: A master leaves behind a servant, whom he puts in charge of the other servants. He is a steward of the workforce. He's the first century equivalent of middle management. Modern readers who exist in the business world on levels below and above middle management will probably enjoy this story. Middle managers themselves might find it a bit scary.

In the story, the steward is tasked with making sure the workers are given their proper allotment of food and drink and supplies. He has control of the schedule, keys to the supply room, and requisitions for new equipment and computers go through him. The CEO is often absent, sometimes for months. So this guy sets up quite a little kingdom for himself. He is abusive and cruel to those below him. He hogs new resources, using them for himself and his cronies, while others struggle to get their work done with aging computers and broken printers. He's pretty liberal with the petty cash too, taking himself and his friends out for long, expensive lunches. People in the office fear him and come to work each day filled with anxiety.

As you can imagine, the good times don't last forever. The manager thinks he knows when his boss is returning. Unfortunately for him, the CEO returns unexpectedly, and there is hell to pay. In the parable, literally.

There are numerous lessons in this wonderful story that have remained relevant for 2,000 years and will remain so as long as we have jobs and workers and people in charge. The abuse of power is, apparently, a thing that makes God quite angry. Woe to those who use positions of power for undue personal gain. The story also reminds us that much is expected from those to whom much is given by God.

The central meaning of the story is, however, faithfulness. God doesn't seem too concerned about what kind of job you have. Some have powerful jobs and others do not. What matters most to God is what you are doing with yourself on average days. On Tuesday mornings, say. And on Thursdays of uneventful weeks.

Happy are those whom the Lord will find obediently serving him when he returns. Happy are those who will be pleasantly surprised and filled with joy when they look up from their work and find that he has come. Happy are those who, being put in charge of others, are not seeking to benefit themselves, but instead carrying out their managerial tasks with grace and honesty and fairness to others.

**Yes, happy are the faithful. For the day of the Lord always comes.** In one form or another, it comes. And whether His coming is cause for celebration or trembling is determined, in part, by what happens in your life on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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