



Should You Ever Befriend Dishonesty?

Luke 16:9: (NRSV) *And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.*



Sometimes you read a scripture and it makes you do a double-take, because it simply does not make sense. It then ought to become our responsibility to figure it out - to try and understand what the real message is. Such is the case with our theme text from Jesus' parable of the unjust steward. Jesus seems to say 'make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth, so you can have it easy later.' It sounds like Jesus is throwing integrity out the window along with honesty and accountability and replacing them with a situational ethics "it's all about me" approach. Could this be? Stay with us as we look into this parable, its context, its meaning, and its lessons for us.

What is the context of this particular parable?

Key elements of the context:

- Begins in **Luke 15** - there were three parables spoken before this one and one parable spoken after.
- It is a mixed audience:
 - Publicans and sinners,
 - Pharisees,
 - His disciples
- He begins by directly addressing the Pharisees, then he changes his primary audience to his disciples as he speaks this particular parable, then back to the Pharisees for the next parable.



 **Tickled Pink, Language in Context, a missionary school illustration of context and translation in a foreign country - youtube**

- "...I'm tickled pink that you've invited me here to share with you." (Translation: "It seems our guest has developed a rash and has been scratching himself so much he turned pink in places.")

Phrases that we use all the time, set in an unfamiliar context, can easily lead to misunderstanding.

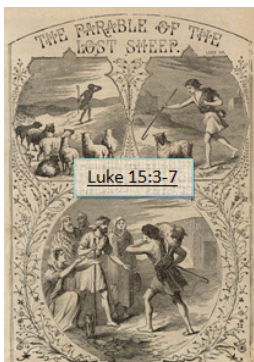
Back to the parables, the main audience was the Pharisees.

1. Parable of The Lost Sheep: **Luke 15:3-7** - There is joy in heaven over the recovery of a sinful race.

Isaiah 53:6: *All we like sheep have gone astray.*

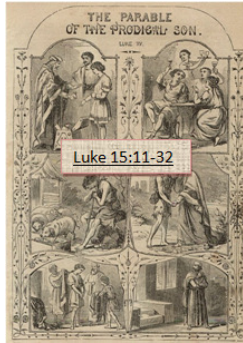
Romans 3:10: *There is none righteous, no not one.*

The Pharisees would not have liked this, based on their murmurings because they saw themselves as elite, special and above everyone else. Jesus continually reminded them that they were privileged and responsible.





2. **The Lost Coin:** Luke 15:8-10 - Restating the heavenly joy in the recovery of sinners. But again, the Pharisees saw themselves as above sinners.



3. **The Prodigal Son:** Luke 15:11-32 - Who would these two sons be? The "elite" of Israel and the "sinners" of Israel - sinners come back and the elite complain. This makes the Pharisees mad!

The theme of the previous three was the lost has been recovered - hope for the "sinners" of the world, but now Jesus addresses his disciples directly about what to learn for others' missteps.

4. **The Unjust Steward:** Luke 16:1-15 - A story of the unfaithful stewardship over God's people that the Pharisees were about to lose.

5. **The Rich Man & Lazarus:** Luke 16:19-31 - Jesus re-addresses the Pharisees directly. This is a story of the actual replacement of the Pharisees and Israel, with their position of favor with Gentiles.

Who's who in the parable? The Rich Man, the Steward and the Debtors



Luke 16:1: (NASB) Now he was also saying to the disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions.

We have the Rich Man and the Manager/Steward. Following the context of the previous parable, it is sensible to have God pictured as the Rich Man and the Pharisees pictured as his steward.

To help us with the context, here is a scripture telling us something important about the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:1-3: (NASB) ¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, ²saying: The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

Jesus points out that the Pharisees weren't living the life they were telling the people to live. Their actions didn't live up to their words.

A part of the previous parable:

Luke 15:29-32: (NASB) ²⁹But he (the eldest son, also picturing the Pharisees) answered and said to his father, Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰but when this son of yours (the younger son, picturing the sinful Jews who had strayed away) came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him. ³¹And he said to him, Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.



This helps us to understand the role God plays in the previous parable, corresponding with the Rich Man in the parable we are studying today. These five parables are linked together. The Older Son corresponds to the Rich Man's Steward.



🔊 Play Sports for Jesus, *Language in Context, a missionary school illustration of context and translation in a foreign country - youtube*

- "Their testimony is not worth a hill of beans!" (Translation: "Their testimony is not worth a mountain of vegetables.")
- "It's time to get on the ball for Jesus!" (Translation: "It's time to play sports for Jesus!")

Luke 16:5: (NASB) *And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, How much do you owe my master?*

Here we have a number of debtors of the Rich Man who are coming before the Steward.



(Source: Albert Barnes' Commentary on the Bible) These were persons, doubtless, who had rented land of the rich man, and who were to give him a certain proportion of the produce.

Thy bill: The contract, obligation, or lease. It was probably written as a promise by the debtor and signed by the steward, and thus became binding.

Luke 15:21-23: (NASB) ²¹And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. ²²But the father said to his slaves, Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

Amos 3:2: (NASB) You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Why all this time on figuring out the context? Because if you *don't* know what it means, then you *won't* know what it means!!

What is "stewardship" according to the parable?

Luke 16:1: (KJV) And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

What exactly is a "steward?" *The concept of stewardship is that of the manager of a household or of household affairs, a superintendent.*

To whom was Jesus talking in the parable? His disciples.

Why? He was telling them they should learn from the mistakes of this steward, who is about to get fired, because they were about to get that job!

1 Peter 4:8-11: (NRSV) ⁸Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Christian stewardship isn't for the purposes of self-glorification.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (KJV) ¹Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Anyone who is a disciple of Christ is a steward of the mysteries of God. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, a steward has to have integrity and accountability.



The Geography Test, Short Cuts - Bluefish TV

This shows the importance of integrity in taking a test. (By the way, the capital of Uruguay is Montevideo. And just so you know, Uruguay is south of Brazil and east of Argentina.)

We should live with a large amount of integrity so our lives are reflecting what it should - Jesus. For us, the principle of stewardship can be applied in those areas where we are supposed to do something, but may have little or no



interest in doing it, like learning the geography of South America in our example.

So, we have all the pieces: God is pictured by the Rich Man; the Pharisees by the Steward; and the Jewish nation by the Debtors. Jesus is telling this story to his disciples, who are going to be the new stewards of God's riches on earth.

Let's begin to unfold the parable:

Luke 16:1-3: (NASB) ¹Now he was also saying to the disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager. ³The 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; I am ashamed to beg.



Observations:

- The Steward was NOT doing his job - he had a squandering and irresponsible attitude;
- Accountability is demanded from the Master, along with a termination notice;
- The Steward only decides to "work" because his own future survival is at stake;
- He is not strong enough to dig (till the earth), the honest work of sinners, perhaps like the prodigal son was willing to do in the previous story!
- How about begging? This happens to be the state of Lazarus in the next story!

So, what's the story?

Luke 16:4-6: (NASB) ⁴I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes. ⁵And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, How much do you owe my master? ⁶And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.

- The Steward forms a plan to take care of himself once he is fired;
- He actually goes to work as a Steward (finally)!

(Source: Albert Barnes' Commentary on the Bible) Verse 6. An hundred measures. The measure here mentioned is the bath, which contained...7 1/2 gallons...to about 9 gallons and 3 quarts.

- He cuts the first debtor's bill by 50%!

Was this a wise action or a foolish action?



Proverbs 26:12: (NASB) *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

One can't have an egotistical attitude and be a steward of God's goods.



"Don't try to be different. Just be good. To be good is different enough." - Arthur Freed



This audio is of two men who are in training to be SWAT Team members

The Bomb Test Short Cuts - Bluefish TV

(Shows it is important to have integrity when taking a test.)

Luke 16:7: (NASB) *Then he said to another, And how much do you owe? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, Take your bill, and write eighty.*

(Source: Bible Commentator C. Russell) Another owing a hundred measures of wheat (500 to 1400 bushels) was told that he might scale it down twenty percent. And so he went down the list. Such a use of his authority made him friends amongst those whom he had favored...

- This was evidently a large scale operation to have had such large debts;
- This debtor was forgiven 20%. Is he cheating or helping his master?

Luke 16:8: (NRSV) *And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.*

The Master was pleased because he previously wasn't receiving *any* monies from the debtors. To get something vs. nothing was better. Sometimes in business, certain debts need to be written off. At least revenue was now being created.

Jesus is saying through the parable that the "child of this age" knows more about the two-way street of mercy than God's own Stewards (the Pharisees). So, the Master is commending the shrewd accounting that essentially pleases everyone and not commending the injustice of the Steward's tenure. (In other words, you are finally being merciful - that's what I wanted all along.) The Pharisees should have won the love and gratitude of their fellow Jews, but they did not.

Luke 16:9: (NRSV) *And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.*

Another translation:



Luke 16:9: (NASB) *And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.*

This is a continuation of Jesus' overall theme of these parables: The heavenly favor of God had been the responsibility of the Jews and their leaders, but it was now falling away from them into the hands of anyone who would follow Jesus. You are about to be replaced and need to have a compassionate approach.

The "Rick paraphrase" of this verse: *I tell you - my disciples - be merciful to and honest with all with whom you have dealings - don't look down on those who are not in your position. Once this world and the comparably small responsibilities we bare in it passes, you will be received into a heavenly reward for so doing.*

Mercy can be a risk sometimes, but we still need to do right by the little things (integrity) in this sinful world, because it is a small thing in comparison with eternity.

Proverbs 6:6-8: (ASV) ⁶*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; Consider her ways, and be wise: ⁷Which having no chief, overseer, or ruler, ⁸provideth her bread in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*

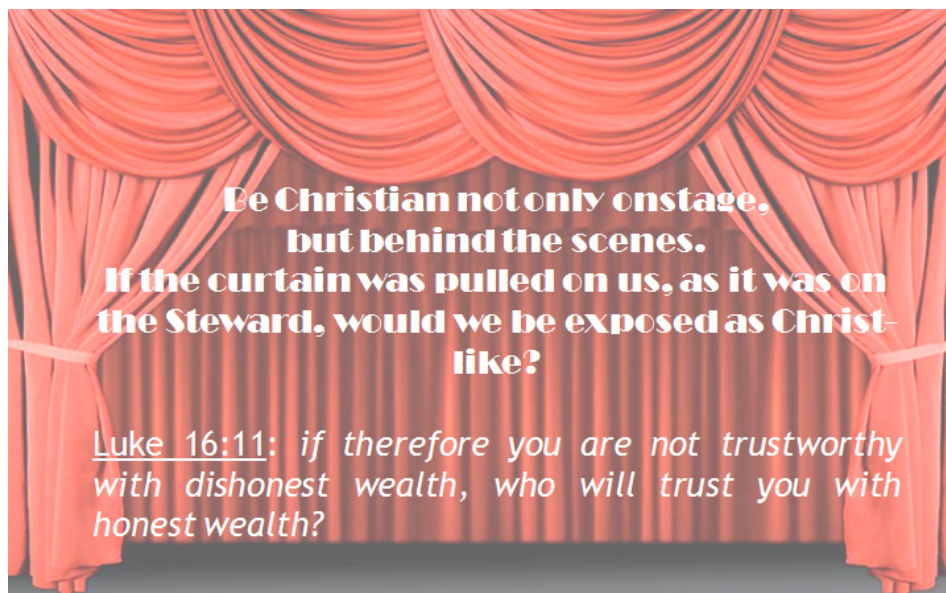
The final verses of our parable:

Luke 16:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰*He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?*

The wealth of the sinful world is a little thing. If we are faithful in the little things, we can hope to be faithful in the big.

 **Small things, Part 1 - Bluefish TV**

- *Featuring dust, a staff, the jawbone of a donkey and trumpets*



So, what was the point of this audio? The clear answer to follow!



Matthew 6:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. ²⁵For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Matthew 6:33: (NASB) But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

What do we learn from all this?

Jesus continually taught that God is merciful and we also should be merciful:

Matthew 18:23-27: (NASB) ²³For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, Have patience with me and I will repay you everything. ²⁷And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.

The stewardship of our lives is serious business:

Titus 1:7-9: (NRSV) ⁷For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. ⁹He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

We are to be examples to all men in our service to God and our respect for all others:

Matthew 5:13-16: (NRSV) ¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Live according to the integrity to which you were called.

We reap what we sow - no more and no less:

Galatians 6:7-10: (NRSV) ⁷Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Small things, Part 2 - Bluefish TV

- If God can use such small things to change the course of history, certainly he can use you...

None of these things can happen without humility:

1 Peter 5:6-7: (NASB) ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.



Put things in perspective from a spiritual standpoint, even though we are in an earthly world.

"If honor be your clothing, the suit will last a lifetime; but if clothing be your honor, it will soon be worn threadbare."

- William Arnot

*So should you ever befriend dishonesty?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*

First, the parable in its entirety:

Luke 16:1-12: (NASB) ¹Now he was also saying to the disciples, There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager. ³The 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; I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes. ⁵And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, How much do you owe my master? ⁶And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil. And he said to him, Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty. ⁷Then he said to another, And how much do you owe?' And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. He said to him, Take your bill, and write eighty. ⁸And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. ⁹And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings. ¹⁰He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

The concept of stewardship in more detail:

Steward: Strong's #3623 oikonomos (oy-kon-om'-os); a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer, i.e. an employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher (of the Gospel): KJV-- chamberlain, governor, steward.

1) the manager of household or of household affairs 1a) esp. a steward, manager, superintendent (whether free-born or as was usually the case, a freed-man or a slave) to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age



1 Peter 4:8-11: (NRSV) ⁸Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰Like good **stewards** of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ¹¹Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Titus 1:7-9: (NRSV) ⁷For a bishop, as God's **steward**, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. ⁹He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (KJV) ¹Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and **stewards** of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

A comparison between the merciful approach of God and the demanding approach of the Pharisees:

Matthew 18:23-33: (NRSV) ²³For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'

Mercy was the furthest thing from the Pharisees minds:

Matthew 23:1-13: (NRSV) ¹Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ³therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. ⁶They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. ⁸But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. ⁹And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted. ¹³But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them.

How our attitude as the stewards of God should be:

Romans 12:9-21: (NRSV) ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty,



but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



Notable and Quotable:

"Do not repeat anything you will not sign your name to."
~Author Unknown

"Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." ~Will Rogers

"I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to."
~Author Unknown

"The reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour."
~Japanese Proverb