

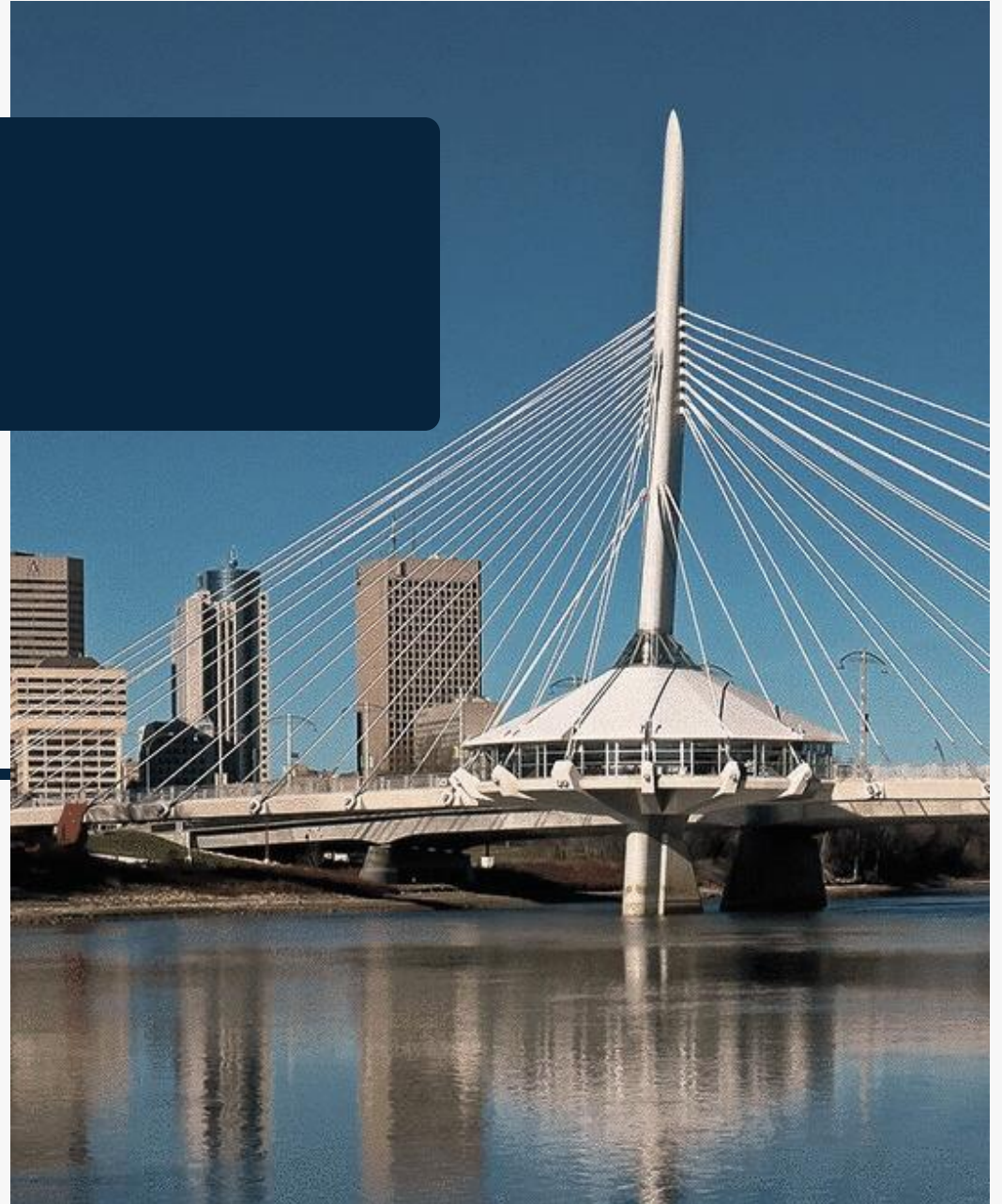
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*The Gospel of Luke: 1st Century Insights for 21st  
Century Business Leaders*

**ELO** Network



# Brief overview of presentation

- 1) Why focus on Luke?
- 2) 3 “keys” to unlock “Luke on management” from a 1<sup>st</sup> century perspective
- 3) Interpret the “Parable of Ten Pounds/Talents” via a 1<sup>st</sup> century lens
- 4) Connect lessons from parable to contemporary research
- 5) Q&A – fosters discussion/deeper understanding/multiple views

*“Is using money to make money (e.g., grow economy) different from using it to optimize holistic well-being (e.g., everyone has enough)?”*

# Some background: Why did I focus on *Luke*?

Keywords (NRSV)	Luke	Matt.	Mark	John	All 4
<b>A. Mgmt related words</b>					
- <i>manager/management</i>	<b>7</b>	1	0	0	<b>8</b>
- <i>master (nobleman)</i>	<b>24</b>	21	1	3	<b>49</b>
- <i>owner/to own</i>	<b>9</b>	9	3	2	<b>23</b>
<i>Total number of mentions</i>	<b>40</b>	31	4	5	<b>80</b>
<i>Percentage of all 4 gospels</i>	<b>50%</b>	39%	5%	6%	<b>100%</b>
<b>B. Financial wealth related</b>					
- <i>money</i>	<b>7</b>	8	6	3	<b>24</b>
- <i>wealth</i>	<b>4</b>	2	2	3	<b>12</b>
- <i>rich/es</i>	<b>15</b>	3	2	0	<b>20</b>
- <i>cash (coin, talent, etc)</i>	<b>14</b>	21	4	4	<b>43</b>
- <i>possessions/goods/property</i>	<b>15</b>	6	2	0	<b>23</b>
<i>Total number of mentions</i>	<b>55</b>	40	16	11	<b>122</b>
<i>Percentage of all 4 gospels</i>	<b>45%</b>	33%	3%	9%	<b>100%</b>

# Three “keys” to “unlock” Luke on management

**3 things to know about business, money, & management in first century**

- 1) Business:** When you read “household” (*oikos*) in Luke, think “company” (50x)  
*oikos* = husband+wife+children+slaves+buildings+equipment+**land**  
members of *oikos* eat at same table (*com*=together, *pany*=bread)  
10% of society not in an *oikos* (outcast/marginalized: die in 5-7 years)

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Zero-sum economy (fixed pie; if someone gets richer, others get poorer)

Two approaches to using money (natural vs unnatural *chrematistics*)

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**3) Managers:** *Oikos* slaves/servants (e.g., absentee landlord)

Both the management class (8%) and *oikos*-less class were growing (10%)

(management often facilitated widening gap between rich and poor)

# Parable of the Ten Pounds/Talents (Lk 19: 12-27; Matt 25: 14-30)

## Two preliminary observations

1. The parable is the **only** passage in the New Testament that focuses on **using money to make money**. Thus some business commentators note:

“It is interesting to note that Jesus had a parable set aside for the businessperson, and that parable was about making money. From this parable, I believe we can learn that Jesus wants us to make money.”

“[S]ervants of Jesus must occupy themselves in profitable service during the time of his absence, and that judgment and deprivation await the unprofitable servant.”



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2. The parable has striking similarities to a historical event that Jesus’ listeners would have been familiar with (as recorded by Josephus, a Jewish historian of that time)

“After Herod the Great died, his then 19-year-old son Archelaus (brother to Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee) went to Rome to confirm his kingship of Judea (as specified in his father’s will). Archelaus was followed [to Rome] by a delegation of 50 people protesting his appointment. He received the kingship, and went on to kill about 3,000 Pharisees who opposed his rule.”



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## What the parable says:

Nobleman leaves to seek power  
Gives money (talents) to managers  
and instructs them to make money

## Interpretation in 1<sup>st</sup> century

Rich ruler goes to Rome  
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## Popular interpretation today

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Some people don't like Jesus  
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Noblemen is hated Delegation goes to prevent power	Rich ruler is hated Delegation tries to stop him	Some people don't like Jesus Complain to other leaders
1 <sup>st</sup> manager 10-fold return; 2 <sup>nd</sup> 5-fold Praised and given cities to rule	Exploitive managers em- powered to exploit more	Good & faithful stewards are rewarded with more power

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Slaughter opposition	Oppression of poor	Opposition suffers

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3. Is it responsible (even heroic) to refuse to engage in acquisitive economic behavior?
  - *Should we widen the gap?* Nobleman says: “I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away”.
  - *Or narrow the gap?* Jesus says: “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required” (Luke 12:35–48; see also Zaccheus in preceding passage)

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- 3<sup>rd</sup> manager is “hero” for Early Church leaders: Origen (185–254) & Eusebius (269–333):  
The manager “who hid the talent . . . was accepted with joy,” whereas the managers “who multiplied the gain . . . [were] rebuked”

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- 3) the more they are highly rated as competent by their bosses