



BEWARE • Eternal Perspective

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Luke 12:1-21

Background

The backdrop to this section is Jesus' confrontation with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. As He approaches His death in Jerusalem, Jesus is concerned that His disciples may fall prey to the same type of hypocrisy. Therefore, He urgently warns them to "be on their guard" against two potential traps that have ensnared the Pharisees – hypocrisy and greed.

Luke 12:1-3

This section contains a warning about hypocrisy in general. Hypocrisy is the incongruity between what we are on the inside and how we behave on the outside. Jesus says the foolishness of hypocrisy is that on the great Judgement Day of God, He will reveal the secrets of all men's hearts and all hypocrisy will be fully exposed.

In 1 Peter 4:17-19, Peter describes trials as "mini-judgement days" which God graciously brings into the lives of Christians to expose hidden areas of sin and weakness. Our hearts are easily deceived and often we are not aware of the different levels of deception and hypocrisy that exist within our hearts. That's why God provides trials in order to bring these issues to the surface now, so that on the real Judgement Day we will be fully rewarded as faithful servants.

It is often in the midst of the stress and pressure of a trial that our areas of underdevelopment and sin are "proclaimed from the roof tops." Meaning that they are manifest for all to see. It is at this point that God is able to work on these character issues and grow us to greater maturity as Christians.

Luke 12:4-7 and 11-12

Jesus advances His teaching to focus on a second area of hypocrisy, which is being a Christian, yet not being willing to publicly acknowledge this fact. This is of great concern to Jesus as He is approaching His death, for it is essential that His disciples are willing to give testimony about Christ and their faith in Him. Nothing could potentially hinder the spread of the gospel faster than disciples who are afraid to speak about Christ.

Jesus focuses on the root cause of this hypocrisy, which is a fear of men: what others may do to them or what others may think about them. Obviously, Christians experience this same fear today. In the spiritual battle that Christians are engaged, Satan uses fear to intimidate Christians in order to keep them silent about the good news of the gospel.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus warns His disciples of two dangerous traps that had ensnared the Pharisees – hypocrisy and greed. The study looks at the subtle danger and deception of both of these issues, and how to "be on guard" against them.

What's the Problem?

We tend to seek the approval of men rather than God, and the pleasure of greed rather than generosity.



The solution Jesus offers is two-fold. First, they are to fear God more than they fear men. Christians must always keep in the forefront of their thinking and prayers that they need to live for God's approval alone. This is a key point to emphasize. In Christ, He does approve of us, but we are slow to believe it. When we are living out of a deep experience that God loves us and is pleased by us, what other people think starts to matter a whole lot less. The problem of course is that we don't often believe that. Not really anyway. Drill down deep on this and challenge people to investigate how deeply God's real and enduring affection for them has penetrated to the point that it influences the choices they make.

The second remedy is found in 4:11-12. Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give them words to speak, so they should have no fear about what they are to say. Again, we are a lot more likely to rely on Him if we believe He is there and is for us.

Luke 12:8-10

Jesus also teaches that there is a form of hypocrisy, of which the Pharisees were guilty, that can never be forgiven. This sin is to refuse the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the identity of Jesus Christ as our Savior. The logic is simple. All sins can be forgiven due to Christ's death on the cross, except the sin of rejecting Christ. In this case, there is no provision for sin. The Pharisees were guilty of this hypocrisy, for they claimed to know God, but were rejecting the Son. For this, there was no forgiveness, because they had rejected the only provision for the forgiveness of their sin.

Luke 12:13-21

Apparently, another area of hypocrisy for the Pharisees, was greed. Jesus says to beware of all forms of greed. This probably meant that the Pharisees were greedy for status or position, and not simply money.

In the story, Jesus says that the man was rich even before he had this good crop. The deceitfulness of wealth is that very few people ever consider themselves to be truly rich. Jesus also warns about all forms of greed, meaning there are many ways we can be greedy, even if it is not toward money. Last, wealth can be deceitful in that we can subtly place our trust in it to provide for us, rather than God. This is how wealth can deceive even disciples.

The foolishness of the man lies in the fact that he hoarded his wealth and put his trust and confidence in it to provide for his security. His untimely death demonstrates the foolishness of his misplaced priorities and trust.

As Jesus warned, His disciples must always be on their guard against the insidious trap of hypocrisy, as well as the deceitfulness of all forms of greed.

What's Our Response?

Because there are two major teachings in this study, there are two potential areas for application.

The first is hypocrisy. It is important for the group to consider where God is working in their lives to bring about greater integrity between what they believe and how they live. Help your group chose to believe and rely upon the love and power of God.

Second is the issue of greed. The last question of the study focuses on the application point for this topic and asks them to consider what they should personally apply from the parable. It is important for the group to consider how they might be more generous with the wealth that God has entrusted to them.

What Are the Questions?

Luke 12:1-21

LAUNCH

Have you ever warned someone who was unaware of some dangerous situation they were about to face? What happened?

EXPLORE

1. There are two main issues here: One in vv. 1-12, and a second in vv. 13-21. Luke quotes Jesus using the same phrase to set up each and alert us to the topic. What's the phrase Jesus repeats and what are the two topics He is teaching on?
 2. What is hypocrisy? Why does Jesus say that it is ultimately futile?
 3. When will God disclose the secrets of our hearts?
 4. The Scripture refers to trials as "mini-judgement days" (1 Peter 4:17-19) that God graciously provides for believers to expose their hidden areas of underdevelopment and sin. Why does God do this?
 5. Describe a time when the stress of a trial "proclaimed from the roof tops" a hidden area of your weakness and sin?
 6. Read 12:4-7 and 11-12. What form of hypocrisy is Jesus concerned about here?
 7. What causes us to be hypocritical in this area?
 8. What does Jesus teach to counterbalance these pressures? How should this make a difference in our witness for Christ?
 9. Read 12:8-10. Jesus mentions here one form of hypocrisy which the Pharisees were guilty of that can never be forgiven. What is it? Why can't it be forgiven?
- Be on your guard. Read 12:13-21.**
10. Compared to the rest of the world, how would you assess your wealth in the following areas?
Education; Money; Possessions; Health; Time; Vocation (financial freedom that enables you to choose a career); Freedom (to speak, travel, etc.)
 11. How was this rich man foolish concerning his wealth?
 12. Do you see yourself as truly free to serve Jesus in whatever way He would ask, or do you feel obligations or ensnarements to pursue careers, additional studies, financial security, or even a family? In which of these areas do you feel a sense of obligation?
 13. What lesson can you learn from the rich man and Jesus' warning to "be on your guard?"

APPLY

14. Why do you suppose we find it so hard to believe that God really does approve of us?
15. When has not believing that His good opinion of you is all that matters caused you to try to win approval from the crowd? Did it lead to hypocrisy?
16. In light of this passage, how do you sense God calling you to give from the wealth you possess?
17. The leading character in the parable believed that "life" could be found in accumulating more possessions. If this parable was describing ways you look for life apart from Christ, what would it be about?
18. What makes it hard for you to trust that God will repay your generosity?

What Are the Answers?

1. The signal phrase is “Be on your guard.” The two topics are hypocrisy and greed.
2. Hypocrisy is the incongruity between what we are on the inside and how we behave on the outside.
3. At the Judgement Day.
4. So that we can grow in these areas, and so God can root out hypocrisy from our lives.
5. Allow the group to share how trials have brought up hidden areas of weakness or sin. You might begin by sharing your own experience.
6. Being a Christian, but not being willing to publicly confess this fact.
7. Fear of what others may do to us, or think about us.
8. To fear and reverence God more than man, because He alone is the true judge. Second, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say.
9. It is the sin of rejecting Jesus. See “What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?”
10. Allow the group to discuss.
11. He trusted in his wealth rather than God. He also hoarded his money.
12. It would be good to begin the sharing with the different ways you have felt ensnared to pursue family, career and a comfortable lifestyle.
- 13.-18. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 12:1

Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

Luke 12:15