



BEWARE • ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE



Photograph by Greg Schneider/Worldwide Challenge

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

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 afraid to speak about Christ.

Jesus centers 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,

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

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.

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Satan uses fear to intimidate Christians in order to keep them silent about the good news of the gospel.

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. 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.

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 subtly we can place our trust in it to provide for us, rather than God. This, then, 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.

This study is accompanied by an article. Take the time to read it over before the study. Hand it out to the group at the end of the study and have them read it this week.

WHAT IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

Luke 12:8-10 may be a source of questions. See explanation above.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

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.

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 also important for the group to consider, as it relates to greed, how they might be more giving from the wealth that God has entrusted to them.

MEMORY VERSES

Luke 12:1 "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."
Luke 12:15 "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed."

WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS?

1. Hypocrisy is the incongruity between what we are on the inside, and how we behave on the outside.
2. At the Judgement Day.
3. So that we can grow in these areas, and so God can root out hypocrisy from our lives.
4. Allow the group to share how trials have brought up hidden areas of weakness or sin. You might begin by sharing your own experience.
5. Being a Christian, but not be willing to publicly confess this fact.
6. Fear of what others may do to us, or think about us.
7. 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.
8. It is the sin of rejecting Jesus. See notes above.
9. Give the group time to fill in their answers.
10. He trusted in his wealth rather than God. He also hoarded his money.
11. Allow the group to share the ways they have sought to give.
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. Allow the group time to process the personal application.