

The Discipler's Commentary

Answer Outline for the Discipler

Luke 12

12:1-12 – Jesus' warning to His followers concerning the hypocrisy of the spiritual leaders

- *The teaching outline for this chapter provides many opportunities for open discussion and application. For example, some in the group—men, particularly—may not be aware of what leaven is and its importance in baking. This, as well as the term hypocrisy, may require explanation for the disciples to see the relevance.*
- *The warning Jesus gives here involves spiritual leaders. There may be many opportunities for discussion on the hypocrisy of present-day spiritual leaders, such as TV evangelists who are always asking for money when it is obvious they live affluent lifestyles, or pastors who teach such things as the Prosperity Gospel, or even spiritual leaders who teach one thing but do another. The discipler may need to have at his or her disposal some examples from the news.*
- *Verses 4-7 may prove fertile discussion for the subject of fearing God versus fearing man. These verses also serve as an opportunity for showing how much God cares for His people.*
- *Verses 8-12 provide opportunities for the discipler to bring up the subject of Christian persecution. All kinds of scenarios may be created here along the theme of “What would you do if...?”*
- *Take time to explain verse 10. Some disciples may have already heard the term “unpardonable sin.” This will require explanation from the commentary. Ensure that a true disciple cannot commit the unpardonable sin.*

12:13-21 – Jesus' warning about greed

- *This section of Jesus' teaching will certainly open the door for lively discussion. For example, ask, “What is the difference between a need and a want?” The discipler may want to pose some practical illustrations, such as the type of car one chooses to drive, or the size of one's house, or the way one spends his or her discretionary funds. In the discussion, do not fail to raise the issue of the poor, the needy, and those who are experiencing temporary hardship. This is always a good question to ask: “How easy is it for you to loan money to someone?”*
- *Create discussion on the man who is upset because his brother won't give him what is legally his; that is, his inheritance. Why does Jesus call out the man for his greed, when what he sought after was legitimately his?*
- *The main point of this section focuses on the subject of greed. No one ever believes he or she participates in greed; that's something other people do. The discipler may need to be careful regarding specifics here. It would be better to let the disciples themselves discern what in greed. In America, the typical Christian will probably think in terms of the greed associated with Wall Street, politicians, or banks. However, the discipler will want to carefully explain that greed can occur at any level of society, and greed basically means seeking after or acquiring more than one needs. The discipler will want to emphasize the phrase “...every form of greed.”*
- *Ask the disciple to repeat back the parable Jesus gives in His explanation of greed. Bring up the “Saving for a rainy day” scenario. Is there anything wrong with that?*
- *The discipler will certainly want to bring the entire discussion back to the subject of love. How is the disciple to respond to those in need, and what has that to do with greed, particularly in the decisions over what is a want and what is a need.*

12:22-34 – The secret to living successfully without worry or fear

- *Have the disciple or disciples give a definition of worry. Ask, “Why does the disciple of Jesus Christ never need to worry about basic needs, or live in fear?” “What differentiates the disciple of Christ from a person of the world?”*
- *Ask, “Why would fear and worry cause someone to move out of being satisfied with basic needs, and move into a lifestyle characterized by greed?”*
- *Inevitably, someone in the group will raise the question about those Christians who have starved to death during times of war, or those who have lost everything. (Examples would include Christians sent to Nazi detention camps during WWII, or Syrian Christian refugees scattered by ISIS.) So, what’s the answer? The best explanation is that Jesus’ statements are emphasizing the need for His followers to live with a mentality free of worry and fear. That’s the way the world lives. However, these statements apply to everyday affairs, not times of crisis. They are at best probabilities, not black-and-white promises that always hold true under all circumstances. The emphasis of Jesus’ teaching here must not fall on the promise that God will always provide all needs under all circumstances. The issue here is (1) trusting God in spite of the external circumstances, (2) seeking the kingdom of God first, and (3) not letting one’s life be ruled by worry and fear. God may have an overriding purpose or plan that superimposes itself over any given situation, and martyrdom is one of those circumstances*
- *Verses 33 and 34 will also present an opportunity for lively discussion. The phrase “Sell your possessions” will be a stumbling block for some disciples. Emphasize that Jesus is telling His disciples to get rid of anything that may be holding them back from investing fully in the kingdom of God. The disciple will want to do some research on this. There are plenty of examples where men and women have given up all their possessions to enter the mission field or dedicate themselves to the Lord’s work. Those individuals will always say, “It is the best thing I’ve ever done.”*

12:35-48 – Jesus’ lesson on readiness

- *The simple question for the disciple here is, “What does it mean to be ready?” followed by, “How are you preparing yourself to be ready?”*
- *Make sure that the disciple is steered away from the “doomsday prepper” scenario, and to the direction of living a lifestyle consistent with loving one’s neighbor as oneself. This discussion may also lead to the subject of overcoming sinful habits in one’s life.*
- *Also ensure that the certainty of Jesus’ return is not something to live in fear of, but is the great hope all Christians should be waiting for.*
- *Make sure the disciple picks up on the word “possessions” in verse 44. The teaching here is that earthly possessions with no eternal value are replaced by heavenly possessions that have no expiration date. (A nice cross-reference verse is Ephesians 1:3.)*

12:49-59 – The consequences for not being ready

- *Ensure that the disciple understands that this section of Scripture is referring to what is called the “church age.” That is, the time between Christ’s ascension and His second coming. Jesus’ disciples were expecting Him to bring peace to the earth. Instead, there will be great distress for His followers. Jesus is warning His disciples (and us!) that this will be a time of opposition and persecution. This does not mean that God has lost control. It means that these times of distress are all a part of God’s plan.*
- *This section of chapter 12 should be tied in with the theme of “readiness.”*