

CHAPTER 12

Overview of Luke 12

Chapter 12, while continuing on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus makes numerous stops along the way to teach, as the crowds were growing ever larger. It's possible that many in the crowd thought that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and would, with His power, overcome the Roman occupation and set up the kingdom of God in Israel. Many of the teachings Jesus gives in this chapter are also found in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew's gospel. There are warnings about greed and covetousness, as well as warnings about becoming lackadaisical in one's spiritual life. Jesus also announces that His teachings and the allegiance of His followers will bring division within families. Finally, He admonishes the crowds for not comprehending the signs He is giving them concerning who He is...the long-awaited Messiah.

What to look for in Luke 12

1. As you read each paragraph ask, "How is God speaking to me personally through His word?"
2. Look for the similarities between the teachings found in chapter 12 and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.
3. Look for what is called the "unpardonable sin."
4. Look for "warnings of expectation"; that is, warnings about making assumptions about one's life and making assumptions about the coming of the Son of Man.
5. Check out the warnings about "treasures" and where one's true values are.
6. Take into account the statements Jesus makes about whether or not He will bring peace to the earth.
7. Observe the warnings about having a lazy spiritual attitude.

1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

3 "Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

12:1-3 "Under these circumstances" refers back to Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees and scribes at the end of the previous chapter. Jesus focuses on the Pharisees because they had the most interaction with the people.

"...After so many thousands of people had gathered together..." brings to mind a mob scene. This kind of gathering was dangerous for the Jews, as the Romans might consider it a rebellious mob and therefore take aggressive action.

Jesus speaks directly to His disciples and gives them a warning concerning the mindset of the Pharisees. The "leaven of the Pharisees" is a comment on their self-righteous attitude based on the law—it is puffed up. Even though the Pharisees "cover up" or excuse personal sin by making laws, rules and traditions that exclude them (e.g., divorce), their sins and hypocrisy will one day be exposed by God Himself. Therefore, their attitude is hypocritical because they assume they are righteous, act as if they are righteous, and put on a righteous show before people (e.g., loving the "chief seats"). From Jesus' perspective, however, they are not at all righteous. Why? Because of the way they treat others. Their

demonstrations of righteousness are nullified by their behavior toward others, all in the name of the Law of Moses.

The word “hypocrisy” comes from a Greek word meaning “play-acting.” It was the term used for actors on a stage. On the stage, they are one character, but off the stage, they are another—themselves—which is who they *really* are, their true selves. The Pharisees and scribes are like the actors; who they are in private is different from who they are in public, and their private lives are characterized by spiritual darkness.

Jesus’ teaching here, however, is not directed toward the Pharisees but toward the disciples (v. 3). The warning is clear: do not be like them. The implication is that the Pharisees show one side of behaviors to the people (outwardly righteous) but behind closed doors, in their secret meetings and councils (“in the dark”), they show another side— inwardly, they are unrighteous. The people may not be aware of the private side, but God knows, and He will judge the spiritual leaders for their unrighteous thoughts, conversations and deeds. Jesus warns His disciples not to be two-faced like the Pharisees and scribes. Just as God will someday reveal the secrets and words of the Pharisees, He will one day expose *everyone’s* actions and words, including the disciples’.

4 “I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

5 “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

12:4-7 Verse 4 begins a series of teachings that parallel the body of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Many of the same sayings are presented here, yet others are unique to Luke, such as verses 4-6.

This is the first instance in Luke in which Jesus calls the disciples “My friends.” This is an incredible act of love on Jesus’ part toward His disciples, and it is not lost on them. This address made a particular impression on the apostle John who later wrote about it in his gospel (15:15). The lesson that Jesus is giving His disciples is to not fear the Pharisees. The Pharisees had the religious authority to pronounce judgments of blasphemy upon individuals who they felt were in violation of the Law of Moses, thus presumably precluding Abrahamic blessings resulting in expulsion from the temple and synagogue. No doubt the disciples were wondering about the consequences of their association with Jesus from the Pharisees’ point of view. Jesus puts their fears to rest by refocusing their attention on the One who holds the power of eternal destiny. In the big picture, death is not the issue; eternity is the issue, and the Pharisees have no power over eternal destination.

The reference to sparrows is loaded with meaning. First of all, sparrows were cheap and

8 “And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;

9 but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

10 “And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.

11 “When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say;

12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

represented the very lowest of sacrificial offerings. They were sold to worshippers at the temple for the equivalent of two cents. They were what very poor people offered. Yet, God is completely accepting of those offerings. Jesus is actually telling His disciples that they are like sparrows, not worth much in the world, yet completely accepted by God. From the world’s point of view, as well as the Pharisees’, the disciples are not worth very much, yet their sacrifices will not be forgotten by God. In fact, their sacrifices will be worth far more to God than the sparrows.

(There is actually a humorous note here. Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, states that two sparrows could be purchased for one cent. Here, Luke states that you could buy *five* sparrows for two cents. Such a deal!)

12:8-12 This next teaching is an expansion of the fear the disciples’ might be experiencing in terms of the religious leaders. A day will come when the disciples will be tested regarding their association with Jesus. In fact, Jesus is preparing His disciples for that time in the future when He will no longer be present. He is preparing them for the church.

Here, Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of Man.” This is not the first occasion He has referred to Himself in that manner (chapters 7 & 9). Taking the title “Son of Man” was a direct reference to Daniel 7:13-14 and had Messianic overtones. The title “Son of Man” emphasizes the fact that Jesus was human, yet clothed with deity. At this point, Jesus has not called Himself the Son of God, but His acts speak volumes toward His identity. Jesus is therefore asserting His authority over the disciples’ eternal destiny. A true disciple will never deny Jesus.

Verse 10 has perhaps caused more unjustified fear in Christians than any other verse in Scripture. It need not be so. Jesus’ teaching is this: it is one thing to have difficulty accepting Jesus as the Messiah, but it is quite another to attribute to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit. This, of course, actually happened in the previous chapter, where Jesus’ messianic miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit were attributed to Beelzebul, the prince of demons. What verse 10 means is that if someone rejects Jesus in spite of clear evidence by the Holy Spirit, there is simply nothing God can do to save that person; they will never believe and be saved. Therefore, this verse has no application to Christians who accept Jesus and attribute His miracles to the power of the Holy Spirit. True Christians, therefore, cannot commit the so-called “unpardonable sin.” (Note: the term “unpardonable sin” (or “unforgiveable sin”) is not found in Scripture; it is a theological term developed some while ago to summarize the intent of verse 10.)

But Jesus' statement in verse 10 actually goes a step further and looks ahead to the future. Many will reject Jesus during His earthly ministry, but after His resurrection and ascension, when the power of the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles, some who rejected Jesus during His earthly ministry may in fact end up accepting Him as the Messiah. We know that this, in fact, happened; some Pharisees became Christians in the early church (Acts 15:5). And, the apostle Paul himself was a Pharisee. So it is a true statement that even some who rejected the Son of Man will be forgiven. However, when the early church begins in Acts, the apostles have *only* the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is the Holy Spirit who is performing miracles through the apostles, and if someone rejects their testimony and the signs and wonders of a true apostle, they are rejecting the Holy Spirit. There is therefore nothing God can do for that person...their sins cannot be forgiven.

Verse 11 puts the teaching of verses 8-10 into practical situations. The disciples will indeed be brought before the religious rulers. There, the disciples will have the opportunity to confess Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of Man, before "men." Their testimony, however, will be rejected by the rulers and authorities. The apostles have nothing to fear, for God is the ruler of the apostles' eternal destiny. And, as far as their defense, it will be the Holy Spirit who will be speaking through them.

13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?"

15 Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive.

17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'

18 "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to

12:13-21 In these verses, the subject changes dramatically from standing before religious authorities to the subject of greed and love of material possessions. Even though there is a change of subject matter, Jesus is continuing to prepare His disciples for the time when they will be ministering on their own.

It is interesting that Jesus calls the man's inheritance a form of greed. The plaintiff in his case seems to have a justifiable case—he is only asking for his fair share of the inheritance, yet Jesus calls this greed. Why? Simply because the man sees Jesus as a means to a material end, rather than someone who can save him from his sins. The issue here is one of misplaced love. The man loves things more than he loves the kingdom of God. Possessions and money are more important to him than becoming a follower of Jesus. That is why the apostle Paul will later call greed a form of idolatry (Col. 3:5); the man is worshipping possessions instead of Jesus.

The last part of verse 15 could easily become a proverb: "Not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." This is a warning that a person's identity should never be based on material possessions, or any possessions for that matter. A person's life is worth far more than

come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.”’

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

22 And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.

23 “For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

25 “And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?

26 “If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

27 “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

28 “But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!

possessions. A person’s life and identity should be based on good works and loving relationships, not things. What will be taken into eternity, and what a person will be judged by, will not be based on his or her possessions, trophies, achievements, awards, prestige, or notoriety. In eternity, *we* will be judged on our good works based on love.

Verses 16-21 provide an illustration in the form of a parable. This tragic story concerns someone who relies on material possessions to make him happy. What should the man have done with his abundance? Instead of storing up more for himself, he should have looked around him and determined if there were those in need; i.e., the poor. This would have been how he could have expressed love. It was God’s love for the man that allowed him to have an abundance. It should have been love for others that motivated him to share his abundance. The man only needed enough; he chose to have more and more, and he chose poorly. On the night his soul was required of him, it was too late.

Therefore, the lesson here is that greed represents a severe lack of love because greed is always exercised at the expense of others. Being “rich toward God” simply means giving to others as God had given to him.

12:22-32 The next section of teaching focuses on two basic needs: food and clothing. Some might consider the man in the parable above a prudent saver for a rainy day. But Jesus counters that argument by saying that saving enough for a rainy day can easily become storing up for a hurricane! When does one ever know when he has enough? Jesus answers that question by zeroing in on the motive behind storing up beyond what is needful: worry. Essentially Jesus is saying, “Stop worrying about it!” The lesson is clear: God knows full well what His children need and therefore will provide the needful things, such as basic food and clothing.

Now, to be realistic, how much is really needful as opposed to what is wanted? This is a difficult question to answer on a practical basis, as needs vary with circumstances. Nevertheless, what Jesus is teaching is clear and plain: God will provide for needs. Our task as followers of Jesus is to determine what is a need from what is a want. Yet, Jesus helps us with that decision. What is needful is food, clothing, and the apostle Paul will later add, shelter (“covering”; 1 Tim. 6:8).

Lastly, Jesus focuses in on the emotion behind worry: it is fear. Therefore He says, “Do not be afraid....” Again, Jesus is preparing His disciples for the time when they will be on their own. They will be persecuted, beaten, thrown in prison, and even killed.

29 “And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

30 “For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 “But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

33 “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

34 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Most will lose all of their possessions. They are not to worry—God is in control.

The point of Jesus’ teaching in this section is that the world lives in a state of fear and worry about basic needs, and often worry about things they have no control over. This worry and fear inevitably results in greed; that is, wanting and possessing more than one needs. Jesus’ followers are not to be like that. Disciples of Jesus can live without fear because they have a heavenly Father they can trust.

(The reader may want to refer to the “Answer Outline” section for these verses found at the end of the chapter. This section raises some contingency questions that inevitably arise as to whether or not Jesus’ words are black-and-white promises about provision that are true in every circumstance.)

12:33-34 The word the NASB translates as “charity” is a very specialized word. It is not the same as a tithe. Specifically, it refers to merciful giving to the poor or needy, or to those who have experienced temporary misfortune. The giving may be money or things, or any helpful acts toward the poor based on compassion. The Greek word (*eleemosune*) is used only 11 times in the New Testament, and always has that context (e.g., Matt. 6:4). The NASB most frequently translates the word as “alms.” The OT basis for this kind of giving is Lev. 19:9-10, and Deut. 15:11 states, “For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.’” (This compassionate giving is vividly illustrated in the Book of Ruth when Naomi and Ruth are allowed to glean Boaz’s fields.) “*Charity*” and “*alms*” is the only kind of giving recognized in the New Testament outside the gospels; tithing as such is never commanded.)

There is no getting around the instruction by Jesus to “Sell your possessions and give to charity....” Quite simply put, followers of Jesus should hold loosely onto things that do not fall into the category of basic needs. That may be a hard pill to swallow in capitalistic America, but to rationalize away any other interpretation is not in keeping with good biblical hermeneutics (the interpretation of Scripture). Whereas every reader may agree with the instruction, it is up to each individual to determine what is a possession that fits into the category of need, and what is a possession that is merely a want. As alluded to earlier, this is a difficult determination for those who live in an affluent society. For those with many possessions, the practical solution is quite simple: be a very, very, very generous giver to the things of the kingdom of God and to those who are in need. Simply said, the more one gives, the more

35 “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit.

36 “Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.

37 “Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.

38 “Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

40 “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

others are blessed, and the more others are blessed by your giving, the more you are “rich toward God.”

Unfortunately, there is a caveat to Jesus’ instruction about alms-giving—without love as the motive, it is meaningless. Paul states very clearly, “And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor...but do not have love, it profits me nothing.” Therefore, selling one’s possessions and giving to “charity” for the sake of earning God’s favor or gaining approval in heaven is an exercise in futility. Behind the giving must be the mercy, the compassion, and the pity that is generated by love.

The overall lesson Jesus is teaching here is this: do not let earthly possessions get in the way of the greater possession that comes from putting one’s complete trust in God for the supply of all things needful. And do not let the fear of losing possessions hold one back from giving generously to those in need. Therefore, the real issue in this passage is not possessions, but the heart; what a person treasures most is the great revealer of the heart, and what a person ought to treasure most is the manifestation of love for others.

12:35-40 The subject turns here to the second coming of Christ; that is, Jesus’ return. The key word in this passage is “readiness.”

The theme of readiness is actually not a complete change in subject. The parable of the rich man (12:16-21) was a parable about readiness, for one rarely knows when he or she will stand before God and give an account of their deeds. The time wasted worrying about basic needs or protecting oneself for fear of loss often takes away from focusing on eternal matters and matters that are of concern to God (12:22-32). It is imminently more important that one be concerned about eternal needs than earthly needs, and live a life that is consistent with that concern. The command to rid oneself of possessions (12:33-34) is a warning to not let possessions or the pursuit of possessions interfere with becoming the kind of disciple who is always ready to meet the Master when He returns.

Being ready implies consistently, persistently and presently living a lifestyle that is compatible with the kingdom of heaven. So, what is that lifestyle? Is it a lifestyle that sits around speculating on *when* the Son of Man will return? The answer is embedded throughout the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament—“Love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, the lifestyle and readiness that Jesus is referring to is one in which His followers are living in a biblical love relationship with all others. That includes good works, living at peace with others, loving your enemies, forgiving all others, offering grace, having compassion for the poor and sick,

41 Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?”

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?”

43 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

44 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

45 “But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,

48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

taking care of those in need, and thousands of other examples throughout the Bible. All readiness revolves around loving one another and attending to those in need—“charity” as instructed in verse 33.

Therefore, the disciple is “ready” for Jesus’ return when he or she is living a lifestyle that is consistent with loving one another and loving one’s neighbor as oneself, and all the deeds, actions and behaviors that the command includes.

12:41-48 Peter’s question in verse 41 is a question any follower of Jesus should ask—“Are You talking about *me*? Does the command to ‘be ready’ apply to *me*?”

The motive behind Peter’s question as to readiness is obscure. It is obvious that Peter did not have Jesus’ second coming in mind, for he had yet to experience the resurrection and ascension. Most likely, based on other statements in the gospels, Peter believes the disciples are an exclusive group. He has no idea of the reference point of this parable, and therefore is speculating on a near future event when Jesus will reveal Himself as the Messiah and establish His kingdom on the earth. When that happens, Peter believes, Jesus’ disciples will be especially rewarded and placed in positions of prestige. Peter has yet to realize the fact of one Messiah, two comings.

Therefore, Peter’s question most likely arises from Jesus’ use of the word “slaves” in verse 37. The word translated “slave” is *doulos* in the Greek; that is, a bond-servant. The last thing on Peter’s mind is that the disciples would be referred to as bond-servants. That assumption will be erased at the Last Supper when Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

Peter is unable to see the future church that God will raise up after Jesus’ ascension. So the meaning of the teaching is this: the “possessions” of the master is the church. The “sensible steward” refers to the apostles and prophets, and Peter in particular, who will establish the church and serve as its foundation (Eph. 2:20). The “rations” are the word of God; that is, the Scriptures.

Therefore, the apostles and the prophets are to prepare the church to be “ready” when the Son of Man comes in glory, and they are to do this by giving the church the word of God. After the resurrection, Jesus will teach the disciples the meaning of this parable.

Also, do not miss the irony of the word “possessions” in verse 44. The teaching here is that earthly possessions with no eternal value are replaced by heavenly possessions that are eternal.

Verses 46 & 47 provide the consequences for those who hear the word of God and do not adopt a lifestyle consistent with it; that is, a lifestyle that does

49 “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!

50 “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

51 “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

53 “They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

54 And He was also saying to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out.

not reflect readiness. They will be assigned “a place with the unbelievers.”

The apostle Paul reiterates the teaching in **verse 48** concerning “entrusting”: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

12:49-53 This next dramatic change in subject almost appears as an exasperation on the part of Jesus. In this verse, fire probably does not represent the Holy Spirit, but judgment. Fire destroys things, and in this case, ironically, the destruction will be relationships. The baptism refers to Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion.

This passage is one of those rare instances in the New Testament where, at first glance, love appears to be put on the back burner. Isn’t the destruction of relationships and the division among family members a very *unloving* consequence of following Jesus? Doesn’t this passage seem contradictory to Jesus’ teachings on love?

Actually, there are two important lessons on love in this section of Scripture. First, *truth must always trump love*. The truth about Jesus, who He is and what He brings, is the ultimate expression of love; the love of God for a lost world, the love of God to give His beloved Son as a sacrifice for mankind’s sin, and the love of Christ to be willing to suffer and die on behalf of sinners. There is no greater expression of love than the love that is experienced and expressed through Jesus Christ. And it is this love that the followers of Jesus desire to share with the world. Some will accept the love that is offered, others will reject it, and that rejection may include family members.

Second, therefore, families will be divided because of the unloving reactions of those who do not accept Jesus. In Jewish communities particularly, for a Jew to become a Christian often results in ostracism and persecution. Jesus is preparing his disciples for what will happen to many Jewish families when one of their members decides to become a follower of Jesus the Messiah.

Yet, the most loving thing a person can do is to share with others, including family, what Christ’s love has done for them, and offer through that love the truth about Jesus.

12:54-56 Here, Jesus is expressing His frustration over those who witness His power but deny His person. Notice, this admonition is to the crowds, not to the disciples. The contrast is vivid: the average person can tell when it’s about to rain, but cannot tell when the Messiah is in their midst. Such is the nature of spiritual truth. And in this case particularly, the

55 “And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way.

56 “You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

57 “And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?

58 “For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.

59 “I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”

people cannot see that it is not glory, peace and prosperity that is coming, but fire, division and judgment. The crowds have had plenty of warning through the ministry of John the Baptist. Therefore, they are without excuse.

12:57-59 The analogy here is that God is the judge and Jesus is the “opponent.” The crowds need to “settle” with the opponent (cf. v. 51) so as not to be found guilty before the ultimate magistrate, God.

A closing word about God’s judgment and God’s love would be appropriate here. God’s judgment comes only after His offer of love has been rejected. Judgment is the logical consequence of one’s choices, not a failure to love on God’s part.

An analogy would be one involving gravity. Gravity is a force...it just is. If a person is on a tall building standing on a ledge, God’s love says, “Don’t jump. Live!” But if that person jumps on his “own initiative,” God will continue to love him all the way down, but nevertheless, he will hit the ground at terminal velocity. There is not an absence of love on God’s part; there is a choice of rejecting God’s love on the jumper’s part.

Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 12, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in terms of acting upon it?
2. What do you think is the meaning behind Jesus' statements in verses 1-3? Can you remember anything you did or said today that was "covered" up, "said in the dark," or "whispered?"
3. Think about the things you fear the most: loss of financial security, popularity or esteem with others, being rejected, failing, even persecution? How do you tend to deal with those fears? Are those fears legitimate for the true follower of Jesus Christ? Where would you put yourself in the "be anxious for nothing" file?
4. Why was Jesus reluctant to settle the dispute for the man who was being treated unfairly by his brother about their inheritance? What does that tell you about Jesus' concerns and the priorities He wants His followers to have? Have you ever been involved in a lawsuit? If so, who initiated the lawsuit and what was the issue? Did you handle it according to Jesus' teaching? How about failure to receive a raise that was earned, or having to pay taxes?
5. How does the parable of the rich man with productive land relate to the above teaching? Who made the land productive, the man or God? What do you think the man should have done with his surplus?
6. How do you interpret and how do you apply to yourself Jesus' instruction in verse 33?
7. There is a relationship between Jesus' teaching on readiness (verses 35-48) and the parable about the rich landowner. Can you figure out what that relationship is? How would you measure your own state of readiness?

The Discipler's Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 12

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

12:13-21 – Jesus' warning about _____

12:22-34 – The secret to living successfully without _____

12:35-48 – Jesus' lesson on _____

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

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.”*