

# Fear not



A ST. JOHN'S BIBLE STUDY ON LUKE 12



## INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 12

### FEAR NOT!

Welcome to the Gospel of Luke! This series is a ten-week exploration of Jesus' teaching in Luke 12. A helpful starting point for understanding it comes from earlier in the gospel, in Luke 4. As Jesus begins his ministry, he proclaims these words from Isaiah 61:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me  
To proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

Here in Luke 12, Jesus is teaching us so that we, in our spiritual poverty, would know where true treasure is. He is teaching us so that we, in our spiritual captivity, can be liberated for lives of bold and joyful witness. He is teaching us so that we, in our spiritual blindness, would learn to see the world rightly and, as a consequence, would live wisely for the kingdom of God. In Christ, we learn that God loves us, favours us, and longs to release us from our captivity. Jesus puts it this way in Luke 12:32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We hope you will be blessed as you learn from Jesus in Luke 12!

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## THE BROAD STRUCTURE OF LUKE

The book of Luke is difficult to structure tidily. Almost inevitably, the structure overlooks significant details, and there's no substitute for simply reading the book yourself. With that said, here is an outline which tracks with the big movements of the story:

Prologue and Birth of Jesus (1:1-2:52)

Preparation for Ministry (3:1-4:13)

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (4:14-9:50)

The Road to Jerusalem (9:51-19:48)

Conflict in Jerusalem (20:1-21:38)

The Passion (22:1-23:56)

Jesus Exalted: His Resurrection and Ascension (24:1-53)

### HOW DOES LUKE 12 FIT INTO THE BOOK?

A few connections to Jesus' broader ministry were noted above, but it will also be helpful to situate the chapter within the context of the larger story Luke is telling. At the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (chs.4-9), we read "When the days drew near for him [Jesus] to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). Jerusalem would be the place where his ministry to "seek and save the lost" culminates in his death and resurrection, demonstrating once for all that he is God's anointed deliverer. In light of that impending reality he is both preparing his disciples to follow him in his ministry after he has left the earth, and warning everyone present that the judgement of God is coming.

In Luke 11, as the religious elite cast doubt on Jesus' ministry, and also on the power which is at work in his words and deeds, Jesus offers a scathing critique. In response to their growing opposition to his kingdom he begins to teach his followers in Luke 12 how to resist this perspective, and how to see things rightly and live for God's kingdom, even in the face of tremendous difficulty. The key, or the purpose to the whole block of teaching, comes at its conclusion, in Luke 13:1-9, where Jesus warns that, like a useless fruit tree, anyone who does not repent and bear fruit will be cut down. Repentance is the key to the kingdom, and this is a message that everyone needs to hear.

Stern and uncompromising as this might seem, it is important to remember that this is the just and loving response of a perfect and holy God, a God who delights to give us his kingdom and who sends his Spirit as we learn how to live between Jesus' first and second coming. As we struggle in this in-between time, living in the fear of the Lord, serving as faithful stewards of the message and mission he has entrusted to us, Jesus wants us to be prepared, so that we can partake of every good blessing that God longs to give us. Fear not!



# Fear not

## **STUDY ONE - LUKE 11:53-12:3**

Today's passage is the beginning of a new block of teaching which Jesus gives from 12:1-13:9. He is on the road towards Jerusalem (9:51), where his ministry to "seek and save the lost" will culminate in his death and resurrection, demonstrating once for all that he is God's chosen messiah. In light of that impending reality, he is both preparing his disciples to follow him in his ministry after he has left the earth, and warning everyone present that the judgement of God is coming.

The passage opens with a distinctly ominous note as we learn that the religious leaders are taking a position of active opposition towards Jesus, and this reaction to him serves as the occasion for his teaching about the nature of his kingdom, and the nature of our time on earth as we live for that kingdom. From the heavenly perspective, "nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be made known" (12:2). As persecution by people like the Pharisees looms, Jesus admonishes his disciples to see things from his perspective, setting the stage for the rest of his teaching in the chapter.

## PASSAGE

11:53 As he went away from there,  
the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard  
and to provoke him to speak about many things,  
54 lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

12:1 In the meantime,  
when so many thousands of the people had gathered together  
that they were trampling one another,  
he began to say to his disciples first,  
“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed,  
or hidden that will not be known.

3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light,  
and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 12.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- Why do you think Luke mentions that the crowds were so large they began trampling one another?
- How many potential audiences are there as Jesus begins teaching? Who is he speaking to first?
- What do you notice about the verb tenses (past, present, future) in the passage?

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## STUDY NOTES

**11:53 “...and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak...”** The Greek word here for “press him hard” describes an attitude of ill-will and hostility, while the Greek word for “provoke him to speak” has a similar meaning to “interrogate.” A more colloquial translation could be “and the Pharisees started to really get in Jesus’ face and pester him with questions.”

**11:54 “...lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.”** In the Gospel of Luke, this is not the first time that we see the Pharisees in opposition to Jesus (e.g. 6:11), but there has been an ominous hardening of their hearts in response to what Jesus taught them in 11:37-52. Jesus himself predicts their response in 9:22, and his superiority as the teacher of God’s way and bringer of God’s kingdom is a constant source of conflict (e.g. 14:1-6).

**12:1 “In the meantime...”** Within the larger story in Luke, we are on the road towards Jerusalem. This journey began in 9:51, and will reach its destination in 19:28 with the Triumphal Entry. With our passage today we are also entering a new section of Luke, from 12:1-13:9, where Jesus’ teaching has a very pronounced focus on the age to come. “In the meantime...” places our attention on a particular moment within the larger movement of Jesus’ ministry and teaching. The previous section in 11:1-54 focused on differing responses to Jesus and his kingdom, and the following section 13:10-17:10 will focus on how to participate in this kingdom which Jesus is bringing.

**12:1 “Beware the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”** This particular warning is also found in Matthew 16:6 and Mark 8:15. Though the context is slightly different there, his teaching on all three occasions is in direct response to their hardness of heart. Leaven, or wild yeast, is an appropriate metaphor for the attitudes of the Pharisees’ hearts: it is a small organism, invisible to the naked eye, which gets everywhere, and can have a profound effect.

**12:1 “He began to say to his disciples first...”** Though Jesus is concerned about many, he often focuses his teaching on those closest to him. The scene here is quite interesting: Jesus’ ministry is attracting so much attention that people are stepping over each other. But, in the midst of the hurly-burly, he takes time to instruct his closest friends first. Pay attention to the shifting audience throughout Luke 12.

**12:2 “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed...”** There are several possible layers to this promise from Jesus in Luke: (1) the hidden things of the heart always come out in behaviour; (2) our true allegiances come out during persecution; (3) in the age to come, everything will come to light and all will be judged; (4) the kingdom is already here, even though you can’t see it.



*Fear not*

## **STUDY TWO - LUKE 12:4-7**

Fear can be a powerful motivator. It is often used to push people away from both real and imagined dangers. "You should fear breaking the law, fear what other people think of you, fear the unknown," etc. We can never truly live without any fear: it is a protective mechanism given by God. Here in vv.4-7 Jesus addresses his disciples and gives them a stern warning. However, Jesus does not tell us not to fear, but rather to make sure the things we fear are the right ones.

## **PASSAGE**

4 "I tell you, my friends,

do not fear those who kill the body,

and after that have nothing more that they can do.

5 But I will warn you whom to fear:

fear him 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 pennies?

And not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 15.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What word does Jesus use to refer to his disciples? Why do you think he uses this word here?
- What are some comparisons that stand out to you from these verses? What are they highlighting?

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## STUDY NOTES

**12:4 “...I tell you, my friends,...”** While the language of friendship is not uncommon in Luke’s writing, this is the only use of this word by Jesus when addressing his followers. This particular use seems to escalate their relationship together. There is an ancient Greek idiom that “among friends all things are common.” Some of the things which Jesus and his friends share in this chapter are: enemies, persecution at the hands of those who spurn God’s purposes for their own, knowledge of God’s kingdom, God’s favour.

**12:5 “...has authority to cast into hell...”** The word ‘hell’ here in the Greek is *Ge-enna* which is a word with a complex history in the Bible. In the Old Testament the valley of Hinnom (Josh 15:8, 18:16) was the site where children were sacrificed by wicked and idolatrous kings (2 Kgs 16:3, 21:6) and was declared wholly unclean by King Josiah and converted into an incinerator trash heap. Over time the site became associated with fiery, eschatological punishment particularly in the prophets (Isa 30:33, 66:24; Jer 7:31-32; Rev 14:7-13). By using this phrase, Jesus has opened the conversation about faithfulness in the midst of trials to its huge cosmic consequences.

**12:6 “...Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?...”** In Jesus’ day, sparrows were considered a very common (and thus, from a human perspective) insignificant bird. A penny was roughly one-sixteenth of a denarius, which was about an average laborer’s daily wage. So five whole birds for this amount is truly a pittance. The point here is that, while a small bird can be bought and sold, or while a human can suffer persecution, neither is ever out of God’s sight or care.



*Fear not*

### **STUDY THREE - LUKE 12:8-12**

In this passage Jesus continues to call his disciples to fearless confession of his name. In the previous section, Jesus gave encouragement to his disciples by reminding them of their worth in God's eyes, and admonishing them to continue to walk faithfully in Christ, unafraid of those who have power to kill the body but not the soul. Jesus now gives a series of promises and warnings about persecution before finishing with the assurance that we are guided by the Holy Spirit in times of trouble.

## PASSAGE

8 “And I tell you,  
everyone who acknowledges me before men,  
the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,  
9 but the one 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  
will be forgiven,  
but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit  
will not be forgiven.  
11 And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities,  
do not be anxious  
about how you should defend yourself  
or what you should say,  
12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 28.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
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- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What commands and promises are in this passage?
- Jesus presents a couple of contrasts in the passage. What are they?

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## STUDY NOTES

**12:8-9 “acknowledge...denying”:** Christ is emphasizing that our confession of him before other people will be reflected in the heavenly realm. Thus those who confess Christ are praised by him in heaven even though they are rejected on earth. This is in contrast to the Pharisees who are praised on earth but scorned by Jesus. These words will also become especially pertinent for the early church and any church facing persecution. When brought before a trial, the Christian could either recant his confession or suffer imprisonment, death, etc.. For a similar passage look at Luke 9:23-26.

**12:10 “..speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven... blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”** This saying anticipates what will follow in Luke and Acts. Peter, for example, will deny Jesus three times (22:34, 57, 61) but he will be restored and forgiven when he repents. There has been a great deal of discussion about what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is but, contextually, we can say that, at the very least, it refers to the continual hardening of the heart towards the power of God so evidently present and at work in Christ. For one of the ways in which some of the people are blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, see Luke 11:14-26.

**12:11 “before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities”:** Just as in vv.8 and 9, Jesus is referring to the persecution that will take place after his death. His followers will be brought to trial, and Jesus is reassuring them that the Holy Spirit will take control of what needs to be said in the hour of their trial. The ultimate goal of the Spirit is not to get the accused off the hook, but to convict the hearers of the truth of the gospel. Look at the defenses of Peter and John (Acts 4:5-23), Stephen (Acts 6:15-7:20) and Paul (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-23) for examples of this.



*Fear not*

## **STUDY FOUR - LUKE 12:13-21**

The last two sections of teaching (12:4-7 and 12:8-12) were focused on persecution. Jesus is preparing his disciples for what is to come. He wants them to know what their priorities should be once he is gone: who they should and should not fear. He wants them to know that there is a deeper reality at work in the world, and that “nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”

In today’s passage, Jesus is specifically directing his attention towards the crowds which have gathered around him in order to teach more generally about the nature of the true life which his ministry is establishing. On the surface, a life of wealth and pleasure would seem to be a wise and satisfying path. Jesus, however, wants everyone to see deeper than that, in order that we understand where true treasure is.

## PASSAGE

13 Someone in the crowd said to him,

“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

14 But he said to him,

“Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

15 And he said to them,

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness,  
for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

16 And he told them a parable, saying,

“The land of a rich man produced plentifully,

17 and he thought to himself,

‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’

18 And he said, ‘I will do this:

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 ample goods laid up for many years;  
relax, eat, drink, be merry.”

20 But God said to him,

‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you,  
and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’

21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 36.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What do you think the phrase “rich towards God” (v.21) means?
- In v.14 Jesus first speaks “to him,” and then in vv.15 and 16 speaks “to them.” Who do you think “they” are? (It might be helpful to go back to review the context of 12:1. It’s also worth noting that in 12:22 immediately after this passage, Jesus speaks again “to his disciples.”)
- Pay attention to the pronouns (e.g., I, she, we) in the parable. Who is at the center of the rich man’s thinking?

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## STUDY NOTES

**12:13 “Teacher, tell my brother...”** It was not uncommon within rabbinic Judaism for people to ask respected teachers (rabbis) to weigh in on personal ethical issues, such as the division of an inheritance. Here, the man is specifically asking for arbitration which is the process where a respected third person makes a decision between two people who are in conflict with one another. The speaker, though, seems to be interested primarily in having Jesus take his side, rather than genuinely seeking wisdom in the matter of family wealth, hence Jesus’ rebuke in v.14.

**12:15 “Take care and be on your guard...”** This warning is similar to the warning in 12:1 against the leaven of the Pharisees, so they are clearly connected to each other even if the dangers are slightly different. The importance of the heart, and of guarding the heart, is a big theme in the Bible (e.g. Deut 10:6; Josh 6:18; Prov 24:3; Luke 6:45; Phil 4:7). It alerts us to the fact that our desires are very important, and easily misled. God is after our hearts.

**12:19 “And I will say to my soul...”** In Greek, *psyche* is often translated as “soul” in English, and is also the root for the word “psychology,” which closely reflects our current culture’s conception of personhood. *Psyche* denotes the life force, or the personality, of a human being. In the Hebrew Old Testament a similar idea is captured with the word *nefesh*, often also translated as “soul,” or “breath.” As we learn from Genesis 2:7, the *nefesh* is given by the Spirit of God (translated there as “breath”). God is the giver and sustainer of souls, so when he says “your soul is required of you” in v.20, God is in effect asking the man to give an account of how he spent the life that he was given.

**12:19 “Relax, eat, drink, and be merry!”** At face value this might seem to be a similar approach to what Ecclesiastes advises us (Eccl 2:24, 3:13; 9:7 etc.). The difference is that in Ecclesiastes the Preacher is reminding us to humbly enjoy what God has blessed us with (See also 1 Tim 6:8.) while the rich fool in this parable is engaged in self-absorbed hedonism, rather than living for God.



# Fear not

## **STUDY FIVE- LUKE 12:22-31**

More often than not we are given life advice by people who are already in positions of comfort. Internet pop-ups promise to solve our life's problems: "Here's how to stop worrying about your bills", "10 ways to make free money online." They promise relief, but in reality do nothing to stop the anxieties. This is because the anxieties of life are not caused just by the state of our physical well-being. "Having it all" doesn't mean that a person will lead a worry-free life. Jesus' advice in the face of anxieties about everyday life is both realistic and radical.

After teaching his followers how to be "rich towards God," he moves on to teach his disciples about God's rich provision. In doing so, he answers the questions that all of his followers should ask: In the light of his call to the kingdom, what should I strive for? Can I trust God with my life?

## PASSAGE

22 And he said to his disciples,

“Therefore I tell you,

do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat,

nor about your body, what you will put on.

23 For life is more than food,

and the body more than clothing.

24 Consider the ravens:

they neither sow nor reap,

they have neither storehouse nor barn,

and yet God feeds them.

Of how much more value are you than the birds!

25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that,

why are you anxious about the rest?

27 Consider the lilies, how they grow:

they neither toil nor spin,

yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 But if God so clothes the grass,

which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven,

how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

29 And do not seek what you are to eat

and what you are to drink,

nor be worried.

30 For all the nations of the world seek after these things,

and your Father knows that you need them.

31 Instead, seek his kingdom,

and these things will be added to you.

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 44.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What are some of the commands and questions Jesus gives his disciples?
- What are some of the images Jesus uses in this passage? Why might he have chosen these?
- What are some comparisons Jesus makes? Which of them stand out to you?

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## STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 44.

### (A) Look at the context

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

### (B) A few questions to consider

- How does this passage build upon the previous one from Study 4? Why does Jesus use the word “therefore” in v.22?
- We have another teaching from Jesus about fear. How does this differ from vv.4-7? How does it compliment that teaching?

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### (C) What’s the Main Idea?

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### (D) Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.









## STUDY NOTES

**12:23 “... For life is more than food...”** Interestingly, this passage reveals some of God’s thoughts on what it means to be human. Rather than the modern dehumanizing view of humanity, one which is about just existing to consume and procreate, Jesus makes it clear that people are much more than that. The answer to what this more is can be found in the remainder of the passage. There Jesus demonstrates how highly humans are valued by God: being made in his image, cared for by him especially, and having the unique ability to strive for and serve in his kingdom..

**12:27 “... even Solomon in all his glory...”** The illustrious King Solomon, son of David, was renowned as the wealthiest person in the whole world during his reign. At one point it was estimated that he received over 25 tons of gold a year (1 Kgs 10:14-29)! To say that he arraigned himself “in the finest things” is an understatement and yet, as Jesus notes, the flowers of the fields are still vastly more beautiful.

**12:22 “...do not be anxious about your life...”** This is neither the first nor the last time the Bible mentions anxiety; it is a natural response to life under stress. God goes to great lengths to let his people know how much he cares for them both physically and spiritually. Not only is he our heavenly provider, he is also our Heavenly Father and wants to hear from us. Whether it’s bringing our anxieties through prayers and petitions (Phil 4:6), groaning alongside all of creation while holding on to the hope that he provides (Rom 8:23-24), or desperately, humbly, casting all our of anxieties upon him (1 Pet 5:6-7), God does not abandon his children, and neither will he turn a deaf ear to our needs as we seek his kingdom in the midst of a fallen world.



*Fear not*

## **STUDY SIX - LUKE 12:32-34**

In this passage, Jesus wraps up his teaching on possessions and true treasure, which began in 12:13. Material wealth often distracts us, as it did for the rich fool in vv.16-20. The danger of wealth, comfort, and security is that it can become our god, shutting us off from the good gifts of the Father. As Jesus finishes his teaching on wealth, he takes his disciples to the heart of the matter and reminds them that it is God's pleasure to give true wealth, comfort, and security. Living for this God has profound consequences for what we do with the material wealth he gives us, because it means turning our backs on the things we so easily crave, as our hearts learn to live out of, and live into, the reality of his kingdom.

## PASSAGE

32 “Fear not, little flock,  
for it is your Father’s good pleasure  
to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell your possessions,  
and give to the needy.  
Provide yourselves with moneybags  
that do not grow old,  
with a treasure in the heavens  
that does not fail,  
where no thief approaches  
and no moth destroys.

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

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 52.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What commands does Jesus give here?
- What are the reasons/promises Jesus gives for these commands?
- What does Jesus say here about treasure?

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## STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 52.

### Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

### Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- Read Luke 12:22-31. How does the previous passage, especially vv.29-31, help us understand why Jesus gives this instruction in vv.32-34?
- V.32 states that “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” What does this mean? What exactly is God giving?
- Refer to the parable of the rich fool in 12:16-21. What is Jesus talking about when he says “treasures in heaven”?

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### Ⓒ What’s the Main Idea?

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### Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.









## STUDY NOTES

**12:32 “Little flock”** Given the challenging themes of Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12, this term is maybe a bit of a surprise. This language reminds us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who calls his sheep by name and comes to save the lost, and it reminds us that followers of Jesus are cherished. They may seem small and powerless, but it is to them that God has chosen to give his kingdom.

**12:33 “Sell your possessions...”** According to Jesus, the value of treasure is determined by where it is located. Treasure on earth is always temporary while treasure in heaven is always eternal. The way to store wealth in heaven is to give it away on earth. Storing one’s treasure on earth refers to the way the rich fool did (12:16-21). Giving money to the needy, an act of loving kindness, is equivalent to storing wealth in the heavenly kingdom.

**12:34 “Where your treasure is...”** The heart is the center of our affections, will, and thinking; it is the place we make decisions. In biblical terms, it is more than the place of emotion, though that is certainly part of it. Inevitably, what we treasure directs our desires and thoughts and behaviour. The connection between the heart and treasure is also stressed in Jesus’ conversation with the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-30, and the importance (and consequence) of desiring good treasure is seen in Luke 6:43-45. One of the ways in which the New Testament connects the idea of kingdom and treasure is through the word “inheritance” (e.g. Acts 20:32; Eph 1:18; 1 Pet 1:4 etc.).



*Fear not*

## **STUDY SEVEN - LUKE 12:35-40**

The previous section in vv.22-34 was about trusting in God's provision and care, and building our lives upon his foundation. The result of this trust is twofold: confidence, because we know we are loved by a trustworthy God, and commitment, as we seek to live our lives investing in the eternal kingdom Jesus brings. The faithful response to God's love is to prepare ourselves for his return, and in this there is great blessing. The fact that none of us knows when Christ will return is a prod, spurring us out of both our fear and our laziness into a life of joyful service.

## PASSAGE

35 “Stay dressed for action

and keep your lamps burning,

36 and be like men who are waiting for their master

to come home from the wedding feast,

so that they may open the door to him at once

when he comes and knocks.

37 Blessed are those servants

whom the master finds awake when he comes.

Truly, I say to you,

he will dress himself for service

and have them recline at table,

and he will come and serve them.

38 If he comes in the second watch, or in the third,

and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!

39 But know this,

that if the master of the house had known

at what hour the thief was coming,

he would not have left his house to be broken into.

40 You also must be ready,

for the Son of Man is coming

at an hour you do not expect.”

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 60.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- Is there anything about these parables that surprises you?
- There are two masters mentioned here (vv.36-37, and v.39). Who do you think they are? See Study Notes at the back for help.
- Who is the Son of Man? What is this return Jesus is talking about?

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## STUDY NOTES

**12:35 “Stay dressed for action!”** This can be more literally translated as “gird your loins,” which is a fairly direct reference to Exodus 12:11 where Israel prepares to celebrate the Passover and leave for the Promised Land. Similar language is used in Ephesians 6:10-18 with the “whole armour of God” being put on in order to “keep alert with all perseverance.” In Colossians 3, Paul speaks about the habits of our hearts as the putting on and taking off of different kinds of clothing, something which is done because of our hidden life with Christ.

**12:35-36 “Keep your lamps burning...”** Lamps during this time needed to be regularly filled with fuel in order to keep burning, making this an image of habitual watchfulness. The language is quite similar to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, and the next parable in Luke 12:41-48 shares some strong similarities with Matthew 24:36-51. Jesus’ teaching there, as here, is about preparing for the age to come, as he himself prepares for the cross which will usher in the beginning of that age.

**12:36 “like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast.”** The scene of a wedding feast was a common way for Jewish teaching to refer to the age to come during Jesus’ time. For another example from Jesus, see Matthew 22:1-14. In these stories the master is usually God and, in English, the words “Lord” and “master” are often translations of the Greek *kurios*. It is important to note in this parable that the “master” in Luke 12:36-37 is *kurios*, or “Lord,” but in 12:39 the “master” is not a *kurios* but a “house steward” (*oikodespotes*). The two masters in this section are not the same person.

**12:36 “...when he comes and knocks.”** This same imagery is picked up in Revelation 3:20, in the letter to Laodicea, which also has some strong teaching about living for the kingdom of God.

**12:37 “he will dress himself for service...”** Consistent with what Jesus taught the disciples about God’s provision for their needs in vv.22-31, we see here that, when the master returns, he will serve his servants and join them at a banquet table. This same image is picked up again in 13:29 where Jesus tells another parable about the age to come.

**12:40 “for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** In Luke, Jesus refers to himself as the “Son of Man” quite regularly. We encountered it before in Luke 12:8 and 12:10. The title has a specific emphasis on Jesus’ authority as the one who is seated at the right hand of God the Father, ruling over the entire universe. The title goes back to Daniel 7:13-14, and the everlasting kingdom spoken of there is especially important for understanding what Jesus is teaching here in Luke 12.



# Fear not

## **STUDY EIGHT - LUKE 12:41-48**

In today's passage, Jesus moves from teaching about our day-to-day motivations and actions, to living with the future in mind. The looming perspective of his second coming and the culmination of the kingdom is a truth of which his followers need a strong reminder. The disciples need to know that they have been given a great charge from God and, along with that, he expects much of them and, similarly, of us. Jesus delivers a parable detailing some of the rewards and consequences of serving God, demonstrating that what we do on earth does indeed have eternal consequences.

## PASSAGE

41 Peter said,

“Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?”

42 And the Lord said,

“Who then is the faithful and wise manager,

whom his master will set over his household,

to give them their portion of food at the proper time?

43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

45 But if that servant says to himself,

‘My master is delayed in coming,’

and begins to beat the male and female servants,

and to eat and drink and get drunk,

46 the master of that servant 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 put him with the unfaithful.

47 And that servant who knew his master’s will

but did not get ready or act according to his will,

will receive a severe beating.

48 But the one who did not know,

and did what deserved a beating,

will receive a light beating.

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required,

and from him to whom they entrusted much,

they will demand more.

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 68.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- Who is the master in this passage? Who are the servants?
- What do we learn about the master's will?
- What are some of the promises and warnings in this passage?

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## STUDY NOTES

**12:42 “Who then is the faithful and wise manager...”** It is worth noting here that there is a difference in the text between the word for manager/steward and the word for servant/slave. While the steward was subject, as a worker, to the master, he held a higher position within the household and potentially may even have been a free citizen. Stewards were often put in charge of the property and its day-to-day running while the master was absent and, in some cases, acted as a business administrator for the master’s various investments. The text of chapter 12:41-48 cleverly switches between the two words when the servant acts dishonorably with the charge given to him by the master. Once he abuses the master’s trust he is no longer a steward but a lowly servant.

**12:46 “...and will cut him in pieces...”** A rather gruesome image is given by Jesus as an equitable punishment for the unfaithful slave’s actions. While not common, it was a viable punishment in ancient Rome, though viewed as somewhat severe. However, this is only one part of the whole punishment mentioned in v.46. Aside from the gruesome act, the servant is also “put with the unfaithful” meaning that, not only are they physically cut, they are also cut off from the master/God.

**12:47 “...will receive a severe beating...”** vv.47 and 48 detail for us the final outcome of the various plots of the conniving servants and underscore the constant presence of an authority figure who judges on the basis of fidelity in his absence. This third account in the servant narrative explores the idea of sins committed in ignorance vs. sins done knowingly. The outcome shows that sins committed ignorantly are still sin and deserving of punishment, though less severely than sins committed in active, wilful rejection of God and His instructions. This is why, at the end of v.48, Jesus says: “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand more.”



*Fear not*

## **STUDY NINE - LUKE 12:49-53**

If we took a poll for whether Jesus is about bringing peace (or positive family vibes), one might expect a landslide of “yes!” Jesus himself does not share this opinion. He has been directing people toward a lifestyle of faith rather than self-preservation, and warning of a potentially uncomfortable visitation of judgment in the future. Now increasingly he turns to the dynamics of the present that flow from that coming judgment.

## PASSAGE

49 “I came to cast fire on the earth,

and would that it were already kindled!

50 I have a baptism to be baptized with,

and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!

51 Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth?

No, I tell you, but rather division.

52 For from now on in one house there will be five 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 her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 76.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- What does Jesus state about his mission? What about his feelings and desires?
- What kinds of relationships does Jesus focus on?

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## STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 76.

### Ⓐ Look at the context

- Read the passage immediately before and after
- How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- Look up cross references
- How do they help us better understand the passage?

### Ⓑ A few questions to consider

- What do you see earlier in the chapter that could lead to this division Jesus is talking about?
- What is the baptism Jesus came to experience, and why would he call it “baptism”?
- Why does Jesus connect it with the division he speaks of?

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### Ⓒ What's the Main Idea?

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### Ⓓ Stop to Pray

- Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.









## STUDY NOTES

### 12:49 “I came to cast fire on the earth...”

“The image of fire can refer to judgment (3:9) or to the Spirit (3:16). The Old Testament image of fire describes the purifying message of the prophets (Jer. 5:14; 23:29). Jesus’ message reveals the judging and purging work that his ministry represents: to provide the way for people to make decisions about where they stand and to offer them the opportunity to be healed (5:31–32). But before he can exercise such judgment and authority, he must undergo his own baptism.” \*

*Jesus may in part be alluding to a prophecy about him (and John the Baptist) in Malachi:*

*“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. 3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. (Malachi 3:1-3)*

### 12:50 “I have a baptism to be baptized with...”

“‘Baptism’ is a reference to [Jesus’] approaching death. As later texts make clear, Jesus will engage in a great cleansing act where he will identify with the sins of humanity and provide a basis for both saving and condemning by his experiencing God’s judgment in their place (John 3:16–21; Rom. 5:12–6:6).” \*\*

(\* and \*\* are both quoted notes are quoted from Bock, Darrell L., Luke: The NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text to Contemporary Life, Zondervan Academic, Kindle Edition, pp. 363-364.)

### 12:53 “Father... mother... mother-in-law...”

Jesus’ words here allude to Micah 7:6 which most immediately prophesies the social breakdown in Israel as Assyria besieges its cities in an act of God’s judgment. Apparently these desperate people in Micah are reduced to each trying to save their own skin at all costs, even at the expense of other family members. In contrast to desperately trying to save one’s self, the prophet focuses in hope on salvation from God:

*for the son treats the father with contempt,  
the daughter rises up against her mother,  
the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.  
But as for me, I will look to the Lord;  
I will wait for the God of my salvation;  
my God will hear me. (Micah 7:6-7)*

Both Micah and Jesus preach a call to faith in the face of the breaking of social bonds associated with a coming judgment from God.

Many Biblical prophecies have more than one time of fulfillment. Jewish writings from the time between Micah and Jesus linked these words of Micah to the Messianic days. Jesus’ allusion to Micah emphasizes that the era hoped for in the prophets would not come without tribulation.

### 12:52-53 Family in the Gospel of Luke

Jesus has similar teachings involving family elsewhere in Luke:

20 And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” 21 But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” (8:20-21)

25 Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. 27 Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. (14:25-27)

At the same time, Jesus upholds the law of honoring father and mother:

20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’” (18:20)



# Fear not

## **STUDY TEN- LUKE 12:54-59**

Jesus has just thrown into the mud anyone's hopes that he would bring peace and social tranquility. But he has not done anything to afflict the comfortable quite yet. Time is limited for his audience to respond to their situation with perceptive action, and Jesus shows he cares for these people through his unwillingness to let them remain at ease in their current state.

## PASSAGE

54 He also said to the crowds,

“When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once,

‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens.

55 And when you see the south wind blowing, you say,

‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens.

56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky,

but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

57 “And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?

58 As you go with your accuser before the magistrate,

make an effort to settle with him on the way,

lest he drag you to the judge,

and the judge hand you over to the officer,

and the officer put you in prison.

59 I tell you,

you will never get out

until you have paid the very last penny.”

## STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### NEED SOME HELP?

If you need some help with steps 1-2, check out the study notes on page 84.

### Ⓐ Pray

### Ⓑ Look Closely At

- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Commands
- Promises
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

### Ⓒ Look Structurally

- What kind of writing is this? (eg. narrative, poetry, parable, teaching)
- How does the plot unfold? (Conflict? Climax? Resolution?)
- Divide the passage into its natural sections
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

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### Ⓓ A few questions to consider

- Who is Jesus addressing now and what is their stance towards Jesus?
- Jesus has been speaking in illustrations and parables throughout this passage. In this context, vv.57-59 are best understood as a parable. If so, who is the judge?
- What are the two alternatives posed by vv.58-59?

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## STUDY NOTES

### **12:54-55 “...cloud rising in the west... the south wind blowing...”**

“A cloud from the west would be coming from the Mediterranean Sea and thus would be full of rain. A wind from the south would bring hot air from the desert.”

(Quoted from Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament (Lk 12:47-58). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.)

### **12:58-59 “put you in prison. ...you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny.”**

This is a reference to the institution at the time of debtors’ prison. People who had not paid their debts would be held and even beaten until someone else came forward to pay their debt for them.

### **12:58-59 “As you go with your accuser before the magistrate...”**

It can be tempting on a first read to take this instruction straightforwardly as a command about reconciliation amongst ourselves when one person has not settled their account with another (like when essentially the same words appear in Matthew 5:23-26). However, here in this context in Luke, Jesus is using the saying in a different way. The surrounding material (12:35-13:9) relates to signs of the times and the need to repent and be ready before God’s impending judgment. Therefore it is best to take these verses as a parable about God’s impending judgment as well, not focused primarily on human relationships.