

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 12:22-34

This passage is a continuation of a discussion that started in 12:1. So we want to make sure that we see how it connects with the entire section, and not just pull this particular passage out of context. The main idea that holds 12:1-12:48 together is a warning against self-focus/self-centeredness/selfishness...which can take so many different forms, all of which are dangerous.

To review, in 12:1-12 Jesus warns against the particular type of self-focus that manifests itself in hypocrisy and image-management. This was what the Pharisees were guilty of, and Jesus warns His followers (then and now) against that. In 12:13-21 Jesus warns His followers of the type of self-focus that manifests itself in greed. Now in the present passage, Jesus warns His followers of the type of self-focus that manifests itself in worry.

- Q. What do you have a tendency to worry about most? What, if anything, are you currently worried about?**
- Q. Reflect on where your mind tends to go—for example, when you're driving, or when you're mowing the yard, or whenever you're doing something that doesn't take much mental focus...where does your mind go? Do you tend to fixate and become consumed with one thing, or does your mind just wander all over the place? (possible ice breaker)**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes." (12:22-23) A few points to be aware of: First, notice that Jesus did not say not to worry about other people. He was specific about not worrying about YOUR life...again, building the case that the main concern here is self-focus. Secondly, the idea of worrying about what to wear is likely more an issue of image-management, as opposed to the basic need of clothing. How we dress creates an impression and maintains an image. This connects Jesus' concern for His followers with what He mentioned earlier in the chapter and the previous chapter about the Pharisees. Concern about image, is a concern about what other people think of us...which is not what Jesus wants us concerned with. We can't live the life Jesus wants for us if we're hamstrung by what others think of us. What God/Jesus thinks of us should be our overwhelming, all-encompassing concern. And what does He think of us? Jesus is almost playful here...take a gander at the ravens and the lilies...Jesus cares about those...and we are far more important to Him than those. And third, worrying simply doesn't affect positive change, so why waste the energy (see verse 25-26)? In fact, worrying only causes a long list of health concerns, which is self-defeating. Notice the irony: self-focus is self-defeating.

- Q. What brings you comfort/confidence that God cares for you and is taking care of you? How do you stay mindful of that?**

Q. How, or in what ways, do you get caught up in “image management” (i.e. the effort put forth in order to get people to think of you in a certain way.) How, or in what ways, do you observe our society/culture as obsessed about image management?

Let’s focus on verses 29-31 for a moment. *“And do not **set your heart** on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world **runs after** all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But **seek** His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”* (NIV) The key word in these verses is “seek”. It appears 3 times in the original Greek in these 3 verses...though it’s not readily apparent in English translations, so I’ve highlighted it. To “seek” means to **want** to the point of action, to pursue.

Isn’t it interesting that you and I have never had to learn how to want? Think about it...when, where, how did you learn to want? We didn’t “learn” it...it’s hard-wired into us. Now what we need to learn is to want the right things, and to go about fulfilling our wants in the right way.

Q. What are you currently seeking? Why are you seeking it? (Or, if you’re feeling particularly courageous, you could ask others to answer that question for you: based on their observation, what would they say you’re seeking?) If you cannot get whatever it is you are seeking, how will you respond?

The beautiful thing about pursuing God and His kingdom is that we never have to worry about not getting what we’re pursuing. He promises to give Himself and His kingdom to those who seek it. How cool is that? Let verse 32 wash over you for a bit, *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”* This is what He wants us to want...and He wants to give it to us. Awesome!

Verse 33 might throw us for a loop, so it would be worth considering. *“Sell your possessions and give to the poor.”* It is easy for those of us with plenty (i.e. most Americans...certainly anyone reading this) to gloss over a statement like that, or to justify/rationalize it away as though this was some figurative/metaphorical statement Jesus was making. But the reality is Jesus meant what He said. He desires that we live with less. Why? Because the more we have, the more we will worry....and, again, such self-focus is self-defeating. It will get in the way of us seeking the kingdom. It will distract us and cause our focus to shift from God and His kingdom to lesser things. This also ties in to what Jesus said in last week’s passage, *“a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* (12:15b) So if that’s true—and Jesus said it, so we can be confident that it’s true—why would we bother amassing possessions if life is not found there?

Q. If money were not an obstacle, what would you go out and buy today? Why? How will that help you in your seeking of the kingdom?

Q. Think through all the items in your possession, and resources at your disposal. What would be easy for you to get rid of? What would be challenging for you to part with?

Q. What do you think about the idea that the Kingdom Life might be a life of downward mobility?

Q. Do you have an unhealthy attachment to anything that is getting in the way of fully pursuing God and His Kingdom? Explain. How can your Home Group help you with that?

This particular passage ends (and keep it mind it's connected with what's before it and after it) with *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (12:34) The two key words in this statement are "treasure" and "heart". You'll recall the Biblical idea of "heart" carries with it the true person/self. And it's what God/Jesus is most concerned with in each person/individual. It is what makes us who we truly are. So we could paraphrase the statement this way: Our deepest want determines who/what we truly are. Because our treasure (our deepest want) will be what directs us and drives us.

Q. What directs and drives you? (Your answer to that question is your "treasure".) How did that become what you seek? (How did your heart get formed/aimed in that direction?)