

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 12:35-48

As a reminder, this passage is part of much larger section that began back in 12:1 and continues to 13:9. So we want to be sure to catch the overall context and point of it all. The major focus of this entire section of Luke is Jesus combating the various forms of self-focus/self-centeredness/selfishness. In 12:1-12 Jesus takes on the selfishness of hypocrisy, image-management, and worrying about what others think. In 12:13-21 Jesus takes on the selfishness of greed and the misplaced trust/hope in worldly wealth. In 12:22-34 Jesus takes on the self-concern of worry and losing focus of the kingdom of God. Now, in this present passage, Jesus brings the selfishness of a lack of preparedness/readiness and a lack of faithfulness center stage.

So throughout this entire section the general principle is this: be careful of succumbing to the narrow view that naturally occurs when our focus is on ourselves; instead stay vigilant to keep the wider/bigger view of the kingdom in focus. There is something much larger going on than what any of us can see and personally experience. So the temptation is to think that what we personally see and experience is all there is. When humans take such a limited view of life all kinds of ugliness occurs. The most helpful reminder for all of us is to remember, and function from the paradigm, that we are not the center of the universe.

Toward that end, notice the use of master/servant language throughout the present passage. The key being that we are servants and there is a master (actually, technically, the language is “lord”) to whom we are all accountable.

- Q. Honestly, how do you feel about the idea that you are under Someone, that you are accountable/answerable to Someone? How would someone observing your life notice that you function from such a paradigm?**
- Q. How can this paradigm/arrangement/worldview be considered “good news” to the unbelieving world?**

Quick side note: the majority of scholarship understand Jesus to be referring to His second coming in this passage. But there is a minority view that believe Jesus to be referring to His first coming and the lack of readiness/preparation and faithfulness by Israel in general. Regardless, the point of being ready/prepared and faithful is the same. But a secondary implication, which may be more relevant, is whether Jesus is talking to individuals or to a group/community? You and I are naturally inclined to read this passage in a very personal/individualized manner (i.e. “am I ready?”). But it is very likely, regardless if Jesus had His first or second advent in mind, that this should be read more from a group perspective (i.e. “are WE ready?”)

- Q. How does it change our reading/understanding of this passage if we look at the warnings to “servants” in this passage from a group/we/us lens rather than a personal/me lens?**

Jesus so clearly understands our challenges and short comings. Having a master/lord over us whom we cannot see or easily talk to in a physical face-to-face manner is difficult. He is well aware of that. That's why He paints the picture in this passage of servants whose master is away. The "away-ness" of Jesus/God (even though He is here, now spiritually speaking...physically "away" is probably the best way to describe the arrangement of God with His people) opens up the very real possibility/danger of us losing focus.

Q. What challenges/difficulties do you experience in keeping the immanence of Jesus in mind? How do you go about keeping His presence/nearness in mind?

Peter asks an interesting question in verse 41, "*Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?*" What makes this question so interesting is that Jesus did not offer a direct answer (emphasis on "direct" ...that's not to say He didn't answer it.) It would appear that Jesus' answer is "yes". The warning in this passage applies well both to Israel in general and to the church age. Both Old Testament Israel and New Testament (and beyond) Church are the servants and stewards of God and His agenda of redeeming, restoring, renewing the world...His world. It is not our world. It is His, He's put us in charge of it, and we must give account for what we do with it. (Historically speaking, the entire purpose of humankind was to steward God's creation. After the Fall, God has raised up a people to restore His original plan/purpose. This is the call of Israel and the Church...with Jesus being the lynch pin in the whole plan.)

Q. As you think about your life personally, (and as we think about our life communally) do you/we think foremost as being linked to God's redeeming, restoring, renewing plan—not just as benefiting from it but being an active agent in the ongoing effort? How does that play itself out?

So the two vital points that we should take away from this passage are: 1.) our true role is that of servants/stewards, and 2.) in order to be good stewards/servants we need to know and do the master's will. With this in mind, verse 48b becomes pertinent, "*From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*"

How much have you/we been given, how much have you/we been entrusted with? Let's put that question into perspective. You may recall back in November 2016 Keith went to India to do some "pastor training" for local pastors connected with Asha (an organization Riverside supports). And as good as that training was, this fact remains: if you grew up going to church, or have been a Christian most of your life, you have far more "training" (by that I mean exposure to Bible knowledge, experience in various forms of ministry, access to all sorts of resources, etc.) than the pastors Keith interacted with who are planting and leading churches throughout India. In other words, we have been given much, we have been entrusted with much. And we will give an account for what we've done with it. Personally, I think North American Christians need to heed the warning of this passage. We've been entrusted with much, we know the Master's will, and we are so easily distracted. Let's not gloss over this passage.

Q. Take inventory of all that you've been given/entrusted with. How are you using it to accomplish the Master's will?

Q. What do you think/feel about the idea that we have brothers and sisters across the globe doing so much more than us with so much less than us?

I'll conclude with a quick story. In Flagstaff I functioned as a manager of a restaurant. (Manager and steward being synonymous.) I never thought of the restaurant as "mine"...I was NOT the owner. BUT, as I ran the restaurant while the owner was absent (which was frequently) I needed to make decisions on his behalf. In order for me to be a "good" manager (which was the goal) I had to run the place and make the decisions as if I were him...the way he would do it. I had to treat the staff, customers, and suppliers the way he wanted, because at the end of the day, they were HIS staff, customers, and suppliers. In order to make the decisions he would make, I had to know him pretty well. In the same way, in order for us to be good stewards we need to know Jesus well. Only then can we confidently make the decisions He would make, and do what He would do.

Q. How well do you know your master? What are you doing in order to know Him better? How confident vs. insecure do you feel in acting on His behalf? Explain.