**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 6** Luke 12:1-34 Warnings/Encouragements/The Rich Fool/Worry!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture, and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 159-167.

What is the basic cause of hypocrisy according to Jesus (vv. 4-7)? What is the remedy for hypocrisy? Explain.

1. Read Luke 12:1-12 along with Matthew 10:26-33. The Yeast of the Pharisees!

Jesus spoke of the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” in Matthew 16:6 (NKJV; cf. Mark 8:15 and Luke 12:1). As in many of His teachings, Jesus used an everyday item, in this case leaven or yeast, to demonstrate a spiritual truth. In Luke 12:1, Jesus refers to “the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Jesus’ point was that the teachings of the Pharisees were pervasive and produced hypocrisy and unbelief.

When the disciples heard Jesus’ comment about the leaven of the Pharisees, they were quick to jump to a wrong conclusion: “It is because we did not bring any bread,” they said among themselves (Matthew 16:7). Jesus reminded them of the two miracles of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand (Matthew 16:8–11) and emphasized that they did not need to worry about food. Jesus was not speaking of physical leaven.

Jesus had done many miracles, yet the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians (mentioned in Mark 8:15) still did not believe in Him. Shortly before Jesus warned His disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees, “the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven” (Matthew 16:1). Jesus had refused to give them a sign, but promised them the “sign of Jonah” as the only evidence to come (verse 4). This exchange gives significant context to Jesus’ mention of leaven. The “yeast” or “leaven” of the Pharisees was the subtle yet pervasive influence the Pharisees exerted over people. Those who followed the Pharisees might demand signs, but they would gradually increase in unbelief until they had hardened hearts, just like the Pharisees.

The man-made teachings of the Pharisees were as pervasive as yeast in a loaf of bread. Their corruption advanced in hardly perceptible ways, but it was extensive. Jesus denounced the Pharisees on several occasions (e.g., Matthew 23:1–39), and their hypocrisy was a common theme. The Pharisees displayed an outward conformity to the law, but their hearts were full of unbelief and sinfulness (Mark 7:6–13).

By warning the disciples against the hypocrisy, or “leaven,” of the Pharisees, Jesus sought to keep His followers from an insidious influence that would undermine faith and corrupt their walk with God. Believers today should heed the same warning from the Lord and guard against pharisaic attitudes and the temptation to take pride in man-made teachings and traditions. Once a bit of pharisaism is introduced into the church, it can quickly spread.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. From the above article, why did Jesus strongly warn his listeners to avoid the ‘yeast’ of ‘leaven’ of the Pharisees? What did Jesus say the yeast/leaven represents?
2. How does yeast work in a loaf of bread? Compare this to the pervasiveness of sin.
3. How should we as followers of Christ heed this same warning today (Acts 20:28-31)? How can we prepare ourselves to discern truth from error in a world so full of conflicting truth claims?
4. When will the hypocrisy of false teachers be revealed and what will be their ultimate destiny (2 Peter 2:1-9, 13, 17)?
5. From verses 4-7, consider the fear of God. Read Proverbs 1:7 along with Job 28:28, Hebrews 12:28-29 and Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21. Explain why we, as followers of Christ, should fear God, but not man.
6. What does it mean to fear God?
7. To what should a healthy fear of God lead (1 Peter 1:14-16)?
8. Do you have a healthy fear of the Lord? If yes, explain how this has helped you live a more holy and obedient life than otherwise.

For the unbeliever, the fear of God is the fear of the judgment of God and eternal death, which is eternal separation from God (Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:31). For the believer, the fear of God is something much different. The believer’s fear is reverence of God. Hebrews 12:28-29 is a good description of this: “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ’God is a consuming fire.’” This reverence and awe is exactly what the fear of God means for Christians. This is the motivating factor for us to surrender to the Creator of the Universe.

Proverbs 1:7 declares, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” Until we understand who God is and develop a reverential fear of Him, we cannot have true wisdom. True wisdom comes only from understanding who God is and that He is holy, just, and righteous. Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21 records, “And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.” The fear of God is the basis for our walking in His ways, serving Him, and, yes, loving Him.

Some redefine the fear of God for believers to “respecting” Him. While respect is definitely included in the concept of fearing God, there is more to it than that. A biblical fear of God, for the believer, includes understanding how much God hates sin and fearing His judgment on sin—even in the life of a believer. Hebrews 12:5-11 describes God’s discipline of the believer. While it is done in love (Hebrews 12:6), it is still a fearful thing. As children, the fear of discipline from our parents no doubt prevented some evil actions. The same should be true in our relationship with God. We should fear His discipline, and therefore seek to live our lives in such a way that pleases Him.

Believers are not to be scared of God. We have no reason to be scared of Him. We have His promise that nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39). We have His promise that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Fearing God means having such a reverence for Him that it has a great impact on the way we live our lives. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshiping Him in awe.[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Read verses 8-10 along with Matthew 10:32-33.
2. What do you think it means to acknowledge Jesus before men? What does it mean to disown Jesus before men?
3. Can you remember a time or circumstance when you disowned the Lord by something you said, did not say or the way you responded in a given situation? What should we do if we disown the Lord?
4. There has been a lot of confusion regarding the ‘blasphemy of the Holy
Spirit.’ From the article below, share 2-3 truths that you learn about this unpardonable sin.

The concept of “blasphemy against the Spirit” is mentioned in Mark 3:22 30 and Matthew 12:22–32. Jesus has just performed a miracle. A demon-possessed man was brought to Jesus, and the Lord cast the demon out, healing the man of blindness and muteness. The eyewitnesses to this exorcism began to wonder if Jesus was indeed the Messiah they had been waiting for. A group of Pharisees, hearing the talk of the Messiah, quickly quashed any budding faith in the crowd: “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons,” they said (Matthew 12:24).

Jesus rebuts the Pharisees with some logical arguments for why He is not casting out demons in the power of Satan (Matthew 12:25–29). Then He speaks of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (verses 31–32).

The term *blasphemy* may be generally defined as “defiant irreverence.” The term can be applied to such sins as cursing God or willfully degrading things relating to God. Blasphemy is also attributing some evil to God or denying Him some good that we should attribute to Him. This particular case of blasphemy, however, is called “the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” in Matthew 12:31. The Pharisees, having witnessed irrefutable proof that Jesus was working miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, claimed instead that the Lord was possessed by a demon (Matthew 12:24). Notice in Mark 3:30 Jesus is very specific about what the Pharisees did to commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: “He said this because they were saying, ‘He has an impure spirit.’”

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has to do with accusing Jesus Christ of being demon-possessed instead of Spirit-filled. This particular type of blasphemy cannot be duplicated today. The Pharisees were in a unique moment in history: they had the Law and the Prophets, they had the Holy Spirit stirring their hearts, they had the Son of God Himself standing right in front of them, and they saw with their own eyes the miracles He did. Never before in the history of the world (and never since) had so much divine light been granted to men; if anyone should have recognized Jesus for who He was, it was the Pharisees. Yet they chose defiance. They purposely attributed the work of the Spirit to the devil, even though they knew the truth and had the proof. Jesus declared their willful blindness to be unpardonable.

Their blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was their final rejection of God’s grace. They had set their course, and God was going to let them sail into perdition unhindered.

Jesus told the crowd that the Pharisees’ blasphemy against the Holy Spirit “will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:32). This is another way of saying that their sin would never be forgiven, ever. Not now, not in eternity. As Mark 3:29 puts it, “They are guilty of an eternal sin.”

The immediate result of the Pharisees’ public rejection of Christ (and God’s rejection of them) is seen in the next chapter. Jesus, for the first time, “told them many things in parables” (Matthew 13:3; cf. Mark 4:2). The disciples were puzzled at Jesus’ change of teaching method, and Jesus explained His use of parables: “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. . . . Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand” (Matthew 13:11, 13). Jesus began to veil the truth with parables and metaphors as a direct result of the Jewish leaders’ official denunciation of Him.

Again, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated today, although some people
try. Jesus Christ is not on earth—He is seated at the right hand of God. No one can
personally witness Jesus performing a miracle and then attribute that power to Satan
instead of the Spirit.

The unpardonable sin today is the state of continued unbelief. The Spirit currently convicts the unsaved world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). To resist that conviction and willfully remain unrepentant is to “blaspheme” the Spirit. There is no pardon, either in this age or in the age to come, for a person who rejects the Spirit’s promptings to trust in Jesus Christ and then dies in unbelief. The love of God is evident: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And the choice is clear: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36).[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Read Luke 12:13-21. The Parable of the Rich Fool!
2. A parable normally has one or two key points. In this parable, Jesus describes a rich man who desires to accumulate more and more and store his wealth in larger and larger barns. Then he will be able to sit back and take life easy. Doesn’t this describe the American dream? There are two key verses in this text which point to two key truths: verses 15 and 21. From each of these verses describe the two main points of the parable.
* Verse 15
* Verse 21
1. Read Matthew 6:19-21. What truths do you learn from this text and how will this wisdom change both the way you view money and the way you will manage/steward your God-given resouces from this day forward.

The Parable of the Rich Fool can be found in Luke 12:13–21. The key to understanding this parable is in verse 15 (and later summarized in verse 21). Luke 12:15 says, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Jesus says this to the man who asked Him to arbitrate between him and his brother. In ancient times, the firstborn was guaranteed a double portion of the family inheritance. More than likely, the brother who was addressing Jesus was not the firstborn and was asking for an equal share of the inheritance. Jesus refuses to arbitrate their dispute and gets to the heart of the matter: Covetousness! Jesus warns this person, and all within earshot, that our lives are not to be about gathering wealth. Life is so much more than the “abundance of possessions.”

Jesus proceeds to tell the man the Parable of the Rich Fool. This person was materially blessed by God; his land “produced plentifully” (verse 16). As God continued to bless the man, instead of using his increase to further the will of God, all he was interested in was managing his increase and accumulating his growing wealth. So the man builds larger barns in place of the existing ones and starts planning an early retirement. Unbeknownst to him, this was his last night on planet earth. Jesus then closes the story by saying, “So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

So the point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is twofold. First, we are not to devote our lives to the gathering and accumulation of wealth. There is an interesting point made in the parable. God says to the man in the story, “And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” This echoes the thought expressed in Ecclesiastes 2:18 (“I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me”). You see it all the time in people who are singularly devoted to the accumulation of wealth. What happens to all that wealth when they die? It gets left behind to others who didn’t earn it and won’t appreciate it. Furthermore, if money is your master, that means God is not (Matthew 6:24).

The second point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is the fact that we are not blessed by God to hoard our wealth to ourselves. We are blessed to be a blessing in the lives of others, and we are blessed to build the kingdom of God. The Bible says if our riches increase, we are not to set our hearts upon them (Psalm 62:10). The Bible also says there is one who gives freely and grows all the richer (Proverbs 11:24). Finally, the Bible says we are to honor God with the first fruits of our increase (Proverbs 3:9–10). The point is clear; if we honor God with what He has given us, He will bless with more so that we can honor Him with more. There is a passage in 2 Corinthians that summarizes this aptly (2 Corinthians 9:6–15). In that passage Paul says, “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that having all contentment in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” We are blessed by God, so we can in turn “abound in every good work” and be a blessing in the lives of others. So, if God has blessed you with material wealth “set not your heart on it” and “be rich toward God.” That is the message of the Parable of the Rich Fool.[[4]](#footnote-4)

1. Read Luke 12:23-34 along with the following article entitled, *What does the Bible say
about worry*?

The Bible clearly teaches that Christians are not to worry. In Philippians 4:6, we are commanded, “Do not be anxious [do not worry] about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” In this Scripture, we learn that we should bring all of our needs and concerns to God in prayer rather than worry about them. Jesus encourages us to avoid worrying about our physical needs like clothing and food. Jesus assures us that our heavenly Father will take care of all our needs (Matthew 6:25-34). Therefore, we have no need to worry about anything.

Since worrying should not be a part of a believer’s life, how does one overcome worry? In
1 Peter 5:7, we are instructed to “cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
God does not want us to carry around the weight of problems and burdens. In this verse,
God is telling us to give Him all of our worries and concerns. Why does God want to take
on our problems? The Bible says it is because He cares for us. God is concerned about everything that happens to us. No worry is too big or too small for His attention. When we give God our problems, He promises to give us the peace which transcends all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

Of course, for those who do not know the Savior, worry and anxiety will be part of life. But to those who have given their lives to Him, Jesus promised, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. What are some of the reasons Jesus offers as to why his followers should **not** waste precious time worrying (verses 24, 25, 28, 30)?
2. Why do you think so many Christians spend so much of their time in this life worrying? What is the root cause of worry in believers (verse 28)?
3. According to the article above, what are believers directed to do with their worry/anxiety/cares (1 Peter 5:7)? Is any concern or care too small for you to take to
God in prayer? Are you taking your cares to God? If not, why not?
4. Once you have asked the Lord for help with whatever problem you face, what should
you do?
5. According to verses 32-33 and Matthew 6:19-20, instead of worrying about your possessions, what should you do? How are you doing in this area of giving and
building up treasures in heaven?
6. Verses 34 states, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
7. Explain this verse:
8. Where is your heart? Be honest!
9. What is the main take-away for you from this lesson and how will it change/alter the way you live your life from this day forward?
1. “What is the leaven of the Pharisees?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 10, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/leaven-of-the-Pharisees.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “What does it mean to have the fear of God?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 12, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/fear-God.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 12, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/blasphemy-Holy-Spirit.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “What is the meaning of the Parable of the Rich Fool?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 12, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-rich-fool.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “What does the Bible say about worry?”Got Questions Ministries, accessed June 12, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-worry.html] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)