



grow groups



Week 8: Love What Lasts

Luke 12:13-21

GOAL: To explore what it means to be “rich toward God.”

CHECKLIST

- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader’s Guide.
- Encourage your group to pray for people they know who don’t know Jesus or don’t have a church home, and who God might be nudging them to invite for Easter Sunday.
- Invite your group to sit together with you at the Table to the Cross service on Thursday, March 28, at 7pm. This will take the place of your group meeting March 25-31.
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members. Help new members register for your group using the QR code in your room or at vrbc.net/grow.

PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

Father, you are the source of everything that we have. Teach us what it means to be “rich toward You.” Change us into the kind of people who naturally want to be generous. And should you send us an unexpected blessing, find us faithful to steward it well for your glory and your honor. Amen.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

CONNECT

- Use this time to connect with your group relationally - both formally and informally.
- Invite your group to share one way that they have seen God at work in the past week, and one way they're praying for God to move in the week to come.
- Spend time praying for your group members and for your time together today, including any praises or prayer requests from your previous conversation.

COORDINATE

Spend a few minutes covering any details the group needs to know:

- Mar 20, 6-8pm - The Great Exchange, a Bible study for adults from Isaiah 61 re: hope in difficulty
- Mar 25-31 - no individual grow groups meeting
- Mar 28, 7pm - Table to the Cross service. Ask your group to attend and sit together.
- Mar 31, 9:30am - Easter Sunday service - who is God calling you to invite?

DISCUSS

Leaders: *This week, Dr. JoAnn Hummel, will be bringing the sermon. With guest preachers, we typically don't have the same early access to their sermon content in order to build the grow group curriculum around it. However, since we are focusing on the same parable from Luke 12:13-21, there should be many connections. Feel free to draw directly from the sermon as you think helpful for your group.*

Read Luke 12:13-15.

- What was the situation that prompted Jesus to tell this parable?

Leaders: *Someone in the crowd asked Jesus to intervene and make his brother divide the inheritance with him. In Jesus' day, a father's estate was usually passed down to the oldest son. That son was responsible for taking care of the rest of the family. Sometimes the older son kept most of the estate but gave the other half or third to the other brothers. There were no court systems for this kind of thing, so the man is trying to get Jesus to straighten his stingy brother out.*

One commentator points out that Jesus was asked on two other occasions to intervene or be a third-party arbitrator. Martha wanted Jesus to tell Mary to get into the kitchen where she belonged and help her with supper. The religious leaders brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus in the hope that he would condemn her and approve of her stoning. Each time Jesus flipped the table on them and gave them a lesson they were not expecting. The same happens here in Luke 12. Jesus does not accept the job of arbitrator. Instead, he replies with a stern warning to the man and the rest of the crowd about the danger of greed.

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- How would you define “greed?” Christian tradition lists greed as one of the “seven deadly sins.” Why is greed destructive to the soul??

Leaders: *The dictionary defines greed as “the intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth and/or power.” Other synonyms are avarice and covetousness. Greed is one of the “seven deadly sins” or “cardinal sins,” a list developed in the 3rd century early church by Tertullian, an early Christian apologist. The list included greed, pride, lust, wrath, envy, gluttony and sloth. These were considered the vices that were most destructive to the soul.*

The essence of greed is keeping what resources God brings your way for yourself. Greed is described in Colossians 3:5 as “idolatry.” Worshipping anything in place of God is deforming to our soul. Not only is greed a sin in its own right, but it also often leads us to commit other kinds of sin in pursuit of our greedy ambitions. Greed does not just lead to the harm of ourselves. It very often leads to the harm of others.

When Jesus says, “Be on your guard,” he is giving an extreme warning. He is telling the crowd to exercise constant vigilance in regard to greed. BEWARE! It’s dangerous! Don’t let it cause your destruction!

Read Luke 12:16-21.

- What was the rich man’s dilemma in verses 16-17? What were his possible options in response to his good fortune?

Leaders: *The rich man’s dilemma was a good one! He had a bumper crop! It must have been more abundant than he had ever experienced to date because he had no place to store it. He asks, “What shall I do?” He had some options. Here are just a few:*

- *He could have asked God what he should do instead of just himself!*
- *He could have given the excess away to those who were in need.*
- *He could have sold the grain and used the profit to invest in his community for the good of all.*

- What did the rich man do with his unexpected windfall that causes him to be an example of greed?

Leaders: *It’s pretty obvious but let’s explore this because it can help us see evidence of our own tendency to greediness. First of all, the man sees his wealth as belonging only to himself. He does not view his wealth as a provision from God of which he is only a steward. He is a “self-made man,” as we like to say. (From a Christian worldview, by the way, there is no such thing!) In his mind, it seems God has nothing to do with it. Notice all the personal pronouns in his speech in vs. 18-19 – “I...my...myself.”*

Second, the rich man never even considers the use of the wealth for any other purpose than his own selfish need to accumulate so that he can indulge himself the rest of his days. He did not see it

as an opportunity to provide for others. It was very common in Jesus' day for farmers to leave the corners of their fields unharvested so that the poor might reap them. Just think how many his "corners" could have fed!

- Do you think Jesus was saying that it is wrong to be wealthy? Why or why not?

Leaders: *Jesus was not saying that wealth in itself is wrong. Wealth can be a gift from God to those who will use it for his purposes. It is right and good to have a financial plan as long as we hold it loosely before the Lord and stay attentive or obedient to his guidance concerning it. It is good and right to take care of our families in a way that meets their true needs.*

BUT Jesus also talked a lot about the LOVE OF money as being a stumbling block and a barrier to life in the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus is pointing to in this parable. So as much as we might like to squirm out from under the thumb of this teaching, let's not do it. Let's heed Jesus' warning about the ways that our attachment to wealth can cause us to be selfish and worship something else instead of God.

It is important to remember that EVERYTHING BELONGS TO GOD. Anything that we have belongs to God and is a gift from his hand. We are called to be stewards of his good gifts. We are called to steward our resources in the light of the great commandments to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus doesn't mince words – it's impossible for us to do this on our own. (See Matthew 19:23-24) But with God, everything is possible. When we seek to be good stewards of everything God gives us, we have is a great opportunity to glorify God and bless others.

- Why do you think God calls the man a "fool" in verse 20? What false assumption(s) was he making that demonstrated his lack of wisdom?

Leaders: *As one commentator puts it, "This is the ultimate 'you can't take it with you' parable!" The rich man in Jesus' parable made a common assumption that many people make. He assumed he would be around long enough to enjoy all the stuff he was keeping for himself. He assumed he would live a long time which would give him ample opportunity to "eat, drink and be merry." Thus he gave no thought to doing anything but keeping it for himself.*

Another assumption was that the best use of wealth is to indulge our every whim. In other words, life should be all about getting to the place where I can have anything I want anytime. Jesus' warning at the beginning of this passage is ringing loudly in contrast to this rich fool – "Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (v. 15). In other words, the rich fool was focused on the wrong thing. The key to a fulfilling life is not more stuff! He had his ladder leaning against the wrong wall, as they say. Life in the Kingdom of God is about something much greater and more interesting and more fun than that! There are many godly people who have a gift for financial gain, but they use their gift to glorify God and to benefit others. They do not worship money. They worship God through the godly stewardship of their money.

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WEEK 8

- Read verse 21 again. What do you think it means to be “rich toward God?” Describe what this could look like for you this week.

Leaders: Give your group a good long time to think about this question and its application. A parallel passage you might read together is Colossians 3:1-3. Being “rich toward God” can mean to treasure what God treasures. It can mean to invest the resources God has given us to show how much we value God and what He values. It means using our resources to carry out His priorities, and that will often involve blessing others. No matter how much money actually passes through our bank accounts, all of us can be “rich toward God.”

What this could look like in practice this week might be:

- Give a regular tithe to the church for use in ministry.
- Think of something that you own that you don't need; make a plan to give it to someone who does need it.
- Do some spring cleaning and take gently used things to a ministry outlet like Angels' Attic in Grapevine. All the profit from their sales go to local ministries and ministry projects.
- Consider how you might be “hoarding” your time right now. Do you need to find a way to serve regularly at VRBC or with another charity?

PRAY

One of VRBC's Value Statements is: Hilariously generous . . . giving and serving with joy. Lead your group through this prayer experience. You can ask them to pray silently while you prompt them with each segment. Or you can ask 4 people in your group to pray aloud for each of these.

1. Thank God for every resource you have.
2. Acknowledge that everything you have belongs to God.
3. Ask God to show you at least one tangible way to exercise generosity this week.
4. Pray that VRBC will continue to grow, both corporately and individually, in our ability to be hilariously generous . . . giving and serving with joy.

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