

Home Church Study Guide—April 25, 2010
Living Without Worry? There is a Way (Luke 12)

Perhaps much of our unhappiness and insecurity comes from living in a world that depends on money, instead of a world depending on God. In essence, that is what Jesus teaches us in this segment of scripture. These words are so well known it is hard to hear them with open ears, minds and hearts. “Do not worry about your life.” Yeah, right. How can we not worry about what we will eat and wear? I mean, isn’t it our responsibility to provide for ourselves? Several years ago I had the opportunity to teach a series of classes to a preacher’s training school deep in the countryside of India. On my last Sunday there, I was taken to an isolated group of villages to encourage the brethren there through teaching. I saw life as I had never seen it before. We drove along a river bank to get to the small village where we were to meet. I saw countless people standing naked in the river. I asked my translator why they were doing this. He explained it was wash day, all the clothing they had was drying on the river bank. They had one set of clothing. That’s all. Later, I met villagers who were paid a day’s rice for a day’s work. They lived in mud and dung huts. Suddenly, the words of Jesus came to mind. “Do not worry, God will provide.” For us, these words are almost empty of meaning. When told not to worry about what to wear, we think of not worrying whether our pants match our shirt. We are so rich, our closets are full of clothing we hardly ever wear. When told not to worry about what to eat, we think about counting fat grams and calories. But Jesus was talking to people much like those in India. They had not extra clothes or full pantries of food. They lived day to day, depending on the food earned for that day and wearing their only set of clothing. Only the few who were rich had any stockpiles.

So they heard these words of Jesus differently than we do. They knew they needed to be dependent on God for life. So, ultimately, who is more blessed? I fear we often thank God for blessings He does not give. Would He continue to give us more of what causes us to trust Him less? Would He give us currency that can only be spent in Satan’s store? Oh, we of little faith! We get so tied up in things that do not matter—and then we dare worry when we lose a little of the abundance we have! I think I’ve mentioned this before, but it fits here as well. I was discussing this with a friend who works in finance with very wealthy people. He asked me if I knew who were the most unhappy people he worked with. I didn’t. He said it was those who once had multiple millions that now only have a few million less! Again I ask, who is the most blessed? The one who has little, yet trusts completely in God to provide his needs, or the one who has much and constantly worries about having more or losing that which he has? All these things that we cherish as valuable have nothing to do with that which is truly important. In fact, they distract us from what is truly meaningful.

Here is the question, “What world do you choose to live in?” Is it the world where God is in control? If so, as my Australian friends say, “No worries.” Really!! No worries, for God will provide. Look around you, friend. Do you not marvel at the number of birds God feeds every day, even nasty ravens (unclean according to Jewish law)? Look at the flowers of the field, no man has ever produced such extravagant beauty in clothing. Have we learned anything from God’s gracious provision? The pagans worry about such things, because they have no father who provides their every need. I am afraid that under such a definition, many of us are pagan. For we live and worry and fret as if no one were caring for us. There is only one thing we are called to do—seek the kingdom. God will provide rest. This is clearly not a call to be lazy or passive. What we are called to do is to let go of the anxiety and worry we often have. God will provide! T.W.Hunt, in his book *The Mind of Christ*, suggests that we are so busy doing what God said He would do that we never get about doing what he asks us to do. We are so busy trying to provide for our needs we never get about seeking the kingdom.

Here is wonderful advice. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” What a wonderful thought! God is the generous, loving Father who wants to provide for our needs in His kingdom. That is the world for which we have been created. Inside the walls of the kingdom we have no reason to fear. So, get rid of those things that distract you, and purses that will not wear out. Don’t be like the rich man who made a BIG purse which he was unable to use. Don’t be a fool. Participate in a radical generosity. Give to those in need. Then you will have treasures which are secure. For what will you live? The kingdom doors remain open for those willing to live in the care and purposes of God.

“So What” for Home Church discussion:

1. What are the major causes of our worry? What is lacking in our faith that creates such circumstances?
2. How can we encourage one another to live in the security of God’s kingdom instead of the worrisome world of current affairs?
3. Discuss a project within your small group of selling something in order to help the poor. Organize an intentional effort to help others with what you have been given.