



THE LOOKOUT

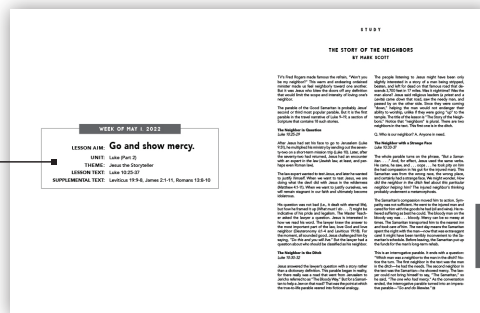
MAY 2022

Unit: LUKE (Part 2) Theme: Jesus the Storyteller

Overview: Bible scholar Kenneth Bailey described Jesus as a metaphoric theologian. Beyond that, Jesus was a storyteller without equal. In this second month of lessons from Luke, we focus on Jesus' parables from the travel narrative section of the Gospel (chapters 9–19). Jesus' stories begin in reality but move to fictional analogy as they subvert our ideas of neighbors, riches, God, and prayer.

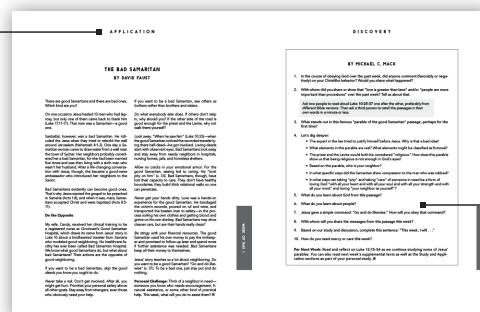
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF MAY 15, 2022

LESSON AIM: **Jesus is coming again,
so be ready!**

UNIT: Luke (Part 2)

THEME: Jesus the Storyteller

LESSON TEXT: Luke 12:35-48

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Matthew 24:42-51; Romans 13:11-14;
1 Peter 1:13-25

THE STORY OF THE MASTER'S RETURN

BY MARK SCOTT

Jesus, the master storyteller, continued his discourse in Luke 12 following the tangent about riches (vv. 13-34). He moved from riches to readiness. Disciples who trust God to provide for their needs will also be ready for God "to show up and show off" (as Marty Young, a minister in Utah, said).

This lesson text is highly metaphoric. The main metaphor concerns a master and servant. But under that big-picture metaphor are at least eight others that make this text quite visual (clothing, lamps, weddings, thieves, eating, etc.). Also worth noting in this highly figurative passage is that the metaphors are mostly eschatological (i.e., they especially relate to the future, specifically the return of Christ).

The Unusual and Coming Master

Luke 12:35-40

Servants (Christ followers) who have their treasures in the right place (v. 34) will *be dressed* (have their work clothes on). Their *lamps* will be constantly *burning* (not allowed to go out due to neglect). They will be ready to receive their master when he returns *from a wedding banquet*. The coming master will not catch the servants off guard. The servants will *open the door for him* as soon as the master knocks on the gate. And this will be true whether the master comes home during the middle of *the night* or *toward daybreak*.

Servants of this master will be vigilant. They will be waiting, watching, and ready for his arrival. Jesus used another metaphor to illustrate the servants' readiness—that of a thief breaking into a house. The *owner of the house* is the same person as the *master*. Thieves are usually discouraged from attempting a robbery when the owner (or his servants) is standing guard over the house.

But this master does not fit the norm. Jesus will, on another occasion, state the normal way that masters and servants work (Luke 17:7-10). Normally when the master returns home the servants serve him. After all, even if servants have done everything the master told them to do, they would still be unprofitable. But due to the love of God and the incarnation, in this text, the master is most unusual. This master comes home, dresses like a servant, and serves the servants (cf. John 13:1-17). And so that there is no mistaking, Jesus identifies the master

in verse 40. He is the *Son of Man*. He will come at an unexpected hour, so his servants must always be ready.

The Faithful and Wise Servant

Luke 12:41-48

Peter interrupted the discourse (big surprise). The reason we know Jesus was speaking figuratively is that Peter framed his question in parabolic terms. "*Are you telling this parable [of the master and servant] to us, or to everyone?*" The unstated answer is probably "both." Jesus then extended the metaphor by calling the chief servant (maybe a reference to the apostles collectively) *the faithful and wise manager*. This special servant has a large stewardship. We know four things about him. He is in charge of the other servants. He is particularly over their food allowance. He, like the other servants, must be busy for the master. Finally, he is in charge of all of the master's possessions.

Jesus posed the prospect that the faithful and wise servant might become presumptuous (v. 45). He might get careless. This carelessness could show up in three ways. First, he could misjudge the master's return. (By the way, in the parables of Jesus, a subtle hint about the second coming is taught. That coming might not be imminent. There could be a significant delay in the master's coming. While Jesus could return at any moment, some people, especially those who are overzealous to teach about the imminent return of Christ, should take note.) Second, he could mistreat his fellow servants. Finally, he could become morally irresponsible by getting *drunk*. For that careless servant, the master could show up *on a day and at an hour* the servant does not expect. The servant has only himself to blame for his judgment by God—described in severe terms (i.e., *cut to pieces*).

The text closes with Jesus connecting the dots between knowledge and responsibility. Any servant (whether chief servant or not) who *knows* his master's will and refuses to do it will incur judgment (*many blows*). Does that mean those who do not know the master's will are off the hook? No! Those who did not know and therefore did not do will be punished with *few blows*. The principle is that with additional knowledge comes additional responsibility. This is true in every category of reality. The master evidently assumed that all servants knew something. Servants who are ready for the return of the king will be *entrusted with much*. ■

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

BY DAVID FAUST

I hate to wait. The problem is, I have to wait.

There are lines at the supermarket, the coffee shop, and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. When I was a boy, my parents made me wait until I was old enough to drive and date. When my wife and I were expecting our babies to be born or adopted, we had to wait several months to hold them in our arms.

On average, Americans spend 32 minutes waiting at a doctor's office (even when we have an appointment), 28 minutes waiting in an airport security line, and 21 minutes waiting for our significant others to get ready to go out. (Yes, someone really measured that!) Each of us average about 13 hours per year waiting on hold for customer service and 38 hours sitting in traffic. Over the course of our lifetimes, we spend about 6 months waiting in line.

Efficiency experts have developed something called queue theory, the mathematical study of waiting in lines or queues. McDonald's and other companies analyze staffing decisions, line placement, and customer demands at different times of day in an effort to decrease waiting times and improve customer morale.

Worth the Wait

The Bible has a lot to say about waiting. Here are some examples:

- "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).
- "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope" (Psalm 130:5).
- "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isaiah 30:18).

- "But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:7).

- "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:25).

At first glance, *waiting* implies little more than passive, quiet expectation. But the word also refers to being ready for action—prepared to serve or obey. That's why people who work in restaurants and catering halls are sometimes called "waiters" or "waitresses." They are standing by, ready for action—ready to serve.

Both definitions of *waiting* appear in Jesus' parable about the master's return. The story reminds us to be "like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet" (Luke 12:36). But notice how the master treats his faithful, watchful servants: "he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come *and wait on them*" (v. 37, emphasis mine). The master accepts the role of the waiter! What amazing grace—what humble, sacrificial love—Jesus demonstrated when he washed his disciples' feet! At the Last Supper, the Master became the waiter.

God sometimes asks us not to act, but to wait. We wait for justice to be done. We wait for prayers to be answered. We obey and serve while we wait for Christ to return. We strive to "live holy and godly lives" as we "look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Peter 3:11-12). When patience is difficult, we recall how long-suffering and merciful God has been to us. And we trust that Heaven's blessings will be worth the wait.

Personal Challenge: Rate your own level of patience on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = extremely impatient; 10 = gladly willing to wait). Confess your impatience to the Lord, and ask him to make you more patient and help you view time from an eternal perspective (as God does). ■

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How did you deal with worry and anxiety over the last week?
2. With whom did you share last week's lesson?

Ask two people to read aloud **Luke 12:35-48** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to spend no more than 60 seconds paraphrasing the passage.

3. How would you describe this parable in one sentence?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - Jesus used numerous metaphors (figures of speech/implied comparisons) in this parable. Identify several metaphors. Do these metaphors have anything in common?
 - Read verse 37 aloud. Jesus lived out this principle of servant leadership when he washed the disciples' feet the night before he died (John 13:1-17). What does it say about a person's character when their actions (example to follow) are consistent with their words?
 - How does verse 40 help unlock the meaning of this parable?
 - What do you learn about how to be a faithful and wise servant from this passage?
 - What do you learn about how we should effectively and productively wait for Jesus' return?
 - Why will Jesus' return be worth the wait?
 - From the text, what are some dangers we may encounter while waiting?
5. What do you learn about God from this passage?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. As we study God's Word, we become more familiar with the Master's will and how to obey it. What do you learn about obedience to God in this passage?
8. As you await the Master's return, whom will you invite to join you in following Christ?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. As we await Jesus' return and the new life and new body we will receive—a body free of the pains and burdens of this life—we still are prone to the frailties and infirmities of this life. As you face this next week, what do you most need from God?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Luke 15:11-32** as we continue studying some of Jesus' parables. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. **1**