

# Following Jesus in Everyday Life



## SABBATH—MAY 30

**READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON:** Luke 11:37–54; Luke 12:4–21, 35–53; Amos 6:1; Luke 8:4–15; Luke 22:24–27.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The apostles [teachers and leaders] said to the Lord, ‘Give us more faith!’ ” (Luke 17:5, NlrV).

**JESUS WAS A GREAT TEACHER.** But He did not start a school of theology<sup>1</sup> or philosophy.<sup>2</sup> His purpose was “to seek [look for] and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, NKJV). He came to show the character (thoughts; feelings; actions) of God. The best example of this love was shown on the cross. There Jesus showed all people and unfallen worlds what God was really like. He also paid the penalty for sin so that sinful humans could be saved.

In doing this, Jesus also created a saved community. This is a community of people who have been saved by His death and have chosen to be examples of His life and teachings.

The call to be part of this saved community is a call for full loyalty to the One who calls, to Christ Himself. What He says becomes the law of life for the disciple.<sup>3</sup> What He desires becomes the disciple’s one purpose in life. No amount of being good or perfect can take the place of full loyalty to Christ and His will.

Discipleship<sup>4</sup> is made possible only through Christ’s living within us. It requires full obedience to certain rules. No substitutes or changes are permitted.

## DEFINITIONS

1. theology—the study of God.
2. philosophy—the study of the truth.
3. disciple—follower of Christ.
4. discipleship—the process of answering the call of Christ and following Him.

## DO NOT BE LIKE THE PHARISEES (JEWISH RELIGIOUS TEACHERS) (Luke 11:37–54)



Some Pharisees who had been entrusted with the key to God's kingdom had locked out the people and thrown away the key.

### DEFINITIONS

5. legalists—those who believe they can be saved by obeying the law.

6. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

There are more than eighty examples about Pharisees in the Gospels. And about 25 percent of them are found in Luke. Pharisees were well-known for their strict rules. But Sadducees were known for their “loose” ideas. Pharisees were often legalists<sup>5</sup> who claimed to believe in grace<sup>6</sup> but taught salvation by the strict keeping of the law.

**Read Luke 11:37–54. What is Jesus warning about? How is this same principle (important rule) shown today? How can we make sure that we do not follow some of the things that Jesus warned against?**

The woes (troubles) (Luke 11:42–54) on the Pharisees and the scribes show how much the call to true religion is for every generation, including our own.

For example, tithing shows that we recognize God's care. But it can never be a substitute for the love and justice for humans (verse 42).

For example, these same ones who “neglect justice and the love of God” love the “most important seats in the synagogues [Jewish places of worship]” (verses 42, 43, NIV). Talk about missing the point of true faith!

Jesus warned, too, that those who believe that true religion is only outward practices are really unclean. They are much the same as those who touch the dead (Luke 11:44; read also Numbers 19:16). How easy to confuse what is not important with what is holy in the eyes of God.

Also, Jesus announced a woe on the experts in the law. They used their education and experience to put heavy religious burdens on others while they themselves “do not touch the burdens with one of [their] fingers” (Luke 11:46, NKJV).

The Pharisees honored the prophets (special messengers from God) who were no longer alive. But they worked against the living ones. Even as Jesus spoke, some were planning to kill the Son of God. What is important is not the honoring of prophets. Instead, they should listen to their prophetic message of love, mercy, and judgment.

The last woe is a terrible one. Some of the Pharisees had been entrusted with the key to God's kingdom. But they had failed to do their duty. They had not used the key wisely to let God's people come into the kingdom. Instead, they had locked God's people out and thrown away the key.

## FEAR GOD (Luke 12:4–12)

“ ‘Fear God and give glory [praise and honor] to Him’ ” (Revelation 14:7, NKJV) is the first of the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14. This message is very important to Seventh-day Adventists’ life and faith. Fearing God does not mean being afraid. Instead, it is understanding who God is and what His claims on us are. It is an act of faith that requires full loyalty to Him. God becomes the only Creator and Judge of our life—our thoughts, actions, relationships, and future. The faith that depends on that kind of “fear” stands on firm ground.

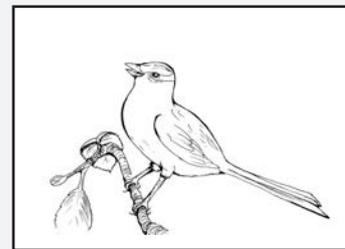
**Read Luke 12:4–12. What is Jesus saying to us about fear?**

The verses show us whom to fear and whom not to fear. We do not need to fear things that can attack only our body in the present world. Instead, we must fear and obey God because in His hands is our eternal future. But our God—whose eyes are on the sparrow (little bird) (Luke 12:6) and who has counted the hairs on our heads (Luke 12:7)—is loving and caring. So, each one of us is forever important in His sight. If we truly believed that, how many earthly fears would go away?

**Read Luke 12:13–21. What is Jesus warning us about here?**

Jesus refuses to take sides in the quarrel between two brothers fighting over the division of property. But He does point to the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17) against the evil of being jealous. He also points out an important truth for all time: life is not made up of things (Luke 12:15). The rich foolish man lived in his own little world. Nothing else was important to him. How careful we need to be not to fall into this same trap. This is very important for those who have been blessed with many worldly things.

**We all enjoy material things. But think how little satisfaction they really give you, especially when we think about eternity. Then why is it still so easy to make the mistake that Jesus warned about in Luke 12:16–21?**



**But our God, whose eyes are on the sparrow, loves and cares for us.**

**BE PREPARED AND WATCHFUL (Luke 12:35–53)**

**We must keep our robes ready and our lamps trimmed.**



**The cross draws a clear line between Christ and Satan.**

**DEFINITIONS**

7. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

“Watchfulness and honesty have been required of Christ’s followers in every age. But now we are standing upon the very edge of the eternal world. We are holding the truths and have such great light, so important a work. So we must be on our guard and watch carefully.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies<sup>7</sup> for the Church*, volume 5, pages 460, 461.

**Read Luke 12:35–53 and summarize what these verses mean to you, especially if you have been waiting a long time for the second coming of Jesus.**

Christians cannot afford to relax or be lazy. Jesus’ sure return, and the unknown hour, should drive us to have our robes ready and our lamps trimmed and burning. The hope of His soon return must be the driving force of our life and work, our readiness and faithfulness. It is this faithfulness to do His will on earth and readiness to meet Him in peace that separate good servants from evil servants.

Any neglect of faithfulness because “ ‘My master is delaying his coming’ ” (Luke 12:45, NKJV) is putting yourself under the most serious form of God’s judgment (verses 45–48). Suppose a person is honored more in doing God’s work. Then he is given more work and responsibility. And God will expect more of him (verse 48).

The old-time prophet’s judgment “Woe to you who are at ease [lazy] in Zion” (Amos 6:1, NKJV) seems to show Christ’s warning that Christian discipleship is not about being lazy or taking it easy. Paul explains the Christian life as one of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12). The important point is that every Christian is involved in the war between Christ and Satan. And the Cross draws a clear line between the two. Only by continual faith in the Christ of the cross can one win the final victory.

**“ ‘Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. Even more will be asked of the person who is supposed to take care of much’ ” (Luke 12:48, NIV). What should this verse mean to us as Seventh-day Adventists?**

**BE A FRUITFUL WITNESS (Luke 8:4–15)**

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in their meeting before the world began (Ephesians 1:4), developed the plan of salvation. Even before the first human was created and before the first humans sinned, God had a plan in place to save the world. The plan is centered in the Cross, and the good news of the Cross must be told to everyone in the world. The responsibility of that witness is placed on every Christian.

“ ‘You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You will be my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. And you will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other’ ” (Acts 1:8, NIV). The final command of Jesus shows the importance the Lord placed on the witnessing duty of His followers.

**What lessons must those in Christian witness learn from the parable of the sower and the soil? Read Luke 8:4–15.**

**What and when is the reward of the one who witnesses? Read Luke 18:24–30.**

**What does the parable of the minas (a coin; money) (Luke 19:11–27) teach about faithfulness and responsibility in witnessing?**

In each of these verses, and others, the dangers, the responsibilities, and the rewards of witnessing and faith are given. We have been given a serious responsibility. But when we think of Jesus' sacrifice for us, how little is really asked of us?

**BE A SERVANT LEADER (Luke 22:24–27)**

**Read Luke 22:24–27. Even as the disciples were preparing for the Last Supper, they were arguing about who among them would be the greatest in the kingdom. How does Jesus deal with their foolishness? And what is so different about His answer?**

Jesus' answer is very special in the history of leadership. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and Genghis Khan all saw leadership as power and authority over others. That is pretty much how the world always has used power.

Jesus said, “ ‘But you must not be like that. Instead, the most important among you should be like the youngest. The one who rules should be like the one who serves’ ” (Luke 22:26, NIV). In His answer, the Lord of the universe changed the rule for leadership: “ ‘Don't [do not] be like that. Instead, anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant. And anyone who wants to be first must be your slave. Be like the Son of Man. He did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free’ ” (Matthew 20:26–28, NIV).

Jesus described servanthood and self-denial as the basic principles of His way and His leadership. In this way He introduced a new principle for human relations: fulfillment comes not from power but from service. Leadership receives its authority not from power but from servanthood. Change begins not with the throne but with the Cross. To live is to die (John 12:24).

In Luke 9:46–48 something almost the same arose among Jesus' disciples about who would be the greatest. The principles of the world were still set in His disciples' minds.

Jesus' answer gets to the heart of the problem and brings up one of the most difficult challenges in the Christian life. His words, especially the part about being the “ ‘least among you’ ” (Luke 9:48), show how different the world's rules are.

**The principles of the world are so different from what Jesus taught here. So, how are we to survive if we use Jesus' principles in our own lives?**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? About whom do we love to talk? Who has our best interests and energies? If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are with Him. And our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is dedicated to Him. We desire to copy His character, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 58.

“In our life here, we are limited by sin. But the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future without sin, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing and learning anew ‘the glorious [great] riches of the mystery’: which is ‘Christ is in you. He is your hope of glory.’ Colossians 1:27, NIV.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 309.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Jesus called the rich and successful farmer a fool (Luke 12:20). One may not be rich or successful, but what makes one a fool to God?
- 2 In some of our churches, we see two groups: first, the professionals, business leaders, church and community leaders. All of them get respect. Second, the silent and the unimportant ones who just come and go without anyone taking note of them. What can you do to make the second group feel just as important as the first group?
- 3 It is easy today to criticize the Pharisees for the way that they twisted the faith. But how can we be sure that we are not in danger of making the same mistakes? How do we stand firm for what is right without becoming a Pharisee? Or how do we decide what is right and what is worth fighting for, instead of quarreling over unimportant issues?
- 4 How do we keep an attitude of being watchful and ready for the return of Jesus, without losing faith and hope?