

# WHAT LIES BENEATH

GOING DEEPER  
DISCUSSION GUIDE  
March 30, 2014



# Discussion Guide

## The Blob

*Luke 12.13-21*

### Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

### Getting Started:

10 minutes

- In your estimation, when do you know you have enough stuff? Is it possible to ever have enough? Would you elaborate?

### Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Use the notes to describe the background and context of Luke 12.13-21.
- Read Luke 12.13-21 aloud, slowly. Try to imagine the scene unfolding before you as you read the text.

- Read Luke 12.13-21 once more. This time, try to experience the scene as the brother who approaches Jesus.
- As you experience the scene as the brother, what stands out to you? How do you feel? Could you elaborate?
- Read Luke 12.13-21 once more. This time, try to image the scene unfolding today in the food court of a local mall. What reaction is stirred in the crowd? What might be behind this reaction?
- Greed is defined as the pursuit of more than one has need, and it was once considered to be one of the most serious of sins. Actually, it was classified as one of the seven deadly sins—wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony—from which all other sins originate. In our modern day, any discussion of greed seems to have disappeared or gone underground. Why might this be so?
- Consider your own life. In what ways, if any, might greed be present in your own life, hidden from plain sight?
- Jesus states that greed is a false pursuit because we can't save our stuff and our stuff can't save us (Luke 12.20-21). Does knowing this make it easier or harder to deal with any presence of greed in your life? Could you explain?
- The root of greed has been defined as fear, particularly the fear of the future apart from possessing in the present; that is, if I don't have more I won't have enough. Do you agree or disagree? Could you elaborate?
- What might be some ways your group could address the fears that lead to greed?

## Context and Background

### *Greed*

Simply defined, greed is the inordinate desire to amass more goods than one needs. Sometimes this desire is motivated by the pursuit for physical security, while at other times greed stems from the attempt to gain a competitive edge over others including an elevated status when compared with others. Throughout the history of the Church, greed has been considered to be one of the most serious of sins. The early Church classified greed as one of the seven deadly sins, one of seven sins from which all other sins were believed to originate. (The seven deadly sins are traditionally defined as wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony.) Throughout Scripture, greed is portrayed as the pursuit of inappropriate material gain (2 Peter 2.3, 14), and was particularly serious because it marked the life of one who lacked a knowledge of God (Romans 1.29; 1 Corinthians 6.10-11; Colossians 3.5). Those who pursued material goods in an inappropriate way were placing their trust in these goods for their well-being rather than in God. Thus, greed was classified as a form of idolatry (Colossians 3.5). Because greed turned people away from God, it also turned them away from the experience of the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6.10; Ephesians 5.5). In our modern Western setting, greed is no longer recognized as an inappropriate or sinful attitude. Rather, greed has been removed from the ancient lists of vices and been elevated to a new positive on the lists of virtues. Our American culture, in particular, elevates those who possess much and admonishes people to possess more. Scripture does not condemn the possession of goods. The ability to gain material wealth can be viewed as a God-given ability. It does, however, instruct those who possess many things to share what they have and to put their ultimate trust in God rather than their possessions (1 Timothy 6.17-19; Matthew 6.19-24).

## The Text

### *Luke 12.13-21: Beware of the Blob!*

In Luke 12, Jesus is moving from Galilee toward Jerusalem (Luke 9.51). As he journeys along the way, he is met by ever-increasing crowds which press upon him. In this particular episode, Jesus is in the midst of teaching those in the crowd to trust fully in God who sees and knows all things (Luke 12.3). Jesus instructs his audience to live for God rather than others, like the Pharisees, because only God has true power and concern for them (Luke 12.4-8).

As Jesus is speaking about trusting God, he is interrupted by a man who asks Jesus to resolve a family dispute over an inheritance. Disputes over inheritances were common in Jesus' day as traditionally family lands and possessions were held among families rather than divided among individuals. If they were divided, then Jewish custom often led to the elder brother receiving a larger share. It is not clear whether this is a younger brother who wants a greater portion or a brother (possibly even the older brother) who desires his own private share. What is apparent is that his request is a thinly veiled attempt to convince Jesus to take his side.

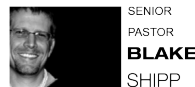
Jesus refuses to be drawn into the dispute by countering with a warning about the true nature of the dispute, greed. The brother is bent upon the pursuit of material possessions. Jesus warns his audience to avoid greed because life consists of more than possessing. (See Greed.) This message would have struck a deep chord in Jesus' audience because the common belief was that a person's status was directly related to his possessions. The more a person possessed, the more prominent a position he filled.

Because his warning is so contradictory to present thinking, Jesus proceeds to tell a story illustrating the fallacy of pursuing possessions. This story involves a farmer who experiences the blessing of an abundant crop. This farmer's fields have yielded a harvest that he cannot store. Therefore, the farmer decides to increase the size of his barns. He then decides to stop farming because he has all he needs for an easy life. This farmer feels he has all he needs in life to be safe and secure. At this point, God speaks, stating that the farmer will die that very night and his abundant harvest would pass to others. One might conclude that God is passing judgment upon the farmer for refusing to share his crops, but the plain reading of the text seems to imply that the crops did not ensure safety and security. The farmer could not save his stuff and his stuff could not save him. This is the fallacy of greed. The pursuit of stuff would disappoint for it could not be saved, nor could it save the one who possessed it. Jesus instructs his audience to pursue God instead of material goods as God is the only one who can bring true security.

## Application:

How much is enough? The answer always seems to be, "Just a little bit more than I have now." We are a people and a culture consumed with the pursuit of material goods. If one television is good, two is better. If last year's model is good, this year's is better. Not only are we consumed with the pursuit of the latest and greatest but we seem to be bent to possess as much as possible, measuring our worth as individuals in terms of our possessions, particularly our possessions in comparison to those of others around us. "The more we have the more we are worth" could be a modern mantra. Stuff is wonderful, good gifts from God meant to be enjoyed and used in the fulfillment of our needs (James 1.17). However, stuff is not what matters most because possessing a great amount does not ensure our safety or security. Death, sickness, sorrow, and sadness pursue each of us and no amount of possessions can stop them. When they find us, we discover that our possessions quickly evaporate, finding their way into the hands of others. A much surer investment is to engage in the full pursuit of God, the one who provides for our needs and can ensure our ultimate safety and security.

Want to know how this looks in real life? Check out Blake's blog at [BlakeShipp.blogspot.com](http://BlakeShipp.blogspot.com)



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