

# Sermon & Bible Study Helps

## YOU ARE OF MORE VALUE

Emphasis Passage: Luke 12:6–7

### Parallel Translations

**King James** 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

**New King James** 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

**New International Version** 12:6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

**Holman Christian Standard** 12:6 Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. 7 But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows!

**New American Standard** 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."

**New Living Translation** 12:6 "What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. 7 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows."

### Greek Text – Luke 12:6–7

12:6 οὐχὶ πέντε στρουθία πωλοῦνται ἀσσαρίων δύο; καὶ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν  
What is five sparrows the price of two cents? Yet one of them

οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλεησμένον ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ. 7 ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ τρίχες  
is not forgotten before God. But even the hairs

τῆς κεφαλῆς ὑμῶν πᾶσαι ἠριθμῆνται. μὴ φοβεῖσθε· πολλῶν στρουθίων  
of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid. Many sparrows

διαφέρετε.  
you are worth more than

## KEY WORDS (WITH STRONG'S REFERENCE NUMBERS)

ἀσσαρίων (*assarion*) – noun genitive neuter plural

(787) ἀσσάριον, ου (*assarion*) – Roman copper coin worth 1/16 denarius

ἐπιλελησμένον (*epilelāsmenon*) – participle perfect passive nominative neuter singular

(1950) ἐπιλανθάνομαι (*epilanthanomai*) – forget, neglect, overlook

ἠριθμῆνται (*ārihmāntai*) – verb indicative perfect passive 3rd person plural

(705) ἀριθμέω (*arithmeo*) – count, number

διαφέρετε (*diapherete*) – verb indicative present active 2nd person plural

(1308) διαφέρω (*diaphero*) – (intransitive), be worth more than, be superior to

## CONTEXT

As Jesus' popularity grew, the likelihood of conflict between Jesus' followers and the scribes and Pharisees grew as well (See Luke 6:6-11). Jesus was well aware that His disciples would suffer at the hands of these two groups. In chapter 12 of Luke's gospel, He tells His disciples that the Jewish religious leaders will bring them "before the synagogues, and the rulers and the authorities" (12:11). In order to prepare them for this eventuality, Jesus offers His disciples encouragement by teaching them about their great value to God. While His words were addressed principally to His disciples to prepare them for the coming persecution, they reflect a profound respect for the value of human beings that offers us insight into the sanctity of human life from God's perspective.

## SERMON AND BIBLE STUDY HELPS

### I. God values all of life, v. 6.

Jesus begins to teach His disciples about their great value to God by offering them an illustration of something else that has value to God. Out of all the things He could have chosen, Jesus chose the very common sparrow. Jesus had a reason for this choice: sparrows were so common that they were practically worthless. Their slight value is evident in two ways. First, a person could buy five of them for two cents. The word "cent" is the Greek word ἀσσαρίων (*assarion*). An assarion was worth only 1/16 of a denarius. One denarius was the day's wage for a rural worker. Second, sparrows were so worthless that the fifth

sparrow was thrown in merely to sweeten the deal. We know about this fifth sparrow because Matthew records the fact that two sparrows could be purchased for a cent (Matt. 10:29). If two sparrows could be purchased for a cent, then a person should get only four sparrows for two cents. So the fifth sparrow must have been the incentive offered by merchants to get people to buy four sparrows.

Jesus used this buy-four-get-one-free practice to illustrate how much God values life. He said that not one sparrow is forgotten before God. Jesus used the word ἓν (*hen*) to single out the individual sparrow. A. Plummer (*The Gospel according to St. Luke*, ICC, p. 319) comments that the construction Jesus used here, "is more expressive than οὐδὲν ἐξ αὐτῶν, throwing the emphasis on ἓν: 'not even one of them, although five cost so little.'" By narrowing His application to the individual sparrow, Jesus was including the free sparrow. In other words, even a nearly worthless free sparrow is not overlooked by God. He takes an interest even in this unappreciated bird. R. Lenski (*The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, p. 677) observes: "So vast are his providence and care that they include every cheap, little sparrow and all that ever happens to it."

(Illustrate the value God places on things others consider worthless with something no one else would consider valuable except to the person to whom it belongs—perhaps a memento from your childhood or a treasured gift from your children.)

## II. God values the smallest detail of human life, v. 7.

While it is a great encouragement to know that God values the seemingly insignificant fifth sparrow, it is even more encouraging that He values His disciples so much that He takes an interest in every possible detail about them. Jesus revealed the extent of God's interest in the disciples in verse seven. He told them "the very hairs of your head are numbered." The root of the word "numbered" is the Greek word ἀριθμέω (*arithmeo*). We derive the word "arithmetic" from it.

The greatest significance in Jesus' comment is not found in the counting of many hairs but in what this task means for each individual hair. Jesus said God did the math and counted every hair on their heads. With more than 140,000 hairs on the average human head, this attention to detail reveals the extent of God's interest in His disciples. He knew exactly how many hairs there were on their heads; each one had been counted and "numbered."

It would be hard to find someone so interested in a person that he would actually take the time to count the hairs on the person's head. But that is Jesus' point. God placed such a high value on His disciples that He was interested in the smallest details of their lives.

God's interest in the smallest details of human beings isn't limited to the disciples. God is that intimately aware of and interested in all humans (Job 31:15). Paul reminds us that all human beings "live, and move, and exist" in God (Acts 17:25). God surrounds humans with His presence. There is no place we can go, no word we can say, no act too small for God's notice. (Illustrate this by describing how two people who are falling in love are interested in every detail about the other. They talk about everything, and they want to know everything there is to know. No detail seems too trivial.)

## III. God values human life more highly than other life, v. 7.

God's interest in even the smallest detail about the disciples illustrated Jesus' conclusion. Jesus told His disciples that they were of more value than many sparrows. The word "value" is a combination of two Greek words, δια (*dia*) meaning "through," and φερο (*phero*) meaning "to carry." According to Liddell and Scott, (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 389b), δια means "preeminence" when appended to φερο. Thus the compound word διαφερο has a literal meaning of "to carry preeminence." The disciples held preeminence over the sparrows.

Jesus is saying that God has a hierarchy of value when it comes to life, and the disciples are at the

top of that hierarchy. However, it isn't only the disciples who enjoy this preeminence. Three important observations can be made that imply that Jesus had more than only the disciples in mind when He considered human worth. First, it is likely that Judas Iscariot was among the disciples when Jesus offered these encouraging words. He was not a true disciple then or later, but Jesus did not distinguish between him and the other disciples. Second, Jesus spoke of the preeminence of human worth in other contexts where He wasn't speaking only about disciples. For example in Matthew 12:12, Jesus compared the value of people to animals. He said, "How much more valuable than is a man than a sheep!" The word "valuable" in Matthew 12:12 is the same Greek word found in Luke 12:7. Third, Scripture makes it clear that Jesus died for all people (John 3:16), not only the disciples. His love for humanity led Him to sacrifice Himself on their behalf, even though many of them would never accept His offer of forgiveness.

The high value God places on humans should lead us to place a higher value on human beings than other living things as well. Humans are not simply the end product of blind evolution, different in degree but not kind. Humans are different in kind as well as degree. Genesis 1:26-27 reveals this distinction. Only man was created in God's image. While no one can state with certainty what it means to be created in the image of God, the biblical record asserts that only human beings possess this characteristic of the divine.

### **Conclusion**

The truths derived from Jesus' message to His disciples remind us that all life has value to God and that humans have the greatest value. God sees no difference in value between the obedient and the disobedient, the child and the adult, the sick and the healthy, the poor and the rich. In fact, the very example of Jesus' own ministry to the sick and poor illustrates His great care and concern for the weakest among us. The Christian, and all people, should respond to humanity in the same way Jesus did and consider all human life, in every stage and condition, of equal value and worthy of absolute protection and care.

## **WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?**

Start a pregnancy care center or volunteer to work in one.

Teach young people the importance of abstinence from sex until marriage.

Adopt a child.

Find ways to meet the basic needs of people in your community out of respect for the high value God has placed on all human beings.

Encourage your church to observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday every year.

Write letters to your elected officials encouraging them to pass laws to protect all people regardless of age or condition.

Write letters to the editor expressing your reasons for being pro-life.

Hold seminars in your community to provide people the opportunity to hear pro-life answers and positions.

## **HELPFUL SCRIPTURE**

Bible verses about the sanctity of human life

Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Exodus 23:7; Job 10:8-12; Job 31:15; Job 33:4; Psalm 106:37-38; Psalm 127:3; Psalm 139:13-16; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6; Luke 1:41-44; Acts 17:24-28; Galatians 1:15

## SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The sermon notes on this sheet, the accompanying fact sheet, and the enclosed materials serve as resources as you prepare to teach and then lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own answers.

Create Learning Readiness: Perhaps bring an old baby blanket, pacifier, or some worn out toy that was very special to you or someone else. Ask the group how much they think you could sell it for. Or go to a thrift store and buy some old toy or special item and show it to the group. Ask them how much they think you paid for it. Tell them the actual price and then ask them to think about what that item meant to someone when it was new. Tell them the item is hardly worth anything now, except for the wonderful memories someone has from it.

**Ask:** *What causes things to have value?*

Let the group share ideas about why things have value. Write down their answers and see if there are some common categories. You should come up with at least two general categories: Value can be determined by what someone is willing to pay for something or by the amount of effort put into creating it.

**Ask:** *Do some things have no value?*

**Option 1:** If the group says that all things have value, *say: This is especially true for human life.* This Bible study will reveal just how much value God places on human beings. Then go directly to the Bible passage.

**Option 2:** If the group says some things have no value, *ask: What makes it valueless?* Consider these answers and describe how some people could use these answers to argue that some human beings, especially the unborn, the diseased, and the elderly, have no value. *Say: Some people believe that if a human life doesn't meet their criteria for value, it is disposable. This Bible study will reveal that God does not feel this way about human life.*

Instruct the group to open their Bibles to Luke 12:6-7. Choose a member to read the passage. (Make sure this person is comfortable reading in public.)

*Say: This passage teaches some important facts about how much God values life, especially human life.*

Direct the group to look at verse 6.

**Ask:** *How can you sell five sparrows for two cents? Suppose someone just wanted two sparrows. How could you determine the cost?*

If the group doesn't come up with the answer, explain that you would have to find a way to divide a penny, because in Matthew 10:29 Jesus says that a penny will buy two sparrows.

**Ask:** *Because this couldn't be done, how is it that you could get five sparrows for two cents?*

The fifth one was free if a person bought four.

*Say: Jesus said that not one of these sparrows is forgotten before God. What is Jesus trying to get across to His disciples?*

God is even aware of the free one, the one on which no one placed any value.

**Ask: What does this tell us about God?**

That God values all life.

Direct the group to look at verse 7. Note that Jesus is now talking about His disciples.

**Ask: What is the point of talking about people's hair?**

It is a very insignificant thing. Even something as insignificant as hair is of interest to God.

Direct the group back to verse 7.

**Say: How do verse 6 and Jesus' comments about hair fit together?**

People might consider counting the exact number of hairs on a person's head to be a worthless endeavor, about as worthless as a fifth sparrow. But not God. He values the disciples so much that He is even interested in how many hairs they have on their heads. Not even one hair is missed in God's attention to them.

**Ask: Do you think this attention applies only to the disciples?**

Let the group discuss their answer to this question. If necessary, share the reasons provided in the Sermon Notes section of this guide that demonstrate that the interest of God in the smallest details about the disciples applies to all humans.

**Ask: How does this make you feel?**

Let the group talk about how this truth makes them feel.

Direct the group to the last half of verse 7.

**Ask: Does Jesus consider some things to have more value than other things?**

He states clearly that people have more value than sparrows.

**Ask: Why would God say the disciples have more value than sparrows?**

List the reasons that God would consider the disciples to have more value.

**Ask: Does Jesus suggest that some human beings have more value than others? How do we know that all human beings have equal value to God?**

Because Jesus made a general statement to this effect in Matt. 12:12, and because Jesus died for all people (John 3:16).

**Ask: Should we think differently about the value of human life in comparison to all other life based on these statements by Jesus?**

Yes.

**Ask: How does this study influence your attitude about the sanctity of human life?**

Let the group share insights about the sanctity of human life they have had as they have worked their way through this passage.

**Ask: How can we help others to recognize this important truth so they will share God's attitude about all human life?**

Let the group share ways they can do this. Talk about some direct actions they can take as a group or individuals right away. Get the group to commit to doing something to help others understand how much God values all human life.