

The Pharisee And The Publican

Luke 18:9-14

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 18:14

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Two bags or boxes, two paper cutout men, tape or glue, a plastic baggy full of old coffee grounds, and filter (or something equally unappealing), and as many small prizes (erasers, pencils, stickers, etc.) as the number of children in your class.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

The Humble Train

Count the number of children in your class. Line up that number of chairs in the center of your classroom. Tell them that the chairs represent a train and the object of the game is to be the conductor. Have the children walk in a single file line around the chairs as you play music or sing a tune. Instruct them to sit in the nearest seat when the music stops. Most of the children will try to get in the front seat. When they are all seated, congratulate the child sitting in the last seat as the conductor of the humble train.

Play again, only this time have the front seat be the conductor's chair. Pretty soon, it should be obvious to the children that the conductor of the humble train is the one who defers to the next person.

Explain that today you will learn about pride and humility. Let the class know that **God honors a humble heart.**

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to sit with the multitude that followed Jesus as He taught them about heaven? Just think how awesome it would be to sit at His feet and marvel at His every word. Without a doubt, He would say something kind and comforting, but He would also lovingly share with us those areas in our life that needed to be changed because of sin.

In our lesson today, we get the privilege of sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His words. He is here and so is His Word. Like those who listened to Him in the crowds, we will either respond to Him with a humble heart, or walk away filled with pride. Let's look at our lesson today and see what Jesus has to tell us.

LUKE 18:9

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others...

Again, we see that Jesus used a parable. Remember that a parable is a story that is cast alongside a truth to help us understand it better. This time, the parable reveals the spiritual condition of those who have a heart filled with pride. Jesus wanted to show us that one cannot trust in himself for righteousness and should not look down on others with contempt as the Pharisees did.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus continually exposed the self-righteousness and unbelief of the Pharisees. The worst thing anyone can do is to fool themselves into thinking that God will accept them based on how good they are. Since the Pharisees were religious leaders, they thought that they were right and Jesus was wrong. Their pride had blinded them spiritually, and their hearts were completely sinful.

Jesus, filled with compassion, continually tried to touch their hearts with the truth, hoping to save them. **God honors a humble heart.** Pride will only separate us from the grace and mercy of God.

LUKE 18:10

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."

The people that lived in Jerusalem often went to the temple to pray, for it was the center of their worship (Isaiah 56:7). When Jesus threw the moneychangers out of the temple, He reminded them that the temple was God's house of prayer (Luke 19:46).

Prayer is our way of communicating with God. He cherishes the time we spend with Him. Prayer in the temple was a common practice during that time, but some came with an attitude of pride, which hindered their relationship with God.

Jesus said, "two men went up to the temple to pray." When God looks at us, He does not make a distinction by our wealth, popularity or social status. He sees us with no partiality. Our wealth or status does not impress God. Our humility and a desire to fellowship are what please Him.

The Heart of the Matter

Take two bags or boxes and cut a hole big enough to see their contents. In one container, put a baggy with old coffee grounds and a used coffee filter, or something equally unappealing. In the other put small prizes. Cover the hole of the container holding the ugly contents with a paper cutout man that is decorated beautifully; use glitter or colorful crayons. On the container with the prizes place a paper cutout man that is decorated shabbily. Attach the cutout men so they can be lifted to view the contents of their containers.

Allow the children to peak inside one of the containers one at a time. Instruct them to look inside the container that looks the most appealing. Most of them will look inside the one with the nicely decorated cutout man first.

Reveal to the class the contents of each container. Explain to your class that we cannot judge the contents of a person's heart by their outward appearance. If you would like to, you can pass out the small prizes to each child.

A Pharisee and a Publican entered the temple to pray. The Pharisees were religious leaders who hated Publicans, or tax collectors, because the Pharisees considered them sinners (Luke 15:1,2).

LUKE 18:11

"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'"

As the Pharisee prayed, he made sure that God and those around him were aware of how good he was compared to others. He considered himself better than the other people; he exalted himself. He used others as his standard of righteousness. He felt he was better than everyone else and thought this made him righteous in God's eyes. We are not to compare ourselves to others but to Jesus. When we do this, we realize how

sinful we are and how much we need Jesus. May we look to Jesus alone, the Author and Finisher of our salvation.

The Pharisee was deceived in his heart about prayer. Because he was a religious leader, he was more concerned about how others looked at him than how God saw him. He used prayer as a means of getting public recognition, not as a means of fellowship with God (Matthew 6:5). This man was nothing more than a hypocrite (an actor) in the eyes of Jesus.

Notice that because the Pharisee's heart was in the wrong place, he was not talking to God but with himself. When we are prideful, we are only showing that we love ourselves more than God. Pride in our lives will block us from having the relationship with God that He wants us to have.

In our lives we need to look at why we do certain things. Do we pray or read our Bible or even do nice things for others so they can see us? Do we do things so people will praise us? What is in our heart is the most important thing. We need to do things to please God, not to make other people think we are good.

LUKE 18:12

"I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess."

The Pharisee was also fooled about himself because he thought that he was accepted by God based on what he did or did not do. Though Jews were required to fast only once a year (on the Day of Atonement), he fasted twice a week (Leviticus 16:29). He also tithed all of his possessions, even the tiny herbs in his garden (Matthew 23:23), but Jesus was not impressed.

One of the biggest lies of Satan is to make people think and believe that they must do something to try to live up to God's standard, to be accepted by Him, to get into heaven. But we can only be saved by God's grace, which we receive through faith in Jesus, not as a result of what we do (Ephesians 2:8). There is nothing for us to brag about when it comes to our salvation because it is all based on the work Jesus did on the cross (Romans 8:1).

LUKE 18:13

"And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

Now that we have seen the pride of the Pharisee, Jesus tells us about the Publican, who was a tax collector. Tax collectors are often spoken of in the Bible as being sinners. Publicans often used threats and force to collect taxes for the Roman government, bringing oppression to the people. Sometimes they would misuse their power and collect more than they were supposed to. They were also considered ceremonially unclean because of their continual contact with Gentiles, and they often worked on the Sabbath Day. To the Jews they were sinners.

Jesus tells us that the Publican stood at a distance in the Temple, grieved by his sinful condition. Unlike the Pharisee, the Publican did not want to be noticed as he humbly came to God. His sin had overwhelmed him with sorrow and despair. He could not even look up towards Heaven.

Repeatedly beating on his breast, the Publican knew where his greatest problem was, and he called out to God for mercy. How does sin affect you?

Is your heart truly sorry about your sin? We must have a heart that seeks God's mercy and forgiveness with a willingness to repent. We must remember it is God's kindness that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). God desires to lead us to repentance and have us return to Him because He is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9).

God sees everything we do, and He knows whether or not we are truly repentant for our sins. The Publican knew the enormity of his sins and that he stood before a holy and righteous God. **God honors a humble heart.** We will either have an attitude like the Pharisee, who was prideful, or the Publican, who was humble.

LUKE 18:14

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Pharisee's pride condemned him, but the Publican's humble faith saved him. Jesus declared the Publican justified because he was truly sorry for his sins. The word justified means to be considered righteous by God. Because of his humble heart and his desire for forgiveness, the Publican prayer was accepted by God and his sins forgiven.

The Pharisee and the Publican

Choose a couple of volunteers from your class to act out the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Instruct the Pharisee to pray a very haughty, proud prayer, paying specific attention to trying to impress the class. Have the Publican beat his chest and cry out: the more humble the better.

Ask your students which child they would most like to have for a friend or spend time with.

What is your attitude towards sin in your life? Do you have the heart of the Pharisee or the Publican? We are all sinners in need of God's saving grace (Romans 3:23-26). You too can be justified and reckoned as righteous by asking Jesus to forgive you and by putting your faith and trust in Him to save you.

It is necessary for us to humble ourselves before God to receive forgiveness, but those who exalt themselves in pride will be brought low, being humbled by God. The Publican's prayer should be our prayer, because we all need God's mercy everyday. **God honors a humble heart.** Do not let pride destroy that blessing.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of humility, thanking the Lord for His forgiveness of sin. If any children have not responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.