

Luke 18:1-17

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

⁴ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’ ”

⁶ And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Little Children and Jesus

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

Luke 18:1-17

1. When was a time when your persistence paid off?
2. Does persistence in prayer mean: a) endless repetition, b) long sessions of prayer, c) attending daily [or weekly] prayer meetings, d) keeping our requests constantly before God, e) something else (what?) What does it mean to be persistent in our prayers?
3. Why did the judge eventually give in to the woman's requests? (18:4-5)
4. How are God's actions the same—and how will they differ—from the unjust judge?
5. Why do people stop praying? How should we respond when we do not see our prayers answered? How can you guard against the temptation to give up praying when you do not get the results you expect?
6. How can we be sure we are praying for things that are within the will of God?
7. How does it feel to be in the presence of someone markedly better than you at what you do best?
8. What motivated the Pharisee to pray? (18:11-12)
9. What would be examples of "Pharisees" and "tax collectors" today? How important are outward appearances in our culture today? How do we judge people according to their outward appearance? Does outward appearance matter?
10. How do you approach God in your prayers? What enables us to be confident before God?
11. Why does God honor the prayers of a humble person?
12. Why did the disciples rebuke those who were bringing their babies to Jesus?
13. What childlike qualities do we need to enter the kingdom of God? What hinders us from having the childlike qualities that God wants us to have? What is one childlike quality you would like to cultivate *this week*?