



Good News **for all people.**

The Gospel of Luke

Week 18 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 2/5/23

Text: Luke 18

NOTE: For this week, Boulder's sermon will focus on verses 1-17, Thornton's on verses 9-17, and Erie's on 18:35-19:10. The questions here have a heavier focus on verses 1-17. The last two questions cover (most of) the rest of the chapter. Question 6 will be most relevant for Erie's sermon.

In all, these questions might be most helpful (especially for the Erie Campus) if you familiarize yourselves with all of chapter 18 by reading it as a group rather than focusing only on the verses that were part of the sermon you heard.

Icebreaker: What have you done (or are doing presently) that has required great persistence? Did you ever think of giving up?

1. In verses 1-8, why does Jesus commend the widow?

Yes, this is simple. She's commended for her persistence. It's remarkable, though, if we consider that this judge has both a position of great authority and she—as a widow—has virtually no authority. He is completely reluctant to respond to her, yet she keeps at it despite whatever intimidation or inferiority or exhaustion she might have felt. Maybe it's not so simple after all!

Application: Why is it easy to lose heart when prayers go unanswered? Is there a prayer you've been praying that you're still waiting for God to answer?

2. Jesus is saying, in-effect, "If this unrighteous judge will do this, then how much more will God?!" What is it about God's attributes or character that makes him trustworthy with prayer?

We might think of how God is all-present (omnipresent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-powerful (omnipotent). We might think of how God cares for his people (1 Peter 5:7) or how God has brought deliverance in the past (e.g., the Exodus, Daniel, etc.). We can read about God's promises to be with his people in places of fear and danger (Isaiah 43). The cross is the ultimate display of God's trustworthiness.

Application: Are there other verses in God's Word that can encourage us to be persistent in prayer? Look up Romans 12:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 as examples.

3. In verses 9-14, how would you describe the opposing attitudes of the Pharisee and the tax collector? Knowing what you know about both occupations, why is this surprising?

The Pharisee is blinded by his own pride—his sense of superiority to others. He's out of touch with reality because of how prideful he is. Meanwhile, the tax collector seems fully aware of how unworthy he is of God's favor. He knows he's a scoundrel and that his only hope is God's mercy. This is surprising because we should expect the religious leader to be the one who displays humility and expresses his need for God's mercy. The tax

collector, though, would have been hated by many yet his humility makes him the object of God's mercy.

Application: Humility can be explained as complete dependence upon God for everything. In what way is the Pharisee missing it, and what keeps us from being humble (only those who might struggle with this need to answer)? ☺

You could answer this really simply by saying that the Pharisee is missing humility because of his pride; but try to go a layer deeper to the ways his pride is displayed. Notice the sense of superiority and self-sufficiency as he recites his resume: "Here are the many reasons God is impressed with me...and why God owes me his blessing."

4. In verses 15-17, we aren't told why the disciples tried to stop the children from coming to Jesus, but what are some possible reasons? What does Jesus's response indicate about how he views the situation and values the children?

It could be that the disciples thought the children were a distraction from the "real work" that needed to be done in that moment. Maybe the children were loud and injecting a level of chaos into the scene (imagine that!). Maybe the disciples thought Jesus was far too important to be giving attention to such insignificant human beings. Jesus, in typical fashion, turns the tables by elevating and celebrating these children. THEY are the model of what we all must become like in order to be a part of God's Kingdom. Jesus is amazing.

Application: What happens to child-like faith as we get older? How can we cultivate a faith that stays child-like?

5. This week's sermons are not focusing on verses 18-30, but if you read this passage, what do you notice in it of the themes we've seen prior to it of humility (or pride) and a child-like faith? How do you think wealth relates to these themes?

The rich ruler, like the Pharisee who prayed, is attempting to stand on his own merits before God (i.e., he's prideful). Moreover, the treasure of heaven is apparently not enough to offset the loss of his earthly wealth (i.e., he lacks faith). Wealth can be a barrier, both in the sense that it can be viewed as a kind of validation that we are smart, wise, righteous, etc., and it can tie us down to the treasures of this life rather than setting our hope on the life to come.

6. In verses 35-43, how would you describe the blind man's words and actions? What qualities does he display that lead up to his healing by Jesus?

We can see the man's persistence, boldness, and faith in Jesus. Ironically, this blind man is able to see, by faith, Jesus's true identity better than most. Jesus is the "Son of David," which is a term that relates directly to the Messiah. The blind man sees what those with sight are blind to.

If you read all of chapter 18 this week, how might these qualities match those described earlier in the chapter—of the widow, the tax collector, the children, and the very opposite perspective of the ruler?

We're probably meant to compare how the blind man displays *persistence* in crying out to Jesus even when people around him try to get him to stop, how he *humbly* repeats the tax collector's cry for "mercy," how he displays *an unreserved trust* in Jesus, and how he—most likely as a poor man—had *no hesitation* following Jesus.

Application: What kind of steps can we take to help cultivate these qualities in our own lives? Take a minute to pray as a group that the Lord would do this good work in us both in our LifeGroups and church-wide.

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.