



Small Group Notes: Luke 18:15-30 - Kingdom Perspectives

Opening Discussion: talk about what we can learn from kids when it comes to church, human relationships, worship and talking about Jesus.

- Jesus chose to illustrate his new spiritual kingdom with children, and the freedom they possess to enjoy life and draw near to God's presence.
 - Jesus had just illustrated kingdom prayer as a humble nagging persistency. What illustrates humble nagging persistency than children?!
- **[15] Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. [16] But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. [17] Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."**
 - Remember what I said last week about humility...
 - Fake Humility can be contrived and earns you no favors with God.
 - Being Humbled accomplishes nothing when we respond in pride.
 - A Humble character can only happen with a proper Gospel perspective through the constant reminding of the Holy Spirit!
 - **Children weren't focused on the social standards and standings of others, they just wanted to be near Jesus, or were being carried to Jesus by their parents.**
 - Dad's, let's just mention it. We are to follow the example of Christ by receiving the presence of our kids and being approachable.
 - But let us not do the normal guilt-trip Father's Day message either. Let's remember that God is the better Father, and He offers us His grace and strength to continue pursuing our kids and preparing ourselves to be available to our kids, at any age.

How is God a better father than even our very best examples of a dad?

- **Vs 18-30 The difficulty of letting go of the temporal**

- **[18] And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” [19] And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. [20] You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”**
- Jesus started his teaching to the ruler by acknowledging the ruler's acknowledgment of his credibility.
 - When the ruler said “good teacher”, Jesus’ response was his way of saying: “you said it, not me, but it is true.”
 - I find this an interesting moment in a time when we as pastors have lost our qualifications. I am astounded at how often people ask me for wisdom and advice, and then proceed to argue with me as they quote a blogger with no connection to them, and often no theological credentials. (Medical doctors face similar issues with this because of WebMD). Jesus was establishing here a baseline of teaching authority that there would be no argument, and as we will see, there was not an argument.
- Jesus simply reminded this ruler that there is a righteous standard. Jesus wasn't offering the ruler a works based standard. He was reminding the ruler that the standard was clear: perfection. Jesus was leaving a bread crumb trail for the ruler to follow, and the ruler followed it very well. See his response!
- **[21] And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” [22] When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” [23] But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. [24] Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! [25] For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”**

Put yourself in the emotional shoes of this ruler. What is so difficult about selling everything to follow the Lord? If God audibly asked you to do it, could you do it?

- The one thing that mattered most was the next command: “Follow Me!”. Jesus knew how difficult it would be to let go of wealth to live as a pauper in the desert following Jesus.

- Notice we have a second reference to “youth” here in that the ruler had obeyed the law since his youth. He was raised right, but still he only had wealth and law, not a desire to follow Jesus with his whole heart. Parents (especially dads), let’s be careful no to assume that just because we raise our kids in church, send them to Christian school or homeschool them, read the Bible to them every day and listen to Christian radio in the car that our kids are going to be okay. We need to create an environment in our homes where our kids can openly question and wrestle in a safe space. We need to know that Jesus has their hearts, not just their behavior!
- Jesus articulated his “yoke” out of the ten commandments, but got to a deeper point of this man’s identity: his wealth. (he touched on other areas of identity a few verses later.)
 - **For the ruler, there was a disconnect between what he could do, and the identity he needed to let go of**
 - In many instances, what God will ask us to let go of in our desires or expectations will be much more difficult than what He asks us to do. This is not always the case, but it must be recognized and considered.

Questions: Do you find the “thou shalt” of scripture easier or harder than the “thou shalt not”? Do you find it easier to take on a burden, or let go of a blessing? Why?

- According to verse 27 it is **only possible to let go of our own identity with the help of God.**
- **[26] Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” [27] But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.” [28] And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.” [29] And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, [30] who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”**
 - Peter is not boasting here. Peter is also processing this train of thought and wants to verify that following Jesus into eternal life. Jesus graciously assures Peter that the sacrifice made will yield incredible blessings in the eternal kingdom of God.
 - Look closely at what Jesus prioritized in these verses. He didn’t say that Peter had left wealth! Jesus had no concern for wealth. Jesus articulated that Peter had left family: house (or household), wife, siblings, parents and children. We see here a

third reference to kids in this chapter. (Note: I did not intentionally choose this passage for Father's day. This is the beauty of teaching exegetically and trusting the Lord to meet needs and be precise.) Jesus was communicating to Peter that he had properly prioritized his life to put Jesus first.

- This is another quick Father's Day principle to acknowledge: if you love your family, you will prioritize Jesus over your family. Again: "seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you!"¹

Question: How do we prioritize Jesus in our family dynamic and above our families in practice?

- You can trust God with your family! He loves your family as much as you do. Jesus died for them after all! I don't know what the kingdom of heaven will look like when it comes to your family, but I do know that Jesus promised here that if you prioritize him and love your family in a Godward direction, you will not be disappointed in Heaven.
- What about family that doesn't want to pursue the Lord, or even believe the Gospel? This presents a tough scenario! Jesus spoke to this very issue:
- **Matthew 10:34–39 [34] "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. [35] For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. [36] And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. [37] Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [38] And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. [39] Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (ESV)**
- This passage gives us honest truth: our faith in Christ, when lived out, is going to put us at odds with others, including our family. It doesn't feel good to people who don't know Jesus, when we choose Jesus over them, but Jesus has asked us to trust him enough to choose him over our families and in doing so, entrust our families to him.

Discussion: Who in your family right now is at odds with you because of either your faith, or your prioritization of your faith? (Note: sometimes believing family

¹ Matthew 6:33

members aren't against our faith, but rather how much we orient our lives around it at the expense of other activities.)

- **Three messages of hope this morning for those living in contentious family environments:**
 - **1. Your responsibility is to be a person who lives at peace.**
 - The gospel already places us at odds with others, but we don't have to add to that struggle by being unkind and angry people. (This is especially important in political seasons!)
 - **Romans 12:18 [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (ESV)**
 - **Hebrews 12:14 [14] Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (ESV)**
 - This is why the pursuing dialogue rather than monologuing at someone is so important!
 - **Philippians 4:4–7 [4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)**
 - Paul connects anxiety and people problems. His solution? Be reasonable!
 - The word reasonable means “to be fair, equitable, mild, gentle”.² If you are going to win your family to the Gospel and to Christ, you need to be the kind of person people want to be around!
 - We can get really anxious about what we see going on in the lives of our family members as they make really bad decisions. We know that the Gospel is the answer, but they aren't going to receive the Gospel if we present it angrily!

² ἐπιεικῆς, epieikēs (Strong's G1933) connotes the idea of being “like a gentle person”, nuanced that even when we don't feel like being gentle, we should strive to be so.

- Illustration: the lady at Disney who yelled at her kid to have fun on Dumbo.

Discussion: talk about ways to hold on to ones convictions in a peaceable way.

- 2. Don't assume you know the whole story. Heaven will surprise us all.

- **Matthew 7:21–23 [21] “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ [23] And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (ESV)**

- The thief on the cross teaches us that there is no hopeless story. There are people in our midst who we would all assume will be heaven some day, who will be missing. If that is true, then the reverse is true that people will be there we had no idea had surrendered their life! Heaven is a theology of hope, so why not have hope?!
- “There is no charge for miracles!” - Ray Pritchard

- 3. Your prayers matter!

- **James 5:15–16 [15] And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. [16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (ESV)**

- We pray in faith, trusting the perfect will and loving heart of God.
- We must pray for family members who are struggling.
- We must pray for unbelieving family members who refuse to surrender to God's salvation.

Prayer Moment: take some time to pray specifically for unbelieving family members who need to surrender to Jesus for salvation.

- Connecting the dots of Luke 18:

- **God has called us to live for more than ourselves, more than an earthly identity: he has given us a vision of the kingdom revolving around the Word of God and the Souls of Men. This includes intentionality in my life choices, and faith that God's work in me will match His will for me. This is the identity of Christ in me.**
- When we are living for a higher purpose than temporal earthly things, that also affects our human relationships.
- Review the **Gospel Fluencies**.³ How do these apply to our love and pursuit of others in our family?
 - **1. God is great, so I don't have to be in control!**
 - **2. God is glorious, so I don't have to fear others!**
 - **3. God is good, so I don't have to look elsewhere!**
 - **4. God is gracious, so I don't have to prove myself!**

Closing discussion: how do there Gospel Fluencies encourage you in your own difficult relationships?

³ Jeff Vanderstelt & Jackie Hill Perry, *Gospel Fluency: Speaking the Truths of Jesus into Every Day Life*, (Grand Rapids: Crossway, 2017)