

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"TWO PRAYERABLES AND A KINDER KINGDOM" | LUKE 18: 1-17 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What is a memorable prayer you've heard or read somewhere?

"The Persistent Widow" (Luke 18: 1-8)

Jesus tells a story about a widow who receives justice because of her persistence towards a judge as a way of teaching the importance of persistence in prayer. **Why is it hard to be persistent in prayer? What can be done about these obstacles?**

"The Statue and the Sponge" (Luke 18: 9-14)

Jesus tells a story about how a Pharisee prayed in a way that showed pride while a lost tax-collector prayed in a way that humility. **What are ways pride shows up in prayer? What are ways to grow in humility in prayer?**

"The Kinder Kingdom" (Luke 18: 15-17)

Jesus rebukes his disciples for not allowing children to come to him, saying people need to receive the kingdom of God like a child. **What does this show about Jesus? What does this reveal about people who want to follow Jesus?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

In these two parables and this one event, Luke shows that the desperate and marginalized are received and justified. The type of people who know they need a Savior and honestly express that as they approach God and pray. **Have you been honest in your prayers lately? What would approaching God like a dependent child look like for you? Pray that Jesus would give you the persistence to keep coming back to Him.**

2 Prayerables and A KinderKingdom

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-9 AL: TY Camp. Job Op. Missions Pryr. Unfolding. JM. DC&GS. Prep to Go.
- B. Prayer: Lord, often when we pray we kinda forget why we're really doing it. *Lord, teach us to pray.* We don't want to just send up a polite prayer. God we want to *push back the dark!* Help us to pray not just w/our lips but w/both our heart & souls engaged! Help us to be like John, who was *in the spirit on the Lords day.* And Lord we pray, *In Murrieta, as it is in Heaven.*

II. Slide10 Intro: 2 Prayerables and A Kinderkingdom

- A. On my week of sabbatical, I expected my highlights to be about a specific type of prayer, *spending time in silence, focused prayer.* Nope, up on a cliff looking out over the Pacific, *I felt like I was walking through 3 feet of mud each time I tried. Knocking against a glass ceiling. Banging my head against a wall.*
1. It wasn't that he wasn't speaking to me. *It was on my end, not able to sit and focus the way I was planning to hear from Him* (it was terrible & frustrating). Oh, I had a great time w/my God, *but it was in taking walks, hiking with my camera gear, just spending a week with me and Him.*
 2. So it was *the way of prayer or the type of prayer* I was seeking, just wasn't for this time. He met me in the other ways, *more as walking w/a friend, in an every day conversation, throughout the day.*
- B. Slide11a Prayer is not *an awkward meeting, like sitting down with a bearded monk, where you're trying to think of something profound to say.* Tyler Staton, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools.* (a few quotes from the book)
1. Have you allowed Jesus to become more *a set of ideals* for you, and *less a dynamic person* to whom you relate to in your day-to-day activities?
 2. Do you realize *Jesus* did not reveal the God that we could perfectly understand, *but* that we could perfectly **trust**.

3. When it comes to prayer, God is not grading essays, He's talking to children. I believe God *prefers* our rough draft typos, *versus* our polished, edited version.
4. *Slide11b* What if praying is not about getting **revelation** but its purpose is **consent**. *The daily consenting of the work of God's Spirit in our life, which is deeper than understanding or words.* So *deep calls to deep* from our soul to His.
5. **Prayer** is the highest security clearance in heaven.

C. *2 Prayerables*: 2 Parables on Prayer. **A KinderKingdom**: receiving the kingdom like a child.

III. *Slide12* **THE PERSISTENT WIDOW (1-8) READ**

- A. *Many have misunderstood this parable.* Understand the Bible uses **comparisons** and **contrast** here we have both. Jesus is *comparing* this widows prayer life and ours. *And it's contrasting* this unrighteous judge and God Himself.
1. If an unjust judge helps a poor widow, *how much more* will a loving Father meet the needs of His children.
 2. So God rewards persistency by his children, not because of **weariness**, but rather due to His **faithfulness**.
 3. *Slide13* John Piper uses the illustration: *Faith is the Furnace in your life. Fuel = Grace. Shovel = Prayer.* [If you set down your shovel, your burner goes out] **Keep shoveling!** [or shovel w/o stopping, or pray w/o ceasing]
- B. (1) Whatever Jesus is going to say next it has to do with *always praying and not losing heart.* Which means, *we're going to lose heart as life will be difficult.*
1. *Slide14* But what is she persistent about? Not something petty, not even something she doesn't need, but something that fits into what Jesus called *the weightier matters* (Mt.23:23). **Justice** (4x's). You could say, **Justice Matters!** - Don't picture having to *arm wrestle God in prayer* for something, He already said in 12:32 *fear not little flock, it's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

- C. As we focus in on this **judge**, he is self-obsessed, and has no care for the widow's situation. You feel her **plight**, she has no one to **advocate** for her. Which in that society was really needed. She had no friends in *high places*, only friends in *low places*. She had no resources.
1. The **judges** were always called on to give **particular care** and **Justice** to *the widow, the orphan and the stranger*.
 2. It's how **Isaiah** opens with the *rebuke* to the **judges** for *not giving priority to widows*. Because **God** has a particular care for them. (Is.1:10-17)
- D. Slide15 This widow only has one thing going for her, and that is **Persistence**.
1. Picture her chasing him around town. She follows him to the barber shop "Justice for widows!" To the grocery store, "Justice for widows!"
- E. (5) Then she gave him a beat down - I will give her justice, so that she will **not beat me down** by her continual coming.
1. This literally means, *to give a blackeye*. She exhausted him.
 2. **That's her prayer life!** ... to continue *to plead and plead and plead*.
 3. Are you challenged by this parable? I am.
- F. **Keep knocking, keep seeking like ... Epaphras** (in Col.4:12) *wrestled* in prayer on behalf of the Colossians. **Jacob** *wrestled* with God. **Paul** writes he is *laboring* for the Galatians, like a woman in childbirth.
1. What do you need to wrestle with God presently in prayer?
- G. (6-8) Jesus applies this now from the lesser to the greater. If an unjust judge does this for the widow, *how much more* will **God** do it in our lives?

IV. Slide16 **THE STATUE AND THE SPONGE (9-14) READ**

- A. As one said, "If **Grace** is like *rain*, then one is a *statue* & one is a *sponge!*"
1. Picture both being rained on, yet **1 repels water**, the other **absorbs it**.
- B. Jesus now deals with **how** we enter the kingdom. With **humble faith**, w/dependent **faith**. This is how God always operated.
- C. The story reminds us there will be some **surprises** on that final day.

1. In our story it's not the religious man that will go down to his house *justified but instead this filthy tax collector*. It's another *reversal*, it's another *surprise*.

D. Just like the 1st parable He tells us right up front what this parable is about. *It's about people who trust in their own righteousness, they trust in what they do.*

1. They believe that God is going to let all the morally good people into heaven. They believe God is going to evaluate our good deeds & our bad deeds, and as long as we *stay above the tipping point between Mother Teresa and Ted Bundy*, we will be considered *rt* and enter His kingdom.
2. People are still shocked today after they've done so much for God, & then God doesn't reciprocate & give them what they want, when they want it.
 - a) Let's remember, it's *not good people* that are ushered into His kingdom, *It's forgiven people!*

E. Slide 17 THE STATUE (the Pharisee) (note, "I" 5 x's in text)

F. (9) Here is *self righteous worship and self righteous comparison*.

1. Because one of the symptoms of *self righteous pride* is comparing yourself to other people in order to make yourself feel superior.
2. And remember *behavior modification*, and simply *following commands* doesn't create Christ-followers. *It creates Pharisees.*

G. *Standing by himself* - I guess this is *religious social distancing?*

H. *Look who he compares himself to* (extortioners, unjust, adulterers, this tax collector)

1. *"I thank you I'm not a terrorist. I'm not a serial killer. And, I thank you my family's never been on the Jerry Springer show."*
 - a) You're not supposed to compare yourself to a terrorist, but to *God's perfect holiness*.
 - b) *If you were out on a green hillside and saw a sheep, it would look really really white. But if the snow fell, you would say, *wow that sheep is dirty*.

I. We also see that he goes *above and beyond the law* in his *fasting & tithing*.

1. **Fasting requirement** was only *once a year* on the **day of Atonement**. **Wow**, he's doing it 104 x's a year (*twice a week*). **And** his **tithes** are of **all** *not just of the field & the stall*. **I guess he not only knew this, but was determined God should know it from him, and others also.**
 2. He had an *intellectual conviction* to come and pray, **but** yet he doesn't **make contact with God**. [Hell is full of *intellectual conviction*].
- J. **Careful**, at this point being very critical of **this Pharisee** and we might even pray, *"God, I think you that I am not like this Pharisee."* :)
- K. **Slide18 THE SPONGE** (Tax Collector)
- L. Maybe he's thinking of Ps.24, *Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart.* **And** he thinks, *surely not me!*
- M. 1st he's **standing far off** - not front and center, probably off in a corner somewhere.
1. Contrasts: 1st, **up front**. 2nd, **in back**. 1st, **looks around at others**. 2nd, **looks down**. 1st, **puffs out chest**. 2nd, **beats his** (a sign of contrition/sorrow). 1st, **better than others**. 2nd, has self-awareness *he is a sinner*.
- N. **A sinner** - def article, *the sinner*. (chief)
1. He doesn't pray, *God be merciful to me one who occasionally has a moral lapse. Or, God be merciful to me for I am not perfect. God be merciful to me for I struggle with some stuff.* Often the default in our heart is to justify ourselves.
 2. He doesn't use the normal word for **mercy**, **but atonement**. It's our Eng word **propitiate** = *turn away wrath by means of sacrifice*. (2x's here & Heb.2:17). This man recognizes he needs something **outside** of himself.
- O. The Pharisee thanked God that he was not like this man, **and the reality was, he's wasn't like him!** This tax collector left *justified* because he owned his sin.

P. **Slide19 Poem** by Richard Crashaw, “*Two men went to pray; or, rather say, one went to brag, the other, to pray; one stands up close, and treads on high, where the other dare not send his eye. One near to the altar trod, the other to the alter’s God.*”

Q. Once I was making **balloon animals** in **Haiti** but I noticed the kids **untied** the animal that I made, and then **untied** the balloon, letting the air out. They liked **empty** balloons over **filled** balloons! [I believe God is the same]

1. **Balloon Illustration:** (1st man) blow up balloon w/each statement [I'm not like **others**. I'm not like the **tax collector**. I **fast** twice weekly. I **give more \$** than everyone else, **POP!**]. (2nd man) don't blow up. No hot air, not full of himself, **Love is not puffed up!**

V. **Slide20 KINDER-KINGDOM (15-17) READ**

A. We're not only to enter the kingdom *like this tax collector*, but also *as a child*.

B. **Slide21** May I pause: Today is **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**: We celebrate **Life** and recognize **the Creator** who alone gives **Life**. With the recent Supreme Court decision, we certainly have reason to *be thankful!* Yet with that decision comes all the decisions each of our **States** need to make.

1. There is 1 abortion every 34 seconds. I'd like to pray **a baby dedication** for the 64 million babies that have been aborted in the US *that never got a baby dedication*. [we just read *they were bringing even infants to Jesus* & now we do the same]

We pray: Abba 1st will you *touch* each of them right now. **You** knew them when **You** *formed their inward parts; you knitted them together in their mother's womb* in which for some it was their home for only a few days/weeks/months. **God** we praise **You**, for each of these **64 million children** who were *fearfully & wonderfully made in Your image!*

C. **Slide22** This story also emphasizes **humility** and **humble dependence**. Faith, like a child means that we are **dependent**.

D. Let's not read **our context** into the Bible. We have a high view of children, we can even say that children often *run our lives*. As one person said, *we don't have a matriarchy or a patriarchy but a kindergarchy*.

1. In the 1st century children were quite **insignificant** until they were old enough to be useful. Many children died young (50% die before age 10). One writer said *children were more desperate than cute*. That's our context. We have children that are **desperate and not assured a long life, and not particularly useful**. So they are on the fringes, or on the margins. So because of their **vulnerable** position, you can understand why parents are bringing their children to Him. (Like Jacob laying hands on, praying for, and blessing each of his children, in Genesis).

E. The disciples rebuke them, because children were to be in the background of society. They're thinking Jesus is too important and too busy for these children.

1. But unlike other rabbis of the day, *Jesus had time for everyone!*

F. Let the children come to me. He loves children.

1. He rebukes the rebukers. *Let the vulnerable come to Me, the weak.*

G. Receive the Kingdom like a Child - Luke has brought up *widows, tax collectors, and children*. I think to show us *the kind of community that Jesus is assembling*. Those that recognize their **desperate need** for Him.

1. *Like a child* is often taught today as coming to Christ **innocently**, but **Have You Had Children???** :) I think the point is these *children* are **desperate. Helpless. Dependent** on God for everything.
2. *We are the community of the desperate. We are the community of the justified. We are the community of those in need.*

H. Still don't know how to pray, just pray right now, *God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*

I. Keywords: