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“The Pharisee and Tax Collector”

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Beyond the
Weekend

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY, + ACT.

2026 Focus: 12 Months of Prayer | July: Worship

Each month, journey through a different biblical model of prayer.

Day 1 [Luke 18:9-14](#) | The Confrontation

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. Luke 18:9

As Jesus’s popularity grows, so does the hostility of the religious leaders. The Pharisees are a group of leaders known for meticulous devotion to God’s law, yet they consistently oppose the very One the law points to. Rather than humbly receiving Jesus’s teaching, they respond with increasing resentment, even plotting to kill him. Jesus confronts their hardened, wayward hearts, patiently calling them to the life of God’s kingdom, but they are unwilling to listen.

What about us? Are we willing to heed his warnings about having self-righteous, proud hearts? One of the greatest dangers in the Christian life is subtly replacing dependence on God’s grace with confidence in our own performance. We can think we’re right with God because we go to church, read our Bible, or engage in acts of service. This was the mindset of the Pharisees. But, as Jesus’s rebuke makes clear, it is only a merciful God who can raise sinners like us to new spiritual life.

TODAY: Pray for an open heart to Jesus’s teaching. Ask God to grant you a humble posture that’s receptive to his correction wherever needed. As you pray, take heart in the character of God, who not only convicts of sin but leads in the way of everlasting life. Consider praying something like this: “Father, please help me this week to see you accurately and to understand the nature of my sin. Help me yield to your teaching and have a humble heart that is fully surrendered to you. In Jesus’s name, amen.”

Day 2 [Luke 18:10-12](#) | The Pharisees’ Prayer

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.” Luke 18:11

As people gather around Jesus, he has a story to tell. Jesus’s stories, or parables, are fictional tales that connect everyday realities with deeper spiritual truths. Here, he tells a story involving a Pharisee and a tax collector. The Pharisees are a strict sect of religious teachers who maintain a high view of God’s law and their own traditions. The problem is that in their devotion to spiritual things, many of them have developed a proud attitude. Rather than a posture of humility and dependence, they look down on others out of a sense of superiority.

In the same way, the longer we’ve been around spiritual things—church, Bible reading, or other practices—the more prone we are toward a self-righteous attitude that looks down on others for lesser discipline or devotion.

This mindset can creep into any arena of life. It's possible to be a proud parent who looks down on others whose kids behave slightly worse than our own. It's possible to judge those who struggle with substance abuse if that's never been our issue. The gravitational pull of our fallen hearts is to look down on others who don't share the same struggle as ourselves.

TODAY: Take time to confess any self-righteous attitude. As you do, remember the assurance: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" ([1 John 1:9](#)).

Day 3 [Luke 18:13](#) | The Tax Collector's Posture

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." Luke 18:13

Jesus's story involves a proud Pharisee who puffs his chest over his spiritual accomplishments. It also features a humble tax collector who beats his chest in repentance before God. The tax collector has a right view of God's holiness, his own sin, and dependence upon God's mercy. And the shocker of Jesus's story is that it is the tax collector—the one known for his sin and rebellion—who walks away justified (or declared right with God) rather than the Pharisee.

This parable reveals much about God's kingdom. A right heart posture is not one boosted by spiritual achievements. Rather, it's one that has been humbled by a right understanding of our sin and awed by the greatness of God. We can either come to God with our hands full of our accomplishments or with our hands empty, ready to receive his mercy. A humble posture can fuel honesty about our shortcomings—to God and others—and help us avoid a self-righteous attitude. Those who have the healthiest spiritual lives are those who regularly come before God and acknowledge their need for him.

TODAY: Reflect on the character of God, including his holiness, perfection, and mercy. Praise him for who he is, and ask him for help to see yourself and your sin accurately. As you reflect, pray along with the tax collector from this story: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" ([Luke 18:13](#)).

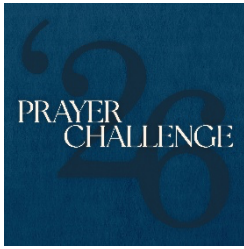
Day 4 [Luke 18:14](#) | The Sacrifice

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. Luke 18:14

Every morning and evening, priests offer sacrifices at the temple on behalf of God's people. Many faithful Jews pause to pray during these times, allowing the daily sacrifices to remind them of their continual need for God's mercy and forgiveness. Jesus tells a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector praying at the temple, likely at these set times of prayer. The tax collector's prayer is rooted in the character of God. Knowing that God is merciful to receive the daily sacrifice, the tax collector asks for such mercy to cover him.

This glimpse of God's character is a shadow of his ultimate expression of love: the offering of his Son on the cross. God saves us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his own mercy (Titus 3:4-5). In Jesus's parable, the tax collector walks away justified, which means being declared right with God. The same can be true for us. Through faith in Christ and his merciful work on the cross, we can be forgiven of all our sins and granted new life. Such standing before God is not based on our merits, but on the mercy of God and the work of his Son.

TODAY: If you have never received Jesus by faith, today could be that day. Like the tax collector, ask God for mercy through faith in Jesus's work on your behalf. If you've already received Christ, praise him for his work and mercy. As you do, sing along with Ada Bible Worship, "[There Is a Savior](#)."



Day 5 [1 Chronicles 29:6–20](#) | David's Prayer of Worship

This year in Beyond the Weekend, journey through different biblical models of prayer—one each month. July's focus is Worship.

But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 1 Chronicles 29:14

As King David's reign over Israel comes to an end, he gathers materials for the temple that his son Solomon will eventually build. Willing and joyful generosity mark this time of collecting. Seeing the wholehearted devotion of their leaders, the people rejoice, and David breaks out in a prayer of praise to God. He worships God for his faithfulness, provision, and rightful rule over the kingdom. He acknowledges God as the giver of all things and humbly recognizes that it is God who stirs up his people's devotion. Evident by their generosity, the Israelites' hearts are fully oriented toward God. This culminates in joy, praise, and worship for the entire nation.

While we find ourselves in different circumstances from the Israelites, our God has not changed. He still elicits our focus and awe. As we worship him for his generosity, faithfulness, and love, our lives, too, can be marked by joy. His generosity toward us prompts us to give of our time, attention, and resources. The opposite is also true. When we worship things other than God, we strive to generate our own happiness and fulfillment. We live exhausted and grow complacent toward what is important. Only by worshiping God and investing in his kingdom can we experience true joy and contentment.

TODAY: Take an honest inventory of your life. Is it characterized by worship that results in joy and generosity? Are you worshiping something other than God? Write a prayer of worship, reflecting on God's character and generosity toward you, asking him to give you a heart more devoted to him.