

Praying with Humility and Repentance

Luke 18:9–14

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Our lives are filled with an abundance of activities. We may be busy working or busy with other activities. We may be so caught up in our activities that we can't see how far we are from Jesus. Too often we go through these cycles in life of being close to God and then drifting away. As a result we aren't talking to Jesus. We're living in the busyness of life. Our relationship with Jesus, the time we spend in prayer becomes more infrequent.

As God's children we're going to explore our prayer lives. As disciples of Jesus we're going to spend some time looking at how to take our prayer lives to the next level. As disciples who are making disciples we'll learn more about how we can help others to pray.

Luke 18:9 -10 (NLT) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: "Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector."

Your prayer life is a reflection of your relationship with God.

Every believer can raise their prayer life to a new level. If you've been a Christian for a day or for your lifetime prayer is a lifeline to the throne room of God. It's just you and God talking and everything else is merely noise. Seasoned believers have become so accustomed to talking with the Lord we forget others might struggle to know how and what to pray.

Some people pray with eloquent words and others speak in simple ideas. Believers pray aloud and silently. But, talking to your Creator and Savior is the important thing. Talking to the only true God is essential.

Money problems, family trouble, illnesses bring us into a conversation talk with God. In the crises we talk to God. In the morning we talk to God. When we go to bed we talk to God.

Do we talk with God about ourselves, our own needs? Yes. Do we bring others – family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors – to God? Yes. Do we want our prayer life to go to new level with God? Yes.

The desire of our hearts to is know the heights and depths, the widths and the lengths of God's love. We want to be in a better relationship with our Savior and Lord. We aren't complacent or weary in our relationship with God, right?

Or maybe we are and we've fallen into a rut. Possibly we've taken the relationship for granted. We may have even gotten to the place of thinking God owes us.

The Pharisee and tax collector were opposites in many ways. The Pharisee was a religious leader. The tax collector was viewed as being corrupt. The Pharisee was an authority on God's Law. The tax collector was a sinner. The Pharisee was a teacher of the Law. The tax collector consistently broke the Law. The Pharisee saw his goodness. The tax collector saw his sin. The Pharisee was

judgmental. The tax collector knew he'd been judged and found guilty. The Pharisee was proud. The tax collector was seeking mercy. It's easy to see from their prayer lives their relationship with God.

Luke 18:11-12 (NLT) The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'

Our attitude toward God is a direct connection to God's answers to your prayers.

Are we so concerned about ourselves that we forget about the greatness of God? Well yes, that is our human nature. If you've been a Christian for a week or the better part of your life, you fall back into your human nature.

You were in your human nature before Jesus saved you. He redeemed you from your old way of life. He delivered you to His new way of living. But, it's too easy to go backwards instead of going forwards. The pull of selfishness is strong. The tug of self-centeredness is tempting. The desire for the old things is always present.

We may not be like the Pharisee bragging about our own goodness. But can easily get caught up in our own wants and wishes. This is when we think of God as our own, personal giver of wishes. We fall into the trap of how God can serve us. But the truth is we are saved, redeemed, and delivered to serve in God's kingdom, to do His will, to fulfill God's plans.

What are we seeking from God? The Pharisee was seeking recognition from God. The tax collector was seeking God's mercy to change his life. I think that what I want most from God, that sounds selfish, is to be used by God. I know that means I need to seek His mercy. Nothing in my life makes me worthy to even ask God for my salvation. It is God's mercy that I can even ask to be forgiven and be made new.

God could see the heart of the Pharisee. God knew that this man was far away. God wanted Him to come closer. But, the man's own self-righteousness kept Him from God. Whatever the Pharisee had in life was only by God's mercy and grace, God's love. But he thought he had earned a place of honor with God. He believed God owed him good things. But, truly he rarely experienced the blessings of the Lord. Rare was the occasion when God answered his prayers.

Luke 18:13 (NLT) "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'

Humility and Repentance are the door to opening your spirit to God's Spirit.

Jesus knows you more thoroughly than you know yourself. I have to wonder how many times Jesus had heard the Pharisee talk about himself and judge others? This may not be a parable as much as it's the truth of what Jesus has heard many religious people say.

Jesus is harsh, He treats the Pharisee bluntly. Jesus speaks the truth. The truth in the ears of the self-righteous always cuts. The Pharisee had an opportunity to see his sin and turn away or to continue on his own path.

More than likely you and I don't resemble the Pharisee. We aren't that self-centered. It's hard to imagine someone who knows God's Law is so caught up in themselves.

Yet, don't you recognize that at times your spirit is not connected to God's Spirit? This is exactly why we need to have the attitude of the tax collector.

We need to humble ourselves before God. That is recognizing that only God is good, and that we aren't. It is seeing ourselves realistically as we are, not in who we might pretend to be. That is to say we need to see ourselves as sinners.

So, if I see myself as a sinner, then I will be seeking God's mercy. This will require me to admit that I still resist God. I need to concede that I fall into my human nature. That leads me to repent, because I see myself not trusting Jesus.

As we humble ourselves before God our spirit is open to God's Spirit. As we repent of our inability to trust God our spirit is open to God's Spirit.

Being open to God's Spirit you will follow Him. When I say that we need to be open to God's Spirit I'm talking about being in a right relationship with God. Even though I'm saved, redeemed, and delivered I still sin. Even though Jesus has washed me clean of my sin I still need to be humble and repent.

It's not that I've lost my salvation, but that my spirit isn't open to God's Spirit. My spirit is open rather to my own desires. Humility and repentance for believers is valuable for removing my desires and putting God's desires first.

Just like the moment of our salvation, the opening of our spirit to God's Spirit is glorious. It is in this act of humility and repentance that we experience mercy and grace anew, and we encounter God's love. Our burden of selfishness, self-centeredness, and our lack of faith is removed. We are in touch with the God who loves us. There is nothing better than being with Jesus.

Luke 18:14 (NLT) I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Always come to God seeking His mercy, and you will experience the uplifting power of God.

God's power changes our world, but more importantly your soul. God's power called the world into order out of chaos. God's power formed people and made them in His image.

God's power heals the sick, casts out demons, and raises the dead. God's power takes away our sin and give us a new life, now and forever. You and I need this power. You and I want this power.

Through faith in Jesus we have this power. The Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives within those who trust Jesus. Through our faith in Jesus we come humbly and with repentance seeking to be more like Jesus. We want this power in our lives to overcome the temptations. We want the power of God to defeat the desires of our human nature. We want the God's power to change our thinking and our heart. We want the power of God to impact our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

Every sinner wants the power of God. Every believer has the power of God. We access this power by talking to God. When we humbly come to God and turning away from our sins we experience His power.

God's power in your life may not heal the sick or raise the dead. But, the power of God in your life removes the demons of your past now and forever.

We need to say to God that we aren't God, but that He is. We need to say to God that without Him we can't overcome.

Until you seek the mercy of God you will remain untouched by His salvation. This was true before you were born. It was true before the earth was formed. Every person ever born was determined to seek power for themselves.

The God of heaven and earth, Jesus saw our dilemma. Jesus decided to show us how to trust God, how to talk to God, how to live each day for God. Jesus was in touch with God's Holy Spirit. Jesus made the decision to put His life in place of our lives. He took our sin upon Himself. He died on the cross. He rose from the dead. He is seated at the right hand of God in heaven.

Jesus is offering to you God's mercy. Jesus has saved you from your sins. Jesus has redeemed you from the power of sin. Jesus has delivered you to a new life with the power of God. It's up to you to ask Jesus with humility and repentance to be made new.