

The Gospel of Luke, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 23: Prayer, Humility, and Riches

Luke 18:1-43

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Much is at stake doctrinally in this chapter, and the teacher should feel its center of gravity. Luke 18 is, at heart, about who enters the kingdom of God and how. Through a persistent widow, a humble tax collector, trusting children, a sorrowful rich man, and a blind beggar, Jesus presses one truth from every angle: God receives and saves the humble, dependent heart that casts itself on His mercy, not the proud and self-sufficient who trust their own record. The heaviest question of the lesson, the Pharisee and the tax collector (vv. 9-14), must be taught with great care. Here Jesus teaches justification. The tax collector who pleaded for mercy "went down to his house justified," while the Pharisee, with all his genuine religious works, did not. The teacher must show that God justifies the penitent who throws himself on divine mercy, while guarding against two errors: the Roman idea that we are justified by accumulating our own merits, and the notion that justification happens by a mere mental "faith only" apart from a humble, repentant, obedient turning to God.

There is also a clear word about riches and about the source of salvation that must be handled honestly. Jesus does not condemn the rich ruler for keeping the commandments; He exposes the idol that the commandments could not touch. Help students see how wealth can quietly become the rival lord that keeps a sincere, moral person out of the kingdom. Then let the disciples' stunned question, "Then who can be saved?" and Jesus' answer, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (vv. 26-27), teach that salvation is finally God's doing, His gift and His power, never a human achievement. The childlike reception of the kingdom and the blind man's persistent cry for mercy reinforce the same point: we come empty-handed and dependent, or we do not come at all.

This chapter was never meant only to be analyzed; it is meant to humble and form us. The Pharisee is uncomfortably easy to recognize in the mirror, and the tax collector's prayer is one every disciple must learn to pray for a lifetime. Aim at both targets each week. Send students home clearer about how a sinner is justified before God and what discipleship costs, and send them home lower, softer, and more dependent, having traded the Pharisee's confidence for the tax collector's plea and the widow's persistence. The goal is hearts that keep crying out for mercy and will not stop until they are heard.

Question 1

Student Question:

Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow so that His disciples “ought always to pray and not lose heart” (v. 1), and He ends by asking, “when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (v. 8). What does this parable teach about the kind of prayer and faith God is looking for, and how does the unjust judge, by contrast, reveal the heart of the God to whom we actually pray?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin where Jesus begins, with His stated purpose. Luke tells us up front why the story is told: “that they ought always to pray and not lose heart” (v. 1). This is a parable about endurance in prayer, aimed squarely at disciples who will face long delays and discouragement. Help the group feel the situation of the widow. She is the most vulnerable person in her society, without husband, power, money, or leverage, facing a judge who “neither feared God nor respected man” (v. 2). All she has is a just cause and a refusal to quit.

The logic of the parable is an argument from the lesser to the greater, and the teacher should make this clear because it is easy to misread. Jesus is not saying that God is like the unjust judge. He is saying the opposite. If even a corrupt, indifferent judge will finally grant justice to a persistent widow simply to be rid of her, how much more will a loving, righteous God respond to His own children who cry to Him day and night (vv. 6–8)? The widow’s persistence does not wear God down; it expresses the faith of people who actually believe He hears.

Notice that Jesus moves immediately from prayer to faith: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (v. 8). This ties persistent prayer to enduring faith and to the Lord’s return. The danger Jesus warns against is not unanswered prayer but a heart that quietly stops believing and stops asking. Prayer that perseveres is the visible evidence of a faith that has not given up on God.

Land the point pastorally and honestly. God’s timing is often slower than ours, and Jesus does not promise that every answer comes quickly. He says God will give justice to His elect “speedily” (v. 8) in the sense of certainly and without unjust delay, but the chosen ones still cry “day and night.” Faithful prayer is not a technique for getting what we want on demand; it is the lifelong posture of people who trust that their God hears and will set all things right.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Persevering prayer as the mark of enduring faith, not a mere technique for getting answers (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 4:2)
- The argument from lesser to greater: God is the opposite of the unjust judge, a loving Father who hears His children
- The link Jesus draws between persistent prayer and being found faithful when the Son of Man returns (v. 8)
- God’s certain justice for His people, even when His timing is slower than we wish (2 Peter 3:8–9)

- The real danger of losing heart, drifting from active prayer into quiet unbelief

Discussion Prompts

- How does this parable correct a picture of God as reluctant or indifferent to our prayers?
- Why do you think Jesus connects persistent prayer with the question of faith at His return?
- What is the difference between giving up on prayer and surrendering an outcome to God?

Question 2

Student Question:

The widow had no power, no money, and no influence, yet she kept coming back, refusing to give up on a just cause (vv. 3–5). Where in your own life have you stopped praying because the answer did not come quickly, and what would it look like this week to bring that request back to God with the widow's stubborn, hopeful persistence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the first self-examining question, and the goal is honesty rather than information. Nearly everyone in the room has prayed for something over a long stretch and slowly stopped expecting it. The widow is held up not as a model of clever strategy but of dogged, hopeful persistence. She kept coming “continually” (v. 5), refusing to treat the silence as the final word.

Help the group distinguish between two things that can look alike. There is a holy surrender that entrusts an outcome to God and rests in His wisdom. And there is a quiet resignation that has simply concluded God is not listening and has gone numb. The widow shows us a third way: continued, expectant asking that neither demands its own way nor abandons hope. Encourage students to name where resignation has crept in.

Invite specificity. A wandering child, a marriage under strain, a health crisis, a long unanswered longing, a lost loved one we ache to see come to Christ. Ask students to name the prayer they have let go cold, and to consider what it would look like to pick it back up this week, not with gritted teeth but with the hope that the Judge of all the earth truly hears.

Reassure them that persistence in prayer is not nagging God or earning an answer. It is the natural breathing of a heart that believes He is good and that He hears. Bringing a request back to God again and again is itself an act of faith, the very faith Jesus longs to find on the earth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The difference between faithful, hopeful persistence and either demanding our own way or sinking into resignation
- Prayer as the breathing of a heart that genuinely trusts God hears (Psalm 116:1–2)
- Endurance in prayer as an expression of faith, not a means of earning answers

- The honest God invites: bringing even our discouraged, half-abandoned requests back to Him

Discussion Prompts

- What is a prayer you have let go cold, and why did you stop?
- What is the difference between surrendering an outcome to God and quietly giving up on Him?
- What would it look like, practically, to pray that request again this week with hope?

Question 3

Student Question:

When the disciples tried to turn away the babies and little children, Jesus rebuked them and said, “to such belongs the kingdom of God,” and that whoever does not receive the kingdom “like a child shall not enter it” (vv. 16–17). What does it mean to receive the kingdom like a child, and what does this teach about how a person enters God’s kingdom?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When parents brought their infants to Jesus, the disciples rebuked them, but Jesus turned the moment into a lesson about the kingdom (vv. 15–16). He insisted, “to such belongs the kingdom of God,” and then made it a measure for everyone: “whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” (vv. 16–17). The teacher should keep the focus where Jesus puts it, on the posture of the one entering, not on a sentimental picture of childhood innocence.

Teach carefully what “like a child” means. A small child has no resume, no leverage, no accomplishments to offer. A child simply receives, depending utterly on the one who provides. To receive the kingdom like a child is to come empty-handed, with no claim of merit, trusting and obeying the Father who gives. This is the opposite of the Pharisee’s posture in the next paragraph, and it sets up the rich ruler who cannot come empty-handed because his hands are too full.

Be clear about how this fits the way a person actually enters the kingdom. Jesus is describing the disposition of the heart that receives salvation: humble, trusting, dependent, ready to obey. This is not a license to treat salvation as a private feeling or to bypass the response God asks. The same Lord who said receive the kingdom like a child also said the one who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16). Childlike trust shows itself in glad, humble obedience to the gospel, not in passivity.

Bring it home. The kingdom does not belong to the impressive, the accomplished, or the self-made. It belongs to those low enough to receive it as a gift. The hardest people to bring into the kingdom are often not the worst sinners but the most self-sufficient, who cannot bear to come with empty hands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Entering the kingdom requires childlike humility and dependence, not human achievement or merit (Matthew 18:3–4)
- Receiving the kingdom “like a child” means coming empty-handed, trusting and obeying the Father
- Childlike trust expressed in humble obedience to the gospel, not passivity or mere feeling (Mark 16:16)
- The kingdom belongs to the lowly who receive it as a gift, not the self-sufficient who think they have earned it
- Jesus’ welcome of the small and overlooked as a window into the heart of God

Discussion Prompts

- What does it actually mean to receive the kingdom “like a child”?
- Why is childlike dependence so difficult for accomplished, self-reliant people?
- How does childlike trust express itself in real obedience rather than passivity?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jesus said we must receive the kingdom “like a child” (v. 17), with the empty-handed trust and dependence of a little one. Where are you tempted to come to God as a competent adult who has earned His favor, rather than as a child who simply receives, and how might that self-sufficiency be keeping you from the very thing you most need?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns the childlikeness of verse 17 onto the student’s own heart. Most of us instinctively approach God as competent adults, bringing our accomplishments, our service, our record of religious effort, half-expecting that these have earned us standing with Him. The call to come “like a child” exposes that instinct as the very thing that gets in the way.

Help students see the subtlety here. A child does not pretend to be helpless; a child simply is dependent, and is content to be. The danger for mature, capable, hardworking believers is that competence in everything else leaks into our relationship with God, until we are quietly relating to Him as people who have it together rather than people who desperately need mercy. Self-sufficiency is hard to see in ourselves precisely because it usually looks like maturity.

Press toward concrete examples. The student who keeps a mental tally of church attendance and good deeds as evidence of God’s debt to them. The one who finds it almost impossible to ask for help, even from God. The one whose prayers are mostly reports and rarely pleas. Invite them to notice where they come to God as a creditor rather than a child.

Point gently to the remedy. Childlike trust is not pretended weakness; it is the relief of finally stopping the performance. The most freeing thing a self-sufficient person can do is to come to God with empty hands and discover that He receives them gladly, not because of what they bring, but because of who He is.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-sufficiency as a hidden obstacle to grace, often disguised as maturity (Revelation 3:17)
- The freedom of coming to God empty-handed rather than as a creditor
- Dependence on God as the proper posture of every disciple, not only of new believers
- Grace received, not earned, as the ground of our standing with God (Ephesians 2:8–9)

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you tend to come to God as a competent adult rather than a dependent child?
- What would change in your prayers if you truly came empty-handed?
- How might your self-sufficiency be keeping you from the mercy you most need?

Question 5

Student Question:

A ruler who was rich, moral, and sincere asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, yet when told to sell all and follow, he “became very sad, for he was extremely rich” (vv. 18–23). What does this encounter teach about the danger of riches, and why did Jesus put His finger on this man’s wealth in particular rather than commending his obedience to the commandments?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The rich ruler is one of the most sympathetic figures in the Gospels, and the teacher should resist caricaturing him. He is wealthy, morally upright, a leader, and sincerely concerned about eternal life. He can honestly say he has kept the commandments “from my youth” (v. 21), and Jesus does not dispute it. This is no scoundrel. He is the respectable, religious, good person many in the room are working hard to be.

Notice why Jesus puts His finger on the man’s wealth. Jesus is not teaching that money is evil or that every disciple must sell everything. He is doing surgery on this man’s heart, exposing the one rival lord the commandments left untouched. When Jesus says, “sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (v. 22), He is asking the man to dethrone the idol he did not even know he served. The man’s sorrow reveals the truth: he did not own his riches; his riches owned him.

Teach the danger of wealth plainly, as Jesus does. “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” and the picture of a camel through a needle’s eye (vv. 24–25) are deliberately startling. Riches are dangerous not because money is sinful but because it offers a

counterfeit security and a rival lordship, quietly persuading us that we need nothing, the very opposite of the childlike dependence the kingdom requires. The rich ruler walked away precisely because his hands were too full to receive the kingdom as a gift.

Apply it without letting anyone off the hook. By the world's standards, most believers in a comfortable society are rich. The question is not how much we have but whether what we have has us. Help students ask whether their security, identity, and sense of being fine without God are quietly anchored in their possessions.

Hold out the hope embedded in the story. The man went away sad, but he went away free to come back. Jesus loved him enough to name the one thing standing between him and life. That same love still names the idol we are protecting, not to rob us, but to give us treasure that cannot be lost.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of riches as a rival lordship and counterfeit security, not money as inherently evil (1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17–19)
- Jesus exposing the one idol that outward commandment-keeping had left untouched
- The startling difficulty Jesus assigns to the salvation of the self-sufficient rich (vv. 24–25)
- Discipleship as the dethroning of every rival lord in favor of following Christ (Luke 14:33)
- The peril of letting possessions own us rather than holding them loosely for God's use

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Jesus single out this man's wealth rather than commend his obedience?
- How can riches become a rival lord even for a sincere, moral person?
- What is the difference between owning possessions and being owned by them?

Question 6

Student Question:

The rich ruler kept the commandments outwardly from his youth, and yet one thing still held him back from following Jesus (vv. 20–23). What is the one thing in your life that you sense Jesus putting His finger on, the possession, relationship, ambition, or comfort you would find hardest to surrender if He asked, and what is that grip costing you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the rich ruler's story into the student's own life. Luke is careful to say the man kept the commandments and still lacked one thing (vv. 21–22). The teacher should help students see that the most dangerous obstacles to following Jesus are rarely scandalous sins; they are the good things, the comforts and loves and ambitions, that we quietly refuse to put on the altar.

Encourage real specificity, but with pastoral care. For one person it is money or financial security. For another it is a relationship they will not surrender to God's terms, a career they have made into an identity, a reputation they cannot bear to lose, a comfort they have organized their whole life around. Ask each student to name the one thing they sense Jesus would put His finger on if He stood in front of them today.

Help them count the cost of the grip itself. The rich ruler thought his wealth was his security, but in the end it was the thing that robbed him of treasure in heaven and sent him away sorrowful. What we will not surrender does not bless us; it masters us. Ask what their particular idol is costing them in joy, freedom, and nearness to Christ.

End with hope, not guilt. Jesus did not name the man's idol to shame him but to free him. The invitation was not merely "sell all" but "come, follow me" (v. 22). Whatever Jesus asks us to release, He offers Himself in its place, and He is always the better treasure.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lordship of Christ over every area of life, including our possessions and ambitions (Luke 9:23)
- The recognition that good things, not only sins, can become idols that keep us from full discipleship
- Surrender to Christ as gain rather than loss, since He offers Himself in place of what He asks us to release
- Honest self-examination as a mark of a heart that wants to follow Jesus fully

Discussion Prompts

- What one thing do you sense Jesus would put His finger on in your life?
- What is that grip costing you in joy, freedom, and nearness to Christ?
- Why is it often the good things, not the obvious sins, that we are most reluctant to surrender?

Question 7

Student Question:

When the disciples, astonished, asked "Then who can be saved?" Jesus answered, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (vv. 26–27), and Peter noted that they had left all to follow Him (v. 28). What does this teach about the source of our salvation and the cost of discipleship, and how do we hold together the truth that salvation is God's doing with Jesus' call to leave all and follow?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The disciples are astonished by Jesus' words about the rich, and their question reveals how much they assumed wealth was a sign of God's favor: "Then who can be saved?" (v. 26). Jesus' answer is one of the most important sentences in the chapter: "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (v. 27). The teacher should let this reframe everything. No one, rich or poor, saves himself. Salvation is beyond human power; it is God's doing.

Be precise here, because this verse is sometimes pressed into a Calvinistic mold it will not bear. Jesus is not teaching that God irresistibly saves a select few who can do nothing at all. He is teaching that salvation lies beyond human achievement, that no one earns or engineers his own rescue, and that what we could never accomplish, God graciously makes possible. The gospel call is genuine and goes out to all; people really can respond, as Peter and the others did. The point is that the power and initiative are God's, not that human response is excluded.

Hold this beside Peter's words: "See, we have left our homes and followed you" (v. 28). The disciples did respond. They left all to follow Jesus, and He promised that no one who leaves house or family for the sake of the kingdom will fail to receive many times more in this time and eternal life in the age to come (vv. 29–30). So the chapter holds two truths together: salvation is God's gift and power, and discipleship costs us everything we are clinging to. We do not earn salvation by leaving all; we leave all because we have been grasped by the God who makes salvation possible.

Guard against two opposite errors. On one side is the idea that we save ourselves by our own merit, the very thing the rich ruler could not do. On the other side is the idea that since salvation is God's doing, our response does not matter, that we are merely passive. Jesus' own ministry refutes both. He calls, and people leave all to follow. The response is real and necessary, but the saving power belongs to God alone.

Bring it home with relief and resolve. The good news for every self-sufficient heart in the room is that what they could never accomplish, God can. And the call for every comfortable heart is the same call Peter answered: come, follow, with hands open and nothing held back.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation as God's gift and power, impossible for man to achieve but possible with God (vv. 26–27; Ephesians 2:8–9)
- The genuine and universal gospel call, to which people can truly respond, against the idea of irresistible salvation of a select few
- Discipleship as leaving all to follow Christ, a real and costly human response to God's grace (vv. 28–30; Luke 14:33)
- Holding together divine initiative and human response: we leave all because God has made salvation possible, not to earn it
- God's lavish provision, now and eternally, for those who give up everything to follow Him (vv. 29–30)

Discussion Prompts

- What does “what is impossible with man is possible with God” teach about the source of salvation?
- How do we hold together the truth that salvation is God’s doing with Jesus’ call to leave all and follow?
- What does it cost you, practically, to follow Jesus with open hands?

Question 8

Student Question:

Jesus told the disciples plainly that He would be delivered over, mocked, killed, and on the third day rise, “but they understood none of these things” (vv. 31–34). Are there things Jesus has said in His word that you would rather not understand because of what they would require of you, and what would it look like to stop turning away from the parts of His teaching that unsettle you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

For the third time, Jesus tells His disciples plainly what awaits Him in Jerusalem: He will be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, shamefully treated, killed, and on the third day rise (vv. 31–33). Luke records their response with striking honesty: “they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said” (v. 34). The teacher should let this be a self-examining mirror rather than a mere historical note.

Why could they not understand? Partly the cross simply did not fit their picture of a triumphant Messiah. But there is a deeper pattern in all of us: we tend not to grasp the teachings of Jesus that would cost us our cherished assumptions or comforts. The disciples wanted a kingdom of thrones, not a Savior who suffers, so the words about suffering slid right past them.

Turn this gently toward the group. Are there things Jesus has said in His word that we keep not understanding, not because they are obscure, but because understanding them would require something of us we are not ready to give? The hard sayings about money, forgiveness, purity, the tongue, taking up a cross. We can become strangely deaf to exactly the parts of Scripture that would change us most.

Encourage a posture of honesty before the word. The remedy for willful misunderstanding is not more cleverness but a humbler heart that says, Lord, show me what I have been avoiding, and give me the will to obey it. The same disciples who understood none of this would later, after the resurrection, proclaim the cross as the heart of the gospel. God can open even the eyes we have kept closed, when we stop turning away.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus' clear foreknowledge of His suffering, death, and resurrection as the planned center of His mission (vv. 31–33; Isaiah 53)
- The human tendency to misunderstand or avoid the teachings of Jesus that would cost us
- Scripture as a word that confronts and forms us, requiring an honest and willing heart (James 1:22–25)
- The cross and resurrection as the heart of the gospel, even when slow to be understood

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think the disciples could not understand Jesus' words about the cross?
- Is there a teaching of Jesus you would rather not understand because of what it would require?
- What would it look like to stop turning away from the parts of His word that unsettle you?

Question 9

Student Question:

Two men went up to the temple to pray, and Jesus said it was the tax collector who beat his chest and prayed “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” and not the confident Pharisee, who “went down to his house justified,” because “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (vv. 9–14). What does this parable teach about how God justifies a sinner, why the Pharisee went home unjustified despite his real religious works, and what kind of heart God receives and saves?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and the teacher should give it the most time and care. Jesus tells this parable specifically to “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt” (v. 9). That single sentence names the disease the parable diagnoses: self-righteousness coupled with contempt. Both men in the story are religious; both go up to the temple to pray. The difference is what they trust in.

Look closely at the Pharisee. His prayer is not even really addressed to God; he “prayed thus with himself” (v. 11), reciting his own resume. He is not lying. He really does fast twice a week and tithe (v. 12); his works are genuine. But every line of his prayer compares himself favorably to others and rests his standing on his own performance. He thanks God that he is not like other men, and he points to the tax collector with contempt. He came to the temple already certain he was righteous, and so he asked God for nothing.

Now the tax collector. He stands far off, will not lift his eyes, beats his chest, and prays seven desperate words: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (v. 13). He brings no resume because he has none worth bringing. He makes no comparisons because he is too aware of his own guilt. He simply throws himself on the mercy of God. And then comes the verdict that would have

stunned Jesus' first hearers: "this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other" (v. 14). The disreputable tax collector, not the model religious man, went home right with God.

Teach justification clearly and carefully here, because this is the doctrinal heart of the lesson. To be justified is to be reckoned righteous, accepted, set right before God. The Pharisee went home unjustified despite his real religious works, because he was trusting in those works and in himself rather than casting himself on God's mercy. The tax collector went home justified because he came as a guilty sinner pleading for mercy, with a humble and repentant heart. Guard against two errors as you teach this. Do not let it slide into the idea that we earn justification by piling up our own merits, the Pharisee's very mistake. But do not let it collapse into a bare faith only that requires no real turning to God either. The tax collector is not saved by a feeling or a single mental assent; he is the picture of a humble, penitent heart that has stopped trusting itself and is throwing itself entirely on God's mercy. That same humble, repentant trust is what God still receives, and in the full unfolding of the gospel it expresses itself in believing, repenting, confessing Christ, and being baptized into Him for the forgiveness of sins, then living faithfully. The point of the parable is not the mechanics of every step but the posture of the heart God justifies: low, empty-handed, crying for mercy.

Then drive home the principle Jesus states: "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 14). This rebukes self-righteousness on one side and presumption on the other. We cannot stand before God on our record, and we dare not presume on His grace as though our hearts need not bend. The only ones God lifts up are those who first come low. Let students feel how easily they slip into the Pharisee's prayer, even using religious language to congratulate themselves, and let the tax collector's seven words become the prayer they carry out of the room.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Justification as being reckoned righteous and accepted before God, which the tax collector received and the Pharisee did not (v. 14; Romans 3:21-28)
- God justifies the humble, penitent heart that casts itself on His mercy, not the proud who trust their own works and record
- The Pharisee's real religious works could not justify him, because he trusted in himself rather than in God's mercy (Philippians 3:4-9)
- A rejection of earning salvation by accumulating our own merits, the Pharisee's fundamental error
- Humble, repentant trust that expresses itself in obedience to the gospel, not a bare "faith only" or a mere feeling (Acts 2:38; James 2:17)
- The principle of reversal: God humbles the self-exalting and exalts the humble (v. 14; James 4:6, 10)
- The twin dangers rebuked here: self-righteousness on one side and presumption on God's grace on the other

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the Pharisee go home unjustified despite his genuine fasting and tithing?
- What does it mean that the tax collector “went down to his house justified,” and what kind of heart did he bring?
- How does this parable guard us against both trusting our own goodness and presuming on God’s grace?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter, the persistent widow, the humbled tax collector, the children, the rich ruler, and the blind man crying “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 38). Each one shows us something about the humble, dependent heart that God welcomes. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these scenes. What is the single truth from Luke 18:1–43 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this final question to gather the threads of the whole chapter. Jesus has paraded before us a procession of the humble and dependent: a powerless widow who would not stop asking, a tax collector who could only beg for mercy, little children with nothing to offer but trust, and a blind beggar who shouted “Son of David, have mercy on me!” and would not be silenced (v. 38). Against them stands the one who walked away, the rich ruler whose hands were too full to receive the kingdom as a gift.

Let the blind man bring the chapter to its fitting close. When the crowd told him to be quiet, “he cried out all the more” (v. 39), and Jesus stopped, healed him, and said, “your faith has made you well” (v. 42). Here is the persistence of the widow, the mercy-plea of the tax collector, and the childlike dependence Jesus blessed, all gathered into one man crying out to Christ and refusing to be hushed. The chapter ends with him following Jesus, glorifying God.

Resist the urge to add new content here. The aim is integration and response. Give students room to name what God has actually stirred, whether it is a prayer to pick back up, an idol to release, the tax collector’s seven words to pray, or simply a fresh cry for mercy to the Son of David. Press gently toward specificity, since a vague intention to be more humble rarely changes a life.

Close the session by lifting eyes to Christ. Every figure in this chapter who came low and cried out to Him was received, justified, blessed, healed. Let the final word be the tax collector’s word and the blind man’s word, the prayer that always finds an open door: God, be merciful to me, a sinner; Son of David, have mercy on me.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Integration of the chapter's themes: persistent prayer, childlike dependence, the danger of riches, justification by mercy, and faith that cries out to Christ
- Faith that cries out to Christ for mercy and will not be silenced, as in the blind man (vv. 38–42)
- The transforming purpose of God's word, which aims at changed and humbled lives, not merely informed minds (James 1:22)
- Personal response and ongoing dependence on God's mercy as the goal of studying this passage
- Worship of Christ, the merciful Son of David, as the fitting climax of the chapter

Discussion Prompts

- Which figure in this chapter do you most identify with this week, and why?
- What single truth from Luke 18 do you most need to carry into the coming week?
- What is one concrete way you will respond to what God has shown you?