

The Kingdom of God
Lesson 19: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
LifeWalk Leader Guide

Open/Icebreakers: What will Hell be like? What Scriptures/images helped you form this picture? Discuss your responses.

Digging In: Luke 18:9-14

1. To whom is Jesus addressing this parable? Why is this significant?
2. How would you describe the prayer of the Pharisee? How is he approaching God? Would you say that it was a sincere prayer?
3. Fasting and tithing were signs of piety in Judaism. The law only required fasting once a year (Lev. 16:29-31), but pious Jews in Jesus' day fasted twice a week. Is Jesus condemning this practice? Aren't fasting and tithing important? What is the problem with the Pharisee's prayer?
4. Tax collectors were among the most despised people in Jesus' day. Not only were they working for a government that oppressed Jews, they were often corrupt. Why would Jesus choose to use a tax collector as the "hero" in this parable? How would you categorize his prayer? What noble or commendable qualities does he possess?
5. Who/what would be the modern day equivalent of a tax collector? How would you react if Jesus made Osama Bin Laden a hero in a parable today?
6. What does Jesus mean when he says that the tax collector "went home justified before God?" What could be some implications from this statement?
7. Jesus says, "For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted," quite often in His ministry? Why was it necessary for Him to teach this lesson over and over? Why makes "kingdom humility" so challenging?

Reflection:

1. Which character do you identify with the most in this parable? If it is the Pharisee, describe why you relate so well with him. If it is the tax collector, describe why you relate so well with him.
2. Are we ever so confident in our own righteousness that it causes us to look down on others? What is the word of Jesus to us?
3. Why is the "comparison and evaluation game" so detrimental to life in God's kingdom? Why do we tend to compare and evaluate others? How is God calling us to view ourselves as we read this parable? What attitude is He looking for?
4. How can your group live out this radical call?

Prayer: Father God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Forgive my tendency to compare myself to others. May I compare myself only with You and as I do that, I see how far I have to go. Help me see others as you see them. Help me ascribe unsurpassable worth to everyone. Holy Spirit, move my heart to love and service.