

## WEEK 36 DAY 1

Today's Reading: Luke 18:9-14

A professor recently reminded me of how easy it is to fall prey to the temptation of legalism if we aren't focused on the Gospel. When people try to do things to serve their own pride instead of God, it is easy to slide toward legalism. As I thought about how easily swayed I am without God, I realized there is no room for me to be proud of my faith or service. It is tempting to count the number of hours we have logged in serving the church, sitting in a service, or reading our Bibles. However, when we think this way, we allow ourselves to be like the Pharisee in Luke's parable; we choose to show God all we have done for Him, and how great we are.

The Lord does call us to serve Him faithfully, and we should serve out of thanksgiving for all He has done for us. When serving the Lord, we should think about how grateful we are that God has been so merciful to us. You and I are sinners who constantly disobey God. We do not deserve to be a part of His kingdom. We do not earn salvation but have been freely given the gift of salvation. Therefore, our thanksgiving to God should be birthed from humility. If we begin to be like the Pharisees, seeing our actions as our redemption, then we'll find we do not need a Redeemer. Therefore, we must always have the heart of the tax collector who begged God for mercy.

- Is your spiritual attitude toward God more like the tax collector or the Pharisee? Is there room for change?
- How can you approach God with more humility than pride?

## **PRAYER:**

God, please forgive me of my pride. I realize the only reason I am a follower of You is because of my desperate need for a Savior.

**Bonus Reading: Isaiah 29:13; Luke  
11:37-54**

## WEEK 36 DAY 2

Today's Reading: Luke 18:15-17

My daughter's favorite episode of The Chosen is "Jesus Loves the Little Children." She sees herself among the children. The television portrayal may border on entertainment, but we know the accounts are rooted in Scripture, and the character of Jesus is on display: Jesus loved children, and they loved Him.

Children are important to God. We can affirm this in Old and New Testament texts. Samuel was brought to the temple as a young child to serve God. In Deuteronomy, we are often told to teach our children about God. Even Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple. This stood in contrast to the culture of the ancient world, where children were often dismissed as property, or without a voice. We even see this culturally dismissive attitude toward children reflected in the disciples' rebuke of children approaching the Savior. Jesus corrected them by saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

When children are young, we teach them about Jesus. They have so much to learn, and we are tasked with guiding them. Jesus also said, "...do not hinder them" or prevent them from coming to Him. God forbids us from being an obstacle that keeps people from coming to Jesus. Instead, let us open the doors wide and invite others to come.

A child's faith is beautiful. Often dependent on others to care for them, they have an innocent ability to trust others wholeheartedly. This is the faith Jesus calls all of us to. Just like children, we bring nothing to the table; we are unable to save ourselves from sin, and we are entirely dependent on Jesus.

- How can we bring children to Jesus and not hinder them?
- What do I need to trust Jesus with today?

## **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You for the children in my life. May I be diligent in bringing them to You when they are young and please give me the faith of a child as I grow.

**Bonus Reading: Luke 2:21-32; 1 Samuel 1:24; Deuteronomy 11:19**

## WEEK 36 DAY 3

### Today's Reading: Luke 18:18-23

Have you ever watched a Hallmark Christmas movie? They are so predictable: a young, ambitious businesswoman is on track to make her business into the next Fortune 500 company. She sacrifices time with her family and friends, possibly even her spouse ... all in the effort of fully investing in her success. Somehow at Christmas, she finds herself back home in the small town of her youth. While home she realizes what she has given up, and how her heart no longer yearns for the success of her corporate pursuits.

Before the Hallmark channel created the rich, busy businesswoman, the Bible introduced us to the rich young ruler, and Jesus didn't need a flannel shirt or a Christmas tree to help this man see the way forward. The man's question was simple: How do I have eternal life? Jesus called the rich, young ruler to sell his possessions and, wholeheartedly and follow Him. From an earthly perspective, this felt overwhelming to the rich ruler, for he had amassed great wealth and significance. What Jesus offered was worth far more. Unfortunately, the rich ruler found it too difficult to let go of his earthly riches, and he chose them over following Christ.

- Take inventory of your life. What possessions, pursuits or relationships do you prioritize over your relationship with Jesus?
- What keeps you from wholeheartedly following Jesus?

## **PRAYER:**

God, teach me to follow You without distraction,  
and let the Holy Spirit draw me closer to You.

**Bonus Reading: Matthew 19:16-30**

## WEEK 36 DAY 4

Today's Reading: Luke 18:24-29

In reading Scripture this week, we'll find that Jesus made a striking statement about the challenges the wealthy face in entering the kingdom of God. He said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." This sentiment extended beyond material wealth. Jesus wasn't condemning all wealth, but rather he was highlighting the potential barriers it can create. Our attachment to riches can shift our perspective, often making it hard to recognize our dependence on God. Jesus made a call to examine what truly holds importance in our lives.

We'd be wrong to infer from this passage that all wealth is inherently evil. However, we'd also be wrong to dismiss the text's caution against making wealth primary. One thing to consider is, where is our heart's posture toward God and toward wealth? Are we fixated on accumulating material possessions, or do we center our time and priority on spiritual and compassionate values? Jesus invites us to reassess our priorities and acknowledge the sacrifices required to follow Him wholeheartedly.

There are things beyond wealth that can hinder our relationship with God: possessions, pride, or even earthly relationships. This passage calls us to examine what holds our heart captive and prevents us from wholeheartedly following God.

Ultimately, the key lies in our willingness to surrender our grip on anything we consider indispensable, apart from God. This act of surrender isn't to rob us but to liberate us from what binds our hearts and allow us to experience a deeper connection with God and others.

- What are you holding onto more than your relationship with Jesus?
- What is causing you not to fully surrender?

### **PRAYER:**

Lord, help me love You wholeheartedly, seek You as Lord of my life, and lay down anything that I love more than You.

**Bonus Reading: Mark 10:17-27**

## WEEK 36 DAY 5

Today's Reading: Luke 18:31-34

Have you ever watched a great movie with a crazy plot twist for an ending? Looking back, you can often realize the movie hinted at the ending from the beginning, but you didn't see it! Hindsight often provides an abundance of "aha" moments. As we read today's passage, we can imagine that is precisely what the 12 disciples experienced.

This passage includes the third prediction of Christ's death. With each foretelling, He became more direct than the last. Jesus spoke of being "delivered to the Gentiles" (Luke 18:32) quite directly. He explicitly stated what would occur, noting that He would be "mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:32-33 NKJV). The 12 disciples did not - or could not - understand these things. They were unable to fathom that their Messiah would experience death so soon. They certainly didn't fully anticipate the glory of His Resurrection.

There is a lesson to be gleaned here from the disciples. If we stay solely focused on the "smooth," "good" or "easy" things of life, we tend to miss the often necessary suffering that is to come. And, if we miss that, we'll also miss the life-change - in this passage it came in the form of Resurrection. Hindsight can be a gift, and we can turn our ears to the Lord to listen and not miss the moment He speaks to us.

- Can you think about a time in your life when you did not listen to the Lord?
- Did it become more evident in hindsight?

## **PRAYER:**

God, allow me to sit and glean from the goodness,  
the suffering and the Resurrection You have  
gifted me.

**Bonus Reading: Matthew 20:17-19,  
Mark 10:32-34**

## WEEK 36 DAY 6

Today's Reading: Luke 18:35-42

Have you ever been in a season when you think, "God, I can't visibly see You, and I don't know what You're doing, but I'm trying to believe in You.

This disappointment is overwhelming"? We all struggle at some point to figure out what God is up to in our life. Sometimes, we get so caught up in our circumstances that we don't even see God in the little moments of our day-to-day lives. If you're like me, there are so many times when I struggle to identify God's presence in my life.

The blind man in the parable we read today could not see Jesus, but he knew His presence was there. He believed a miracle could happen even when he could not see the miracle maker. He believed Jesus could move in his life, even though he could not physically see Him.

Sometimes we get so caught up in our pursuit to "see God at work" that we get discouraged. The passage about the blind man's faith helps us understand Jesus wants us to exercise our faith in Him. We've all been disappointed in life at some point. Maybe the blind man was characterized by his blindness just as we let our disappointments characterize us. Jesus doesn't want our situations to describe us, but instead, He wants us to allow that to be a space for God to enter our lives and do a miracle. Before a miracle can happen, there must be desperation. If we allow that desperation to lead us to our Maker, we can say, "God, though I can't see You, I have full faith in You." In Luke 18:42, Jesus told the blind man, "Your faith has healed you."

Jesus knew it wouldn't be long before we were unable to see Him, physically. May we never limit the miracles God wants to perform by demanding eyes to see it first!

·Do you have faith that Jesus is going to move?

## **PRAYER:**

Lord, I believe. Strengthen my unbelief.

**Bonus Reading: Matthew 9:27-30  
Matthew 20:29-34, John 20:29**