



WEEK 3 STUDY GUIDE

Read [Luke 18:9-14](#).

In these verses, Jesus demonstrated the power of teaching by using a parable, a story that draws a parallel between an eternal truth and everyday life. Right from the start, Jesus was intentional about his audience—“some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else.” Self-righteousness is incredibly dangerous because it leads to pride and an attempt to live outside of God’s plan.

People near Jerusalem often went to pray at the Temple, the center of Jewish worship. Jesus shared this parable to show what really matters: It’s not about praying out loud or the style of prayer. It’s about the heart behind our prayers.

The Pharisee in this parable didn’t necessarily show up to pray to God. Yes, technically, he was praying, but his heart was focused on himself. He wanted everyone within earshot to hear and know and recognize how wonderful he was. He was following the laws and thought he was better than others—especially someone as disgraceful as a “despised tax collector.”

On the other hand, this tax collector stood off to the side. Not everyone could hear him. He was honest and authentic with God. He pleaded with God because he was a sinner in need of God’s mercy and forgiveness. There were no righteous acts to report publicly, and it sounded like a shorter prayer. He was simply broken and knew he needed God.

So who went home justified before God? The tax collector. This must have angered those who were listening. How can this be? The Pharisee was doing all the right things, yet the man who showed a simple and genuine faith had his prayer answered. To explain this ending, Jesus switched up the societal normal: “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

WEEK 3 OVERVIEW

THE MAIN POINT

Jesus wants us to be real with Him:
in our prayers and in our lives.

THE BIBLE

[Luke 18:9-14](#)