

LEADER PREP

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that real faith and conversations with God begin in the heart.

MAIN POINT

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

MAIN SCRIPTURE

[Luke 18:9-14](#)

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here. Let the students and the Holy Spirit guide the conversation, too.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

GET THEM TALKING

- How was everyone's week? Share Highs & Lows.
- Someone recap the main point of the message in your own words.
- Who can share a funny story about an awkward prayer?

INTO THE WORD

READ Luke 18:9-14 and answer the following questions:

1. The Pharisee's prayer was weak.

- What is most surprising or unexpected to you about this parable?
- Think about a time when you made yourself look better by pointing out another person's faults. What was the end result?
- When the Pharisee listed all of his accomplishments in his prayer, was he talking to God or talking to people who could hear him? How do you know?
- How do we get caught in the trap of praying the way the Pharisee prayed?

2. The tax collector's prayer was powerful.

- The tax collector didn't display the same attitude as the Pharisee—he kept his distance. When do you feel like you must keep your distance from Jesus?
- What's most powerful about the tax collector's prayer?
- When do you find it tough to be real with Jesus?

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

- Jesus' words in verse 14 about being humbled and being exalted—how do they challenge our culture's attitude?
- How would you feel if you humbled yourself but weren't honored the way you expected?
- How does the tax collector's prayer challenge you to think differently about prayer?

NEXT STEP

- What would it look like to regularly pray to God?
- What are some ways to respond if you find yourself feeling good or bad simply because you've compared yourself with another person?
- This week, how can you turn the attention away from you and toward other people—and how can that help you pursue Christlike humility?
- What other specific, practical habits or choices can help you pursue a path of humility?

PRAYER GUIDE

We are going to close in prayer.
Anyone have any prayer requests?

MAIN SCRIPTURE

Scripture is provided for convenience, but we prefer you and your students open your Bibles to read the Scripture. This helps your students learn how to find Scripture in their Bibles and where these verses are in the larger context of God's Word.

LUKE 18:9-14 NLT

⁹Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰“Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer^[a]: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! ¹²I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’¹³“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.’¹⁴I 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.”

LEADER CORNER + NOTES