

## **Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide**

### **Luke 18:1-14**

In the sermon this past Sunday the story of Ben & Barbara Flis was shared. What was not shared was that two of their kids, Will & Elora, suffer from terrible skin sensitivities. It is exhausting, frustrating, and scary for all involved. So it was suggested (and it's a GREAT idea) that in each of our Home Groups this week we lift up the Flis family, and especially Will & Elora. Since the passage this week is on prayer, and we are called to be a family that lifts one another up, this seems appropriate and timely. Thanks in advance for taking the time to do this.

Luke was very kind to let his readers know the point of Jesus' parable: that we should always pray and not give up. So many good questions and conversation points from that one statement...

- Q. Describe your prayer life. (Get nitty-gritty with one another: When do you pray? Where do you pray? How do you pray? What do you pray for/about? What do you enjoy about your prayer life? What is frustrating to you about your prayer life? What is your general attitude in regards to prayer? How much of your prayer life is personal versus with others?)**
- Q. How has your prayer life developed over the years? (i.e. how is your prayer life different now compared to when you were younger?)**
- Q. Describe something you've been very consistent/persistent about in prayer?**
- Q. Describe times when you gave up.**
- Q. How have you seen some of your prayers answered?**
- Q. (possible icebreaker) When you were a kid, did you ever wear your parents out through persistence? Explain. For those who are parents, how have you been worn down by the persistence of your kids?**

When you think of "spiritual qualities" how often do words like "persistent", "consistent", "perseverant", "long-suffering", "endurance", "tenacity/tenacious", "grit", "determination", "diligence", "resolve" maybe even "stubbornness" (in the "never give up" sense) come to mind? I'm sure we're accustomed to words like patience and faithfulness, but these other words are synonymous and carry with them a fuller picture of those more frequently used words.

This passage might call to mind an earlier teaching from Jesus on prayer found in Luke 11:1-13. In that passage Jesus highlighted the same to points He highlights in this parable, namely the persistence/boldness of the asker (see 11:8), and the contrast between evil/unjust people and a good God when it comes to answering requests (see 11:11-13).

A close examination of both of the texts in which Luke includes teaching from Jesus on prayer reveals something interesting in regards to WHAT was being prayed for. In Luke 11, the bold/persistent prayer was specifically encouraged in asking for the Holy Spirit (11:13). In this passage in Luke 18, the widow is specifically seeking justice (or more accurately, to be avenged, vindicated; for retribution). An important lesson that can be lost if we're not careful regarding this passage is that wrongs and injustices should be made matters of prayer (with persistence with implies having to wait patiently) as opposed to taking matters into our own hands. The kingdom way is the peaceful way of prayer, not the violent way of the world.

**Q. When you are wronged, or experience/observe injustice, do you make it a matter of prayer? Explain.**

**Q. As we seek justice/vindication through prayer, how might The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) also speak into this? (Hint: think about WHAT is being asked for.)**

The second parable in this passage deals with the proper posture of the heart as we approach God. Take a moment to appreciate the sheer shock value Jesus went for in this parable by comparing a Pharisee and a tax collector...with the tax collector being the one who was justified before God, and the Pharisee coming off not as righteous but rather self-righteous. Simply scandalous. The punch line, of course, is *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* (18:14). The proper posture of the heart is one of humility; an understanding that we do not even deserve the opportunity to address God. Yet, as our loving heavenly Father, He desires us to come to Him. The picture, again, goes back to the prodigal son, who like this tax collector, is not worthy to approach his father. But the father is overjoyed that his son had returned.

**Q. We are tempted to exalt ourselves anytime we do as the Pharisee did and draw a favorable comparison between ourselves and another. With that in mind, when are you tempted to exalt yourself? (Or, when and how do you find yourself making favorable comparisons about yourself.)**

**Q. To what degree do you live with the awareness of your need for mercy?**

**Q. How can a person know if they are truly humble?**

While prayer shouldn't only be conceived as asking/requesting from God. There should be praise and thanksgiving. There should be confession of sin. There should be intercession for others. And, yes, there should be requests, petitions, supplications for ourselves. In this parable, the Pharisee didn't ask for anything, and he was "thankful". But the problem was that he actually thought he was something, and had the gall to approach God as if he was something/somebody. The tax collector on the other hand, began with confession and a recognition of his need for God. That's a much better starting point.

**Q. What's your typical "starting point" when you approach God in prayer?**

(\*\*HG Leaders: This passage sets up well to have an honest and frank conversation regarding prayer...both from a personal prayer life perspective, and praying together as a church family. I highly encourage you to take advantage of it. Where people are in their prayer life is often a good gauge of where they are in their relationship with Him. So not only try to get a good pulse of where people are at; also try to figure out what they need in order to develop. I'll be curious to hear what you discover. Please feel free to contact me and share with me your findings.\*\*)