

week 19: *the one with the widow*

Scripture to Read: Luke 18:1-8

1 And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. 3 And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' 4 For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7 And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8 I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Summary of the Text

Jesus encourages us to persevere in prayer by means of a parable whose point is this: if an unjust judge can be moved by persistent petitions to help a stranger for whom he has no regard, how much more "will God help his own chosen ones who cry to him day and night!"

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. —Luke 18:7-8

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- Why do we lose heart in prayer?
- What was it about the woman that moved the unrighteous judge to address the cause of the widow?
- In what ways do we sometimes feel like the widow when we pray? In what ways is our God not like the judge?
- How does this parable encourage us to keep on praying?

- We believe that Christians have a secure and privileged relationship with the Father through Christ the Son. They are God's chosen ones for whom he works everything together for their eternal good [Romans 8:28]. How should this truth affect your prayer life?
- Why does the Bible contain so many unrelenting cries and prayers—cries of "How long, Lord? (Psalm 13, 79:5; 89:46; Revelation 6:10)
- Why does Jesus conclude the parable with the question in v.8? In what ways are you tempted to disbelieve God completely or to see him as a harsh and merciless judge?
- What items have you dropped off your prayer list that should be placed back on it? What practical steps can you take to "pray and not lose heart"?

Thoughts worth thinking

Benefits of persistent prayer: "Persistent prayer keeps bringing God and me together, with several important benefits. As I pour out my soul to God, I get it off my chest, so to speak, unloading some of my burden to One who can handle it better. Little by little, as I get to know God I learn that God has nothing in common with an unjust judge or stingy neighbor, though at times it may seem so. What I learn from spending time with God then better equips me to discern what God wants to do on earth, as well as my role in that plan....I may, especially during the early stages of prayer, approach God the same way, but inevitably I find that God is the wise and senior partner in the relationship. I find, in fact, that God has been asking, seeking, knocking too, in the subtle ways I so easily ignore." [Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 152]

What is "importunity"? "He prays not at all, who does not press his plea. Cold prayers have no claim on heaven, and no hearing in the courts above. Fire is the life of prayer, and heaven is reached by flaming importunity rising in an ascending scale." [E.M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/bounds/>

5bb.10596-necessity%20of%20prayer/5bb.10596.06.htm. accessed February 15, 2010]

A word from Evagrius the Solitary, one of the church's early teachers on prayer: "Often when I have prayed I have asked for what I thought was good, and persisted in my petition, stupidly importuning the will of God, and not leaving it to Him to arrange things as He knows is best for me. But when I have obtained what I asked for, I have been very sorry that I did not ask for the will of God to be done; because the thing turned out not to be as I have thought... Do not be distressed if you do not at once receive from God what you ask. He wishes to give you something better - to make you persevere in your prayer. For what is better than to enjoy the love of God and to be in communion with Him?" [*The Philokalia*, vol.1 (London, Faber & Faber, 1979), 60]

Tips for Parents with Young Children

Monday: Read Luke 18:1-8. Have your child draw a picture of the poor widow pleading with the unjust judge. Explain that God will never refuse to help us when we need help. He is our *Father* in heaven, and he loves us. He will surely give us the good things we ask for.

Tuesday: Talk with your children about prayer. Remember prayers which you have seen God answer. Talk about things that are still on your prayer list. V.1 says that Jesus wants us to pray always and not to lose heart.

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Continue to use the passage as an opportunity to talk about prayer. God is *our Father in heaven* if we believe in Jesus. He wants us to talk with him. He wants us to tell him about ourselves, about our day, about what we are doing, just as Daddy and Mommy want their children to talk to them. This might be a good opportunity to pray through the Lord's Prayer together as a family. You can ask you children what each part of the prayer means. If you

need a little refresher yourself, you can refer Q.100-107 of the *Shorter Catechism*.

Friday: Ask your children what they would like to do (e.g. read a story, pray, sing worship songs, etc.) and then do that with them.

Saturday: Read a Bible story to your children, or have them read a story to you if they are old enough. Pray that Phillip will have boldness in preaching the Word of God tomorrow. Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for the musicians and choir members who serve us each Sunday.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their Sunday School teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.