

# Two Worshippers (Luke 18:9-14)

## A Small Group Outline



### 1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
  - Sing a few songs of praise to God

### 2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

### 3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did you share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

### 4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

### 5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 150-163
- "The **Pharisee goes up to the temple to worship, not because he feels that he is a sinner in need of pardon, but because he thinks himself righteous and hopes to win commendation. His worship he regards as an act of merit** that will recommend him to God. At the same time it will give the people a high opinion of his piety. He hopes to secure favor with both God and man. **His worship is prompted by self-interest**" (COL 150).
- "And he [the Pharisee] is **full of self-praise**. He looks it, he walks it, he prays it. Drawing apart from others as if to say, "Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou" (Isaiah 65:5), he stands and prays "with himself." Wholly self-satisfied, he thinks that God and men regard him with the same complacency" (COL 150).
- "The **religion of the Pharisee does not touch the soul**. He is not seeking Godlikeness of character, a heart filled with love and mercy. **He is satisfied with a religion that has to do only with outward life**. His righteousness is his own—the fruit of his own works—and judged by a human standard" (COL 151)
- "**Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others**. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. "Other men" he condemns as transgressors of God's law. Thus he is **making manifest the very spirit of Satan**, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing" (COL 151)
- "Standing afar off, [the publican] "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast," in bitter anguish and self-abhorrence. He felt that he had

transgressed against God, that he was sinful and polluted. He could not expect even pity from those around him, for they looked upon him with contempt. **He knew that he had no merit to commend him to God, and in utter self-despair he cried, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” He did not compare himself with others.** Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, he stood as if alone in God's presence. His only desire was for pardon and peace, his only plea was the mercy of God” (COL 151).

- **“There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable”** (COL 154)
- “The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit could not work with him.... **It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save”** (COL 158)
- **“No man can of himself understand his errors.** ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’ Jeremiah 17:9. The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness. **In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness.** When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are.... We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God's infinite grace” (COL 159)
- **“No man can empty himself of self.** We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul” (COL 159).
- “It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. **At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves.** Therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. **Only by constant renunciation of self and dependence on Christ can we walk safely”** (COL 159)
- **“The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves.** Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness” (COL 160).
- Vs 13: God be merciful to me a sinner: The original Greek actually states, ‘God be merciful to me THE sinner’ – i.e. the publican saw himself as the **only** sinner. So while the Pharisee saw himself as far superior to ‘other men’ (v 11), the publican viewed himself as the **lowest** of sinners.
- It is easy to categorise various sins and rant against those sins that we don’t commit. “God, I thank you that I am not a homosexual / an adulterer / a child molester / a murderer.” As we rattle off the sins that we consider the “biggies” it is easy to get puffed up when we can say that we haven’t committed such sins. Yet, we fail to own up to our own sins, which are also repulsive to God:
  - Have you ever talked about a person behind his or her back?
  - Have you ever launched into a fit of anger with your spouse or one of your children?
  - Have you ever prioritised watching your favourite sitcom over reading your Bible?
  - Have you ever eaten too much and excused it?
  - Have you ever found yourself gazing at internet porn?
  - Have you ever worried yourself to death instead of trusting the Lord?

(Taken from: [https://media1.razorplanet.com/share/511079-7965/siteDocs/Luke18.9-14\\_ep.pdf](https://media1.razorplanet.com/share/511079-7965/siteDocs/Luke18.9-14_ep.pdf))

- *Read Luke 18:9-14. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
  - Discuss some of the main differences by which these men approached God (for example: how they prayed, where they stood, posture, what they said)
  - What are some areas in life people tend to compare themselves to others?
  - Why is it dangerous to compare ourselves to those around us?
  - Give examples of some 'lesser' sins that Christians stumble over, while looking down on those who seem to commit 'bigger' sins?
  - Why do you think humility is so key in the Christian experience?
  - How can Christians avoid falling into the trap of comparing themselves with others?
  - Jesus gives a surprise ending to this story. Everyone thought the Pharisee was the righteous man. In what ways does this parable impact your perspective on what it means to be righteous?
  - Share a story of a proud, arrogant person who was humbled, OR a humble person that was exalted / promoted?
  - Describe what a church would look like if it embodied the attitude of the Pharisee? What would it communicate to its community? (*ask one question at a time*)
  - What would be the characteristics of a church that took this parable to heart? What would need to change? What would need to be repented of? (*ask one question at a time*)
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
  - Which of the two worshippers can you identify with more? Explain.
  - Do you find it easy to talk about your shortcomings? Why or why not?
  - What fears keep you from confessing who you really are?
  - What do you think would happen if you got better about admitting your faults?
  - What is something that stood out for you in this parable that you'd like to apply to your own experience?
  - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I want to ensure this week that my words and attitude don't portray self-righteousness and condemnation among my worldly work colleagues, but that they reflect acceptance and love."

## 6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

## 7. Closing prayer

*Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference*