

Underdogs

“Plot Twist”

Luke 18

Small Group Plan

Jesus told stories, to illustrate a spiritual point, but the point was usually made at the end of the story. But there are two times in the gospel of Luke that Jesus gives the purpose of the story before he tells the story, and both speak to the topic of prayer.

Luke 18:1

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Luke 18:9

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.

Let's think about the first story, the persistent widow.

Luke mentions widows more than all the other gospel writers combined. In his day widows usually had a difficult time just surviving, in spite of the care God told his people to give them (Ex 22:22-24; Dt 14:28-29; 16:9-15; Ps 146:9; Is 1:17, 23; Jer 7:6).

As you think through this story try to see it with an Eastern background. Forget about our modern Western courtrooms. The judge, not the law set the agenda, and the widow had several obstacles: (1) she was a woman (no legal standing), (2) she was a widow (no husband to stand with her), and (3) she was poor (couldn't pay a bribe, even if she wanted to). All she had going for her was her persistence.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Begin with a simple definition — how would you define “persistence”?
- Describe a time in your business, education, or relationship experiences when persistence paid off for you?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— PERSISTENCE NEEDED —

Luke 18:1-3

¹Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ²He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. ³And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’”

- Right off the bat, how is God different from this judge?
- So, why does Jesus use a non-caring, non-God-fearing character in his story?
- There are three players in this story. Is Jesus trying to make a point with the adversary, the judge, the woman, or all three? Explain.
- Was the woman's real problem with her "adversary" or the "judge"? Explain.

— PERSISTENCE IN ACTION —

Luke 18:4-5

⁴ "For some time he refused. But, finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

- Why did the judge refuse the woman at first?
- Is Jesus promoting "nagging"? Explain.

— PERSISTENCE SUCCEEDING —

Luke 18:6-8

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

- What did Jesus want his disciples to learn from this story?
- Is Jesus comparing or contrasting God with the unjust judge? Explain.
- What is the faith that Jesus is talking about in verse 8?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Why do people stop praying?
- Is persistence and nagging the same thing? If not, explain the difference.
- How is the way in which God responds to prayer different from the response of the unjust judge?
- What does persistent prayer look like? How do you do it?
- What would need to change in your daily routine for you to pray more persistently?
- Return now to your opening definition of persistence. After thinking through Jesus' story, how would you change your definition?
- Close by asking God to help us all to understand the power of persistent prayer.