



## “Nothing Is Impossible”

Luke 18

### Small Group Plan

Jesus would often tell a story to illustrate a spiritual point, and the point was usually made at the end of the story. But there are two times in the gospel of Luke when Jesus tells 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.*

### OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How would you define persistence?
- When does religious confidence turn into religious pride?

### LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

Try to see the first story, the persistent widow, 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) (3) she was poor (couldn't pay a bribe, even if she wanted to).

All she had was her persistence.

## — PERSISTENCE IN ACTION —

**Luke 18:1-5**

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. <sup>2</sup> He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’” <sup>4</sup> “For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

- How is God different from this judge?
- So, why does Jesus use an uncaring, 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.
- Why did the judge refuse the woman at first?
- Is Jesus promoting “nagging”? Explain.

## — PERSISTENCE SUCCEEDING —

**Luke 18:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> 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?

This second story is also about prayer, but prayer from two very different kinds of hearts — the prayer of pride and the prayer of humility.

## — TWO PRAYERS —

**Luke 18:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup> Two Men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a Tax Collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ <sup>13</sup> “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

- What are the basic differences between these two men?
- Why do you think the Pharisee acted as he did? Where did his feelings come from? Why did Jesus want us to know about them?
- Why did Jesus make the Tax Collector the hero of the story?

**— TWO RESULTS —**

**Luke 18:14**

<sup>14</sup> *“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

- Why did Jesus call the Tax Collector “justified?” What did Jesus see in him that he did not see in the Pharisee?
- What does “exalting” yourself look like? How do you do it?
- What does “humbling” yourself look like? How do you do it?
- Is it possible to be proud of your humility? Explain.

**USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Why do people stop praying?
- Are persistence and nagging the same thing? If not, explain the difference.
- How are God’s responses to prayer different from the unjust judge?
- What does persistent prayer look like? How do you do it?
- What would help us to pray more persistently?
- Think of your earliest definition of persistence. How has it changed?
- How have your prayers changed or matured over the years?
- Why does God honor the prayers of a humble person?
- As you close in prayer, allow a time a silence for each group member to consciously reach a moment of humility before God.