

Mental



✓ Prepare in Advance

Facilitator: In advance of the session:

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the *Bible Background Video* ready to view.

✓ Explore

Before reading the text, lead the following discussion:

- What would you say are important things to practice when we pray – our attitude, our posture, our words?
- Now have someone read Luke 18:9-14 out loud, then show the *Bible Background Video*.

✓ Two Ways to Pray

Use the following questions to encourage discussion.

- Who does Luke list as the audience of this parable (v. 9)? Why might we be tempted to take ourselves out of this audience?
- Describe the Pharisee's prayer. What is his attitude? What is his purpose in praying? What do his words accomplish?
- How does Jesus contrast the two – how differently does the tax collector pray? What is his purpose, and what does he accomplish?
- What is Jesus' analysis of the prayers? Were both men heard? Which one seems to get the better outcome... and why?
- This is such a wonderful parable because it's like a two-edged sword. In what ways does this parable tempt us to do the very thing it warns against?

✓ Looking Down or Looking Up

- Who was the Pharisee focused on while he prayed – God, himself, or the tax collector? In comparison, where was the tax collector's focus?
- How does this kind of focus make a difference in the way we pray?
- Why do you think that "looking down" is such a stubbornly persistent part of our human nature? Does it really make us feel any better about ourselves? Explain.

- In what other places (besides prayer) does this part of our nature typically show up?
- Why is this kind of "looking down" the very opposite of the Gospel message?
- How can prayer offer a corrective to that? How could prayer also magnify that?
- What methods might we use to make sure our prayers stay focused in the proper direction?

✓ Closing

In closing, share one thing you feel God has spoken to you through today's scripture. Then close with prayer.

By Jon Parks



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