



ADMITTING OUR NEED FOR THE GOOD NEWS **Luke 18:9-14**

There they were. Two men...standing. Not close, to be sure. But, you could see them both. And if someone could have spotted a greater contrast than what presented itself that morning in these two...Well, one can hardly imagine it.

They both had come to pray. Come the place where worship was what one should do. When nearby, you would come to the temple. If distant, you would nonetheless face it, like Jonah who prayed even from the stomach of the whale, "I am driven away from your sight, yet I shall look again toward your holy temple" (Jonah 2:4). When you prayed, somehow, somehow you direct your heart toward the "holy of holies."

The one, a Pharisee, positioned himself inside, on the stairs leading into the Court of Women, not far from the "holy place." By himself. His posture confident, head raised, hands up and out. Yet purposely separate. It was *separation* that the 6,000 Phariseesⁱ were known for. A proud brotherhood fanatical to avoid *anything* considered unclean – unclean foods, unclean places, even all kinds of unclean people.

And so he prayed, not so much to God but rather about himself. About his successes in separation. About his own resume of righteousness. ***God! I thank you that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers or... [and clearly, he had noticed the other] even like this TAX collector.***

He paused, but only for a moment. ***I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I that I get...***

Then oddly, his prayer (if you can call it that) ended. "Unusual," you say? Not really. Another, a Rabbi Nehunia, was often heard to pray:

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou has set my portion with those who sit in the *Beth ha-Midrash* (House of learning) and Thou has not set my portion with those who sit in (street) corners. For I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk. I labour and they labour, but I labour and receive a reward, and they labour and do not receive a

reward. I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world, and they run to the pit of destruction.ⁱⁱ

“I,” “I,” “I”...the Pharisee’s prayer. “I have done what I need to do – even more!ⁱⁱⁱ I am so good. Surely, I am acceptable to You. I am more than good enough.”

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off...

If it was difficult to watch the peacock-like Pharisee, it was spell-binding to watch the broken businessman. He was a “tax-harvester,” reaping in for Rome, and himself. Scouring the financial landscapes of his own burdened, weary countrymen. He knew he was hated...*but even more*, he knew he was far from God.

So he came to pray, but broken. So broken he could not come close. So broken he would not even look up. Expecting, it seemed, nothing. No recognition. No “There...there...” false assurances. He came in low with no excuses. No “but I’s.” Just deep guilt about his sin, and shame over choices made, dishonesties perpetrated, a life at least to this point mis-spent in pride, in greed, in “me.”

GOD...BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER.

That’s all? No promises made about what he would do *if* God extended his mercy? No bargain struck. No deal made? Just an open hearted-felt admission that at core he was a sinner, and a simple request: *God, please...be full of mercy?*

So...what did God do with these two men? Who stepped away from the temple truly **RIGHT** with and **RESCUED** by God? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ said it:

¹⁴ I tell you, this man (the tax collector) went down to his house justified, *rather* than the other. For **everyone** who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Australia’s great theologian Leon Morris summarizes this so well:

*[The tax collector’s] is the plea that is accepted. The tax collector went home **justified**, reckoned (by God) as righteous, ‘acquitted of his sins’ (NEB). This is the great [word of Paul the Apostle], seen here in the teaching of Jesus. The principle behind it all is that he **who exalts himself will be humbled**. No man has anything of which he can boast before God. By contrast, **he who humbles***

himself will be exalted (cf. Luke 14:11). The penitent sinner who humbly looks for God's mercy will find it.^{iv}

May I ask you before we go on...which one of these two men are you?

I have no doubt but that there are Pharisees and Tax-Collectors here today.

And, quite frankly, all of us start out as Pharisees...somehow convinced that what I really need to do to be accepted by God is to do enough good things. And unless we get over our own fascination righteousness—that somehow I'm better than all kinds of people I can think of--, someday we will stand before God and pathetically unveil our own trophy case of good deeds in the sight of a utterly perfect and holy God. Who will promptly say, "I'm sorry...I never knew you. Didn't you read, or at least listen to My word, which said "For by works **of the law** no human being will be justified in his sight, since through **the law** comes knowledge **of sin**" (Romans 3:20).

All peacock-like Pharisees need to become broken tax-collectors. Coming to God with but one prayer: "God, I'm a sinner. Please, be merciful." And here's the good news. Broken, humbled tax-collectors go home *justified*. Declared righteous, freely, by a merciful God because...because God the Son who became a man, paid the death penalty I and my sin deserved.

It's called THE GOSPEL...the GOOD NEWS...and God loves to extend His mercy, His rescue, to anyone who will approach Him in faith like the broken Tax-Collector.

HOW WORN IS MY WELCOME MAT?

During these winter weeks, on Sunday mornings, this team – Christ Community Church – a bunch of tax-collectors who have been justified by the mercy of God through faith, are worshipping a God who loves to rescue anyone who will cry out to Him. But quite frankly, we live in a world where many of the people we live nearby, with whom we work, some even within our own families, still do not understand the rescue that is available. And...

Winsome Teaching Series Key-Idea

***Because we love God we disciples of Christ
Jesus love to share what God loves to do***

This morning, because of your generous giving, we are able to put into our hands a tool to help us

better share what God loves to do. So what is this, and how can I use this to better understand the gospel, and to share it with others?

In essence, this is a “devotional guide.” It contains 66 devotionals, enough for seven weeks of meeting with the Lord in His word, and interacting with Him about understanding and sharing what it



means to become and be a disciple of Jesus Christ. It's designed to imbed in our hearts our 4th life Question – “How worn is my welcome mat”? That is, am I as Jesus’ disciple regularly welcoming anyone closer to meeting and following Christ by faith. So, let’s take a closer

look.

Suggested tips on using Winsome: Loving to Share the Good News

#1 Understand how it’s organized (Table of Contents, pp.2-3)

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#3 Interact with and talk to the Spirit of God over on the

- QUESTION:, THOUGHTS, and PRAYER page

A resume of self-righteousness or humility?

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt. "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

There are two kinds of people in the world of humanity. There are those who believe that they are "good enough." Whatever measuring stick they have chosen to use, they have concluded that they indeed measure up. And if there is a God who will hold them to account, they believe they have done enough, been good enough, have personally sacrificed enough, and have by comparison surpassed others enough to merit applause from God. The doorway into heaven will automatically swing wide open to them when they are finally called above. Such was the attitude of the Pharisee. He stands apart to pray for it "to declare," repeats his resume of self-righteousness, and expects a divine "Acta boni" from the Almighty. Unfortunately for him, and anyone who like him proudly trusts in himself, such a person returns home blindly self-deceived. Should life end, the only doors automatically opening are the gates of hell. But there are those who, enlightened by humility, profoundly realize their need before a holy God. No self-promotion erases sin's weight or penalty. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, it is brokenness and confession which opens heaven's gates even to the worst of sinners. So says the Savior who often taught and modeled that "the way up is the way down."

Day 1

Question:
Honestly, when you contemplate standing before God one day, do you anticipate presenting your resume of good works which have earned you heaven and eternal life, or will you begin by beating your breast in humility?

Thoughts:

Prayer:
Holy God, am I humble enough to admit my sin need to you.

Luke 18:14
"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

- Journal Summary pages (after a section)

#4 Master the DIAGRAM pages (pp.62-63)...

- The Bridge
- The 4 Arrows... Practicing drawing and explaining them with your family members, your Connect Group members, others.

Diagrams to illustrate receiving the Savior's gift of salvation

The Bridge

This diagram illustrates our need for salvation and God's gift of forgiveness... the Bridge diagram. Simply drawing this on a piece of paper, and while stepping through 4 biblical truths can help clarify how to receive salvation.

- People** - We are all separated from God and life because of our self-love by nature and choice. Romans 9:30-32
- God** - God is perfectly holy and just. Our sin and sinning creates a chasm, a broken relationship and distance from knowing God and loving God. Isaiah 59:2, 18:2
- Self-effort** - We all try to earn our way into God's favor and a relationship with God through a variety of good works, which, lacking consistency and perfection, fall short. Romans 8:29
- Christ's death for us** - Through each of us, God provided the one perfect Son to die for the penalty of our sin, and to break the power of sin and death. His sin is forgiven and he is adopted into a new family relationship with God through believing in Christ. Anyone can "cross the bridge" to simply believing in Christ for forgiveness and new life in God. John 3:16

In Him we have redemption through His blood (or death), the forgiveness of our iniquities, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7

Four Arrows

1. We are separated from God - Genesis 1:2
2. We BRIDGE in sin away from God - Isaiah 59:2
3. God provides REDEMPTION through Christ - Romans 8:29
4. Without Christ, JUDGMENT - John 3:15-18

For Christ who suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God. 1 Peter 3:18

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

****TIP:** tell "your story" by using a diagram

#5 Be ready to use the SUGGESTED PRAYERS (p.64)

Suggested prayers to receive God's gift of salvation and life in Christ

The following prayers can help express for someone. Neither requires to trust in Christ for forgiveness, salvation, and life. Each one may simply read either prayer to God, to express his/her faith.

DECISION TO "CROSS OVER THE BRIDGE" PRAYER

Father God, I want to receive a change to me. Thank You for sending Your Son into our world. Right now, I choose to believe that He died for my wandering off, my sin, and then rose alive from the grave in victory.

Right now I receive Your forgiveness. Right now I trust in Him alone for my salvation, and for righteousness before You. Right now, in faith I step over the cross-bridge to You.

Thank You for making me Your child. This is a new start for me, and I am eager to grow in Your family as a disciple of Your Son. Amen.

Signed _____ / /

Spiritual Birthday _____ / /

A SIMPLE DECISION OF FAITH PRAYER

Today I choose to place my faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone. I believe He died in my place to pay the penalty my sin deserves. I believe You raised Him from the dead by the Holy Spirit's power. By faith I receive the gift of His righteousness in place of my sin. Thank You. Help me to grow as a follower of Christ. Amen.

Signed _____ / /

Spiritual Birthday _____ / /

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE TRUSTED CHRIST FOR SALVATION IN PRAYER...

- Please sign this sheet and note your "birthday."
- Tell a Christian friend about your decision.
- Use this devotional by working through Section 2 "The Difference the Good News Makes" — and share your discoveries with your friend.

#6 Assess where you are with Life Question #4 (p.166)

SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Readers to whom you refer to the Gospel: Berke, William, in Search of the Great Commission: What Did Jesus really say?

Berns, George, Evangelical Post-Modern: How to reach a changing generation with the unchanging gospel?

Evans, Don and Robinson, Doug, Once Was Love: After Reformation: Spiritual growth as a result of love that is about to break.

Hylton, Ed, Just Walk Across the Street: Simple Steps Pointing People to Christ

Kenny, John, God of Their Faces and Joy: Their Stories: How to understand spiritually lost people and give them direction to God

Litka, Paul E., How to Give Away Your Faith

Peppers, Jim, Living Faith: Sharing the Gospel Naturally

Storley, Andy, Show Nobody's Perfect: How Good is Good Enough?

Nancy, Philip, What's So Amazing about Jesus?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a Division of Good News Publishers, Liberty, Tennessee.

Special gratitude to Pamela Staff for her careful editing and helpful suggestions, to Andy Barnabe for generous recommendations, to Wayne Stewart and David Simon in the Christ Community Church's communication ministry for graphics and management of production. These all are invaluable, unduplicated sources of help.

My heartful thanks go to the Christ Community Church family who prayerfully encourage the writing of the Life Question Book.

Finally, thanks to the Father who loved for us and sent His Son to seek and to save that which was lost, searching and finding us through the power and direction of God the Holy Spirit. Oh what love the Father has for us, that we might be called His children, for that is what we are, by grace through faith (Ephesians 1:1-5).

Life Question Self-Evaluation

Life Question #4: Following Christ through persecution is a life-defining relationship in the Christian's life. How do you measure up to this relationship?

Please evaluate each item using a scale of 1-5 where 1 = Not at all and 5 = Very much so.

Answer: 26 (8-00)

This self-evaluation process can help you consider how your life is shared in Christ. After completing the self-evaluation, you can begin working on a personal growth plan.

Please answer this spiritual self-inventory

1. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

2. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

3. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

4. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. 1 2 3 4 5

Unpack in Connect Group discuss – measure Grow!

#7 Listen to BEYOND THE SERMON podcasts Episodes #5 and #6

Episode #5
What is sin?

Episode #6
What Christ did about sin

Apple podcasts, Google Play, Spotify or through CCC App

CCAmes

Because we love God
(for all that He has done for us in salvation)

we love to share what God loves to do
(He loves to rescue people)

A GOOD CHALLENGE

So the question might be: **Can I really grow in sharing Christ?**

On the first day of this new year, 90,000 orthodox Jews gathered at New Jersey's MET LIFE stadium for a celebration more than 7 years in the making. What were they celebrating?*

People who commit to Daf Yomi—Hebrew for “daily page”—read one folio page of the Talmud every day for 2,711 consecutive days, all following the same order, until they have traversed the entire text. The Talmud, which forms the basis of Jewish law, records the debates of ancient rabbis about ordinary civil matters like torts and divorce, as well as specifically religious topics like how to keep the Sabbath and celebrate holidays—not to mention the arcane ritual procedures governing animal sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem.

But this Super Bowl-like setting was permeated by references to the Talmud, which Jews were studying more than 1,000 years before Columbus. On the stadium’s video crawl, instead of statistics about touchdowns, there were statistics about Talmud: which is the shortest chapter and which the longest, or how many times a particular rabbinic sage is mentioned in the text.

Meanwhile, in between speeches, the Jumbotrons showed expertly produced videos like “Heroes of the Daf,” an inspirational montage featuring people who overcame obstacles to learn their page of Talmud every day. They ranged from ordinary fathers and husbands who got up in the dark to study before work, to Mendy Rosenberg, a Brooklyn

man suffering from advanced ALS, who manages to study with the help of a computer that responds to his eye movements.

Why in the world would they do this?



And most of the men at the Siyum were not themselves completing the Daf Yomi cycle. Rather, they were there to join in a communal celebration of the idea of learning Torah—a term that, in traditional usage, encompasses not just the Five Books of Moses, but the entire system of Jewish law. One speaker, Rabbi Yissochar Frand, spoke of the “the transformative, supernatural power of Torah” on the Jewish soul, by which he meant not just abiding by the Torah’s commandments, but actively studying them.

Here is the truth – there is no true rescue, no salvation from sin, no forgiveness and adoption into the family of God through the Torah (i.e., the Law) nor the Talmud. With all due respect to their passion, they are celebrating something that cannot rescue.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

** The Apostle Paul > Rome*

Shall we not look forward to a different celebration...

Because a church team in Story County (Iowa) committed for 66 days to learn and share the good news?





ⁱ Josephus' estimate, as noted by F.F. Bruce in *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1969), 79.

ⁱⁱ Talmud, *Berakhoth* 28b (Soncino translation), cited in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An introduction and commentary* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press – Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 264. Leon Lamb Morris was an Australian New Testament scholar. Born in Lithgow, New South Wales, Morris was ordained to the Anglican ministry in 1938. He received his PhD at the University of Cambridge in England on the subject which became his first major book, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*. Wikipedia
Born: March 15, 1914, Lithgow, Australia **Died:** July 24, 2006, Kew, Australia

ⁱⁱⁱ Commentators universally point out that fasting twice a week was more than the Law required.

^{iv} Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An introduction and commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 265.

^v Adam Kirsch, "The Super Bowl of Jewish Learning," *Wall Street Journal*, Saturday/Sunday January 4-5, 2020, C4.