

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9 - 14

### Opening

- Gathering: Identify a public figure who fell from high esteem after a sin of theirs became known.
- Today's Focus: Jesus used a parable to teach that we are to rely upon His righteousness and not ours.
- Key Verses: *God have mercy on me, a sinner.* Luke 18:13
- Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* Luke 18:14

Opening Prayer

### Lesson

Obedience to God's Law (*Deuteronomy 4, Psalm 19, Psalm 119*)

What does God require of His people?

Deuteronomy 4:1 = Listen to His laws and decrees, *Follow them so that you may live*

Can these Laws be updated and modified as society changes?

Deuteronomy 4:2 = Do not add to or subtract from the commands I give you

How readily do God's Laws fit our lives today and how clearly do they apply?

Psalm 19:7-8 = God's Law is perfect; Makes wise the simple, gives light to eyes

Why do God's people want to obey His Laws?

Psalm 19:9-11 = Laws are precious and sweet, *in keeping them there is great reward*

Leviticus 18:4-5 = He who keeps God's Laws will live by them

What did David say about those who keep God's Laws? = Longest chapter of Bible, Focus on God's Law

Psalm 119:1-4 = Those who fully obey all of God's Laws are blessed

What is the prayer of God's people?

Psalm 119:33-35, 40 = Help me to understand Your Laws so I can obey them

The Righteous (*Romans 3*)

What percentage of God's people have kept God's Laws as described in Psalm 119?

Romans 3:10-12 = *No one righteous...no one who understands...all have turned away*

Don't the good things we do count for anything? = Filthy rags refer to cloths dirtied by a woman's period

Isaiah 64:6 = *all our righteous acts are like filthy rags* – Our best is far below God's standards

But doesn't the Bible tell about people who were righteous?

Luke 1:5-6 = Zechariah and Elizabeth - *upright in the sight of God*

How is this possible?

Romans 3:21-22 = *A righteousness from God apart from law ... thru faith in Jesus*

How does this righteousness from God fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law?

Romans 8:1-4 = *The law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death*

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Page 2

### God's Righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

What happens to our righteousness if we sin?

1 John 1:8-2:1 = Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense and purifies us

What does Jesus say about those who long for His righteousness?

Matthew 5:6; 6:33 = Righteousness and blessings will be given to them

How proud can we be of our righteousness?

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 = Since it comes only from God, we can only boast in Him

### Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5)

Does all of this mean that Jesus came to abolish the Law?

Matthew 5:17 = No, He came to fulfill it

Which parts of the Law are we no longer required to follow since Jesus came?

Matthew 5:18 = Not even the smallest part has changed or disappeared

What instructions did Jesus give for those who want to be great in heaven?

Matthew 5:19 = Practice and teach all of these commands

Who was recognized in Jesus' time as the ultimate example of how to live righteously?

Acts 26:5 = The Pharisees; Paul was a member

Did Jesus feel they were a good example to emulate?

Matthew 5:20 = You must be more righteous than the Pharisees to earn heaven

What is the point of the details of the Law Jesus gives in Matthew 5:21-47?

Matthew 5:21-22 = Even the super-fine detail of the Pharisees is not enough

What standard did Jesus give on how to live righteously under the Law?

Matthew 5:48 = *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*

### Obey or Disobey? (Romans 6)

Does this mean that the way to live forever is to do our best to keep God's Law perfectly?

Galatians 3:10-11 = No, we would be under a curse because we cannot keep everything

Since we are unable to obey, are we free to sin to our hearts' content?

Romans 6:15-18 = No, we are free from sin and can live in righteousness to our hearts' content

### Acts of Righteousness (Matthew 6, 23)

As slaves to righteousness, how are we to show acts of righteousness for others to emulate?

Matthew 6:1 = Don't perform "acts of righteousness" in order to be seen by others

Why not? Give an example.

Matthew 6:2 = Your only reward will be the honor by men you desire

How are we rewarded when we do these things purely to God's glory?

Matthew 6:3-4 = Our Father in heaven rewards us

Give another example.

Matthew 6:5-6 = Don't show off when you pray but do it behind closed doors

How about one more example?

Matthew 6:16-18 = Don't make it apparent when you are fasting

Who was Jesus using as an example that the Jews of His day would recognize?

Matthew 23:2, 5-7 = Scribes and Pharisees loved to show off their "righteousness"

How did Jesus explain the problem of their righteous outward appearance?

Matthew 23:25-28 = Cup, dish and tomb clean outside but dirty and dead inside

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Page 3

### Chief of Sinners (*Luke 15:1*)

What group of people were considered by the Jews as the scum of the earth?

Luke 15:1 = Publicans (tax collectors)

Jewish traitors (collected for Rome), Forced more than required (profit)

Did Jesus recognize this reputation?

Matthew 18:17 = Treat the unrepentant like a pagan or tax collector

Matthew 5:44, 46 = Even the tax collectors love those who love them

### Today's Counterparts

- = Give examples of people today who have respected reputations like the Pharisees did.  
Pastors, Billy Graham, Church leaders, Worship every Sunday, philanthropists
- = Give examples of people today who have despised reputations like the tax collectors did.  
Drug dealers, pornographers, used car dealers, lawyers, politicians

### The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (*Luke 18:9-10*)

To whom was today's parable intended?

Luke 18:9 = Those who were confident in their self-righteousness

What two extremes of society did Jesus use to make the point?

Luke 18:10 = The respected Pharisee and the despised tax collector

### The Pharisee's Prayer (*Luke 18:11-12*)

What did the Pharisee pray about and what was his posture?

Luke 18:11a = Himself; Prominent place, head up, hands in air

For what was the Pharisee grateful?

Luke 18:11 = He was better and more righteous than others

What evidence did the Pharisee give for deserving this praise?

Luke 18:12 = Fasted twice per week, tithed everything

What was so special about fasting twice per week? = Bible only required fasting on Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:29 = Did much more than the required once per year fast

What was so special about tithing everything?

Leviticus 27:30-33 = Tithes only applied to grain, fruit and animals

Matthew 23:23-24 = Pharisees even tithed kitchen herbs

Was the Pharisee just putting on a show or did he really feel this way?

- = He really believed he was righteous and was proud of it, enjoyed attention anyway
- Positives = Good, honest, just, virtuous, temperate, benevolent, grateful
- Negatives = Religiously religious, faith in himself, no sense of need, no love of others

# Bible Stories for Adults

## The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Page 4

### The Tax Collector's Prayer (Luke 18:13)

What was the tax collector's posture in prayer?

Luke 18:13a = Private place, head down in shame, hands on breast in sorrow

For what did the tax collector pray?

Luke 18:13 = Mercy - really *propitiation* (atonement) - Hebrews 2:17

What three key elements were in the tax collector's prayer? = sin, mercy, faith

Romans 5:8 = *the sinner* (original Greek) - *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*

Titus 3:5a = *have mercy on me* - He saved us by His mercy, not by our righteousness

Exodus 34:6-7a = *God* - Had faith in God's promise to forgive wickedness and sin

### The Father's Response (Luke 18:14)

Which man received justification by the Father for his prayer?

Luke 18:14a = The repentant tax collector

What is the key message of this parable?

Luke 18:14b = Self-exalted will be humbled, self-humbled will be exalted

James 4:6 = *God opposes the proud ...*

James 4:10 = *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up*

### Closing Prayer (Say together)

Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,

by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment.

For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways  
to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

### Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. What acts of righteousness have I done with some intention of being seen by men?  
(Matthew 6:1-18; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Matthew 23:1-12; Mark 12:41-44; Galatians 6:12-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 3:23-24)
2. When have I felt righteous and how did I show it?  
(Luke 18:9, 11-12; 16:15; Matthew 5:17-48; Romans 3; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 3:18-23; 1 John 1:8-2:1)
3. When have I really recognized my sinfulness and how did I respond to it?  
(Luke 18:13; Matthew 5:6; 6:33; 9:10-13; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29)
4. When have I exalted myself only to be humbled?  
(Luke 18:11-12, 14; 14:7-9; 20:46; Psalm 18:27; Proverbs 3:34; Ezekiel 21:26; Matthew 23:5-12)
5. When have I humbled myself and then been exalted?  
(Luke 18:13-14; 14:7-14; 1 Samuel 2:7-8; Proverbs 25:6-7; Isaiah 57:15; Philippians 2:5-11)