

Let's Get Authentic In Our Prayers

The Pharisee -vs- The Tax Collector

The Goal of this session is to open ourselves up to God's desire to produce authenticity in our lives. We will discover from their prayers how the two main characters viewed God, themselves, and others. We will evaluate our willingness to be authentic and then individually select an area in which we will concentrate on developing more authenticity.

Read Luke 18:9 - 14

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be [@](#)humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Pharisee

Discuss the following:

- According to verse 11, what did he pray about?
- For whose benefit was he praying?
- What did he include in his report to God of good behavior?
- To whom was he praying?
- For what was he thankful?

The Tax Collector

Discuss the following:

- Why do you think the Tax Collector stood at a distance in verse 13?
- What message was he sending by "beating his breast"?
- Where was he looking? Why?
- What did he request from God?
- How did he view himself?

Be Authentic: Think about your story?

"The parable of the pompous and pious prayers"

Tax Collector - Some translations refer to the second man (tax collector) as a publican, which means a "collector of public revenues". The Jews/Israelites viewed the tax collectors with little accountability, they thought of them as extortionists. The tax collectors were despised. None of the tax money stayed in Judea, all went to support the Roman Empire. Not only were most tax collectors known as fraudulently and deceptive, they also were spiritually defiled because of their continual contact with Gentiles. A tax collector could not testify in a Jewish court of law, nor could he tithe to the temple treasury in Jerusalem.

The Publicans were wealthy men, usually non-Jewish, who contracted with the Roman government to be responsible for the taxes of a particular district of the imperial Roman state. These Publicans would often be backed by military force.

The Tax collectors which the New Testament refers to (with possible exception of Zachaeus) were employed by publicans to do the actual collecting of monies in the restricted areas where they lived. These men were Jewish, usually not very wealthy, who could be seen in the Temple. They were probably familiar with the people from whom they collected taxes.

Pharisee - members of the middle class. Most tended to be businessmen (the merchants and tradesmen of the times). Most would not have been formally educated in the law, though they loved God's law. Regarding the general populace, Pharisees championed the cause of human equality; in many respects they represented a democratic movement. Their original intent seems admirable: to bring every area of life into subjection to the law of God. By the time of Christ, the Pharisee's sect had evolved into more of an elite group with an aloof attitude, but not all. Example: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who tenderly interred the crucified body of Jesus in Joseph's new tomb, were likely both Pharisees. Luke 11:39 - 52 (Amplified); Matthew 23:1 - 7, 13 - 33

"The Pharisee offered a speech disguised as a prayer. The Pharisee could easily focus on the sins and errors of those around him. Yet he was oblivious to his own pride and judgmental spirit. Read Matthew 7:3 - 5 and Psalm 24:3, 4. If you were prescribing a remedy to cure the Pharisee of his raging case of hypocrisy, what would you recommend?"

Many Christians resist accountability. They dislike having to report on a struggle. They

would rather have the matter be between them and God. (Those people typically do not join a small group.) How does accountability strengthen authenticity? How has accountability to a friend or spouse helped you stay true to your purpose and calling?

Authentic - being true to one's own personality, spirit or character; real, actual, true, transparent, vulnerable, genuine

Not Authentic - fake, deceptive, pretend, hypocrite, phony, fraud or impostor.

3 essential things we learn God wants in our worship.

1. Humility - There are several right ways to pray:
 - Eyes closed: to shut out all the distractions
 - Lift your eyes up and pray while focused on Heaven
 - Sitting
 - Kneeling
 - Standing
2. All of these are acceptable. However, there is one method that will be sure to lose your focus - praying while looking around to see who is watching and listening. (Matthew 6:5, 6)
3. Honesty - Two men went up to the temple to pray. One looked outward and assumed the worst in others. One looked inward and saw the worst in himself. The Pharisee's entire prayer offering was filled with wrong assumptions. Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was confident he couldn't be more righteous. One was confident he needed to be more righteous.

Bottom Line

Two men went up to the temple to pray. One went home just the same. One went home justified. Jesus ate with them. His message was that God would welcome the repentant and humble tax collector while He would spurn the arrogant Pharisee. His mission was to bring sinners - people like the tax collectors of His day - into God's presence.

Matthew 9:11 - 13

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 But go and learn what *this* means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice. [a]For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'