

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

God's Not Like That!

Luke 18:1-8

October 21st, 2018

Main Point

Many of us have wrong ideas about God. Sometimes, we may see Him as bothered by our prayers or reluctant to answer them. This morning, we will see God's not like that...so keep on praying!

Getting Started

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Do you ever find it hard to pray? If so, when?

Sometimes the most consistent thing about our prayer lives is the inconsistency of it. What could be some underlying reasons that people struggle to pray?

Even though prayer can be a struggle at times, we all have experienced God answering our prayers. Share a time in your group when God answered a specific prayer request.

The Bible is clear when it says that Christians are to pray consistently (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Before we get too deep into our discussion, we need to remember that true prayer is a distinctly Christian privilege. Only those who have been brought into God's family through the work of Jesus have gained access to God as Father. As Christians, we boldly approach God knowing that he will hear us and respond (Hebrews 4:16).

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Luke 18:1.

What does it mean to "not lose heart"?

In what situations are you most tempted to lose heart?

How does the condition of the heart affect the prayer life of the believer?

What can we do if we have lost heart?

Consistent prayer requires commitment from the heart. There will be times that the will is tired. In those times the Holy Spirit from your heart reminds you that we can

come to our Father yet again. So, we pray. If we are going to be people of prayer, we must be convinced from the heart that this is what God wants from us and for us.

Have a volunteer read Luke 18:2-3.

What do we know about the character of the judge?

What do we know about the character of the widow?

How does the widow's persistence relate to not losing heart?

Put yourself in the shoes of the widow. Would it have been easy to throw her hands in the air and simply give up? Why do you think the widow did not give up?

Have a volunteer read Luke 18:4-5.

The unrighteous judge is finally taking action. Notice the motive of the judge. It is not justice that the judge is after. No, he wants to get the widow off his back. He reasons, "If I just do what she wants me to do, then she will leave me alone."

What are the differences in character between God and this unrighteous judge?

How do these differences help you in your understanding of prayer?

What would have happened had the widow not been persistent?

Have a volunteer read Luke 18:6-8.

We arrive to the main point of the parable. If an unrighteous judge gives justice to the widow, how much more will God give justice to His people! We are told, "He will give justice speedily." *The question then becomes, do we accept this as truth, or not?*

Knowing that God is much more generous than the judge in this parable, will you share a time of prayer when God reminded you to remain steadfast?

Do you truly believe that you can consistently come to God in prayer with full confidence that He will respond?

How does the content of this parable help you not lose heart? How does this parable help you gain motivation to pray?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Is there anything in your life for which you have given up praying? Why?

What injustices are around you that you could bring before the Lord in prayer? Share those in your group.

What will it take for justice to be a bigger concern in prayer than for your own needs?

How can you specifically encourage one another toward consistent prayer?

Prayer

Father, help us see you as our gracious Heavenly Father who welcomes us into your presence. Thank you, Jesus, for your work on the cross that now gives me certainty in prayer. Father, help me to know what to pray for and help me not to lose heart. I place my trust in You once again, and I know that You will answer me when I call. You are a good, good Father.

Commentary

18:1. Despite interruptions from the crowds and His opponents, Jesus consistently turned back to His disciples to teach them new truths about the kingdom. This time He augmented His teaching on prayer (see 3:21; 5:16; 6:12, 28; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1-13; 20:47; 22:40-46). Prayer is not one quick session of listing needs and expecting immediate results. Prayer is continuing to talk to God with persistence. Prayer is based on absolute faith in God, so it never gives up, knowing God will answer when and where He chooses. Prayer also knows that God expects us to keep on praying until the answer comes.

18:2-5. Another parable illustrates Jesus' teaching on persistent prayer. An emotionally passive judge settled cases in one town. He did so without passion, not caring for either party. He did so based on his own wisdom and power, never looking to God for help, since he did not fear or believe in God. In an Israelite community where the judge was to be impartial and judgment ultimately belonged to God (Deut. 1:16-17), this judge was unfit for his job.

The judge met his match when a local widow pled for justice in a dispute with a neighbor. The nature of her grievance is of no concern for the story. The point is that she was a widow who never gave up. As a widow she should have received special protection and care from the justice system (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 24:17-21; 27:19; cf. Jas. 1:27). No matter how long the judge ignored her or denied her plea, she returned to his court asking for justice. The judge finally threw up his hands in disgust and frustration. Religious grounds did not cause him to act. He had no religion. Social justice grounds did not cause him to act. He cared nothing for people. He simply had a

job as a judge and he did it. He did have limits to his patience. So, he finally gave in to the woman just to get rid of her.

18:6-8a. Jesus applied the story for His disciples. If an uncaring human judge acts like this, how much more does a loving heavenly Father care for His children. He will never put you off. He does care for you. You will get a quick answer. You will receive justice. But remember, this involves continuing to pray day and night. Your definition of quick may not equal God's definition.

18:8b. The problem is not with God. He will answer when you need it. You can count on that. The problem is with us. When Christ returns, will there be anyone here who calls out in faith day and night? Will we become so lackadaisical in our faith that we allow people of persistent prayer to become extinct? Will the second coming of Jesus find us persisting in prayer that His kingdom will come? Or will it find us trapped on the housetop trying desperately to get back into the house to find the possessions that we rely on more than we do on God? Persistent prayer, the work of the person of faith, continues, no matter what the answer. When Christ returns, the person of persistent prayer will still be praying.