

Issue 8 - Humility that Heals: Lessons for Families from Luke 18

Messy story of the week

Sunday afternoon, the house was loud with post-church crankiness. During lunch, Jordan sighed and said grace a little louder than usual: “Lord, thank You that we’re not like those families who skip worship or let their kids run wild.” Fifteen minutes later, he snapped at his daughter for spilling milk and gave his wife the cold shoulder for “not backing him up.” By bedtime, everyone felt small and tense. Jordan ended the day reading his Bible—still convinced he’d been “the spiritual one.”

But in another home across town, David faced a similar Sunday meltdown. His son spilled the juice, his daughter bickered, and his wife looked exhausted. David felt the irritation rising — but he paused, sighed, and admitted, “I’m tired and grumpy, and I don’t like how I’m reacting. I need God’s help right now.” The room softened. His honesty didn’t erase the mess, but it invited grace into it. Instead of widening the gap, David’s humility brought the family closer.

Faithful God Then and Now

Jesus told of two men who went to pray. One recited his goodness and compared himself to others. The other beat his chest and whispered, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Jesus said the humble man went home **justified**. Then and now, God draws near to the contrite. He isn’t impressed by our résumé; He is moved by our repentance. In families, pride makes us prosecutors; humility makes us participants in grace. When Jordan finally whispered, “Lord, have mercy on me,” he found the doorway back to his wife and daughter—not by defending himself, but by receiving mercy and passing it on.

What we can learn

- **Posture > performance.** God responds to a humble heart more than a polished record.
- **Comparison kills connection.** “At least I’m not like…” shuts our ears to those we love.
- **Confession clears the path.** Owning our part restores dignity to everyone in the room.
- **Mercy multiplies.** The mercy we receive from God is the mercy we’re able to give.
- **Justified people apologize.** Secure in God’s grace, we can say, “I was wrong.”

Behind the curtain

In coaching, I often see a subtle swap: spiritual language used as a shield. We justify sharp tones because “the point was right,” or we keep score with quiet comparisons — prayer-as-performance, Bible-as-badge. Common signs: defensiveness that starts with “But I...,” a need to be the most spiritual person in the room, and apologies that explain more than they own. Families heal fastest when the temperature drops from proving to **repenting**.

Faith Step for the Week

Choose one relationship that feels strained. Pray, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Then do one concrete repair: name **exactly** what you did, acknowledge its impact, and ask, “How can I make this right?”

Bible verse

“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.” — Luke 18:13–14a

2-minute practice

Set a timer for 2 minutes.

1. Breathe in: “God, be merciful to me...” Breathe out: “...a sinner.” (60 seconds)
2. Write one sentence beginning with, “Today I will own...” (30 seconds)
3. Text or say one simple repair: “I was wrong to _____. Will you forgive me?” (30 seconds)