



FAITH

& LOVE

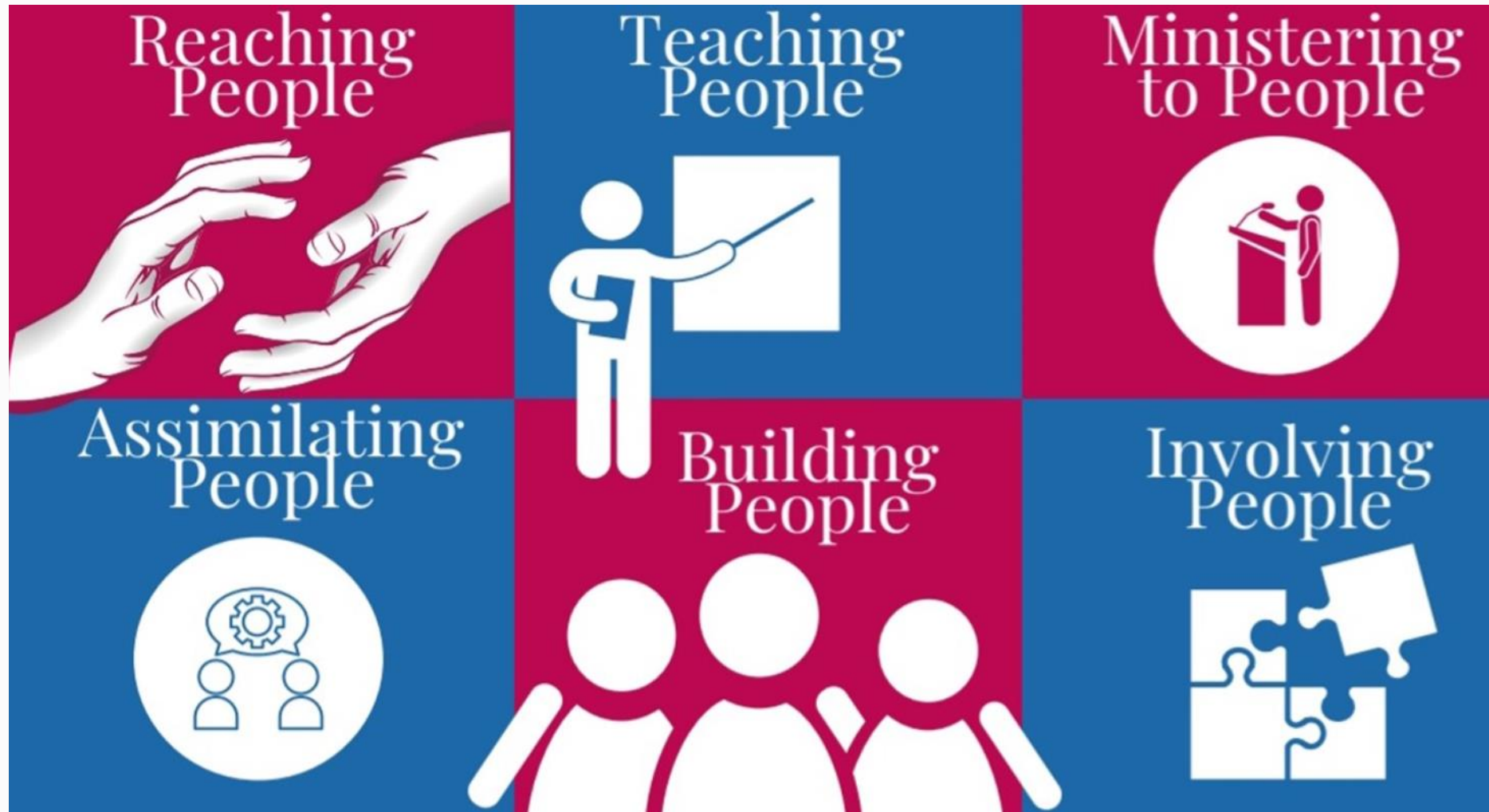
Church of God in Christ

Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C
Sunday School

Lesson 12 May 17, 2026

HUMBLE FAITH

SUNDAY SCHOOL CORE VALUES



SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. **Psalm 133:1**

School/Class: But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. **Hebrews 13:16**

Superintendent/Teacher: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. **2 Timothy 3:16**

School/Class: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **Psalm 119:105**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Philippians 2:4**

School/Class: He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. **Proverbs 22:9**

Superintendent/Teacher: Therefore he says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” **Ephesians 4:8**

School/Class: As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **1 Peter 4:10**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

School/Class: For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. **Romans 12:4**

Superintendent/Teacher: By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. **John 13:35**

School/Class: For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **Gal. 5:13**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

ALL:

But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

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HUMBLE FAITH



- Bible Basis: Luke 18:9-14
- Bible Truth: Jesus taught that prayer spoken in humility has power over a prayer spoken self-righteousness.
- Memory Verse: “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13)
- Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW why the Pharisee’s words were wrong and the tax collector’s words were right; APPRECIATE God’s mercy and grace; and INSPECT, and if necessary correct, our motivation for our own piety.
- Background Scriptures: [Micah 6:6-8, 7:18-19; Luke 18:1-9](#) – Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

Luke 18:9-14 KJV

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon 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 every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Pharisees. A religious group very popular in first-century Palestine. The name Pharisee means "separatists." This name may have come from their tendency to stress the importance of ritual purity and eating exclusively with righteous Jews. They also stressed the importance of following the oral tradition in order to keep the Law handed down by Moses. As a result, they often came into conflict with Jesus, who summed up the Law as loving God with your whole being and loving your neighbor as yourself.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Publicans. Publicans were tax collectors and custom officers. They worked for Rome and collected taxes in various provinces. The tax system was open to abuse, and many publicans were extortioners who created taxes in order to profit. As most Jewish tax collectors would tax and extort their own people, they were considered traitors. To work for Rome was to be not only an outcast but a sinner in the eyes of the average Jew. The Gospel accounts record Jesus having two significant encounters with tax collectors: one with Matthew, who became one of the twelve disciples ([Matthew 9:9](#)), and the other with Zacchaeus, who repented of his extortion and paid back four times what he stole ([Luke 19:1-9](#)).

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: We will understand how the faithful wonder whether their words, which are sometimes spoken out of desperation, will make a difference.

INTRODUCTION

Two Approaches to Prayer

Luke was a physician ([Colossians 4:14](#)), a ministry partner to the Apostle Paul ([2 Timothy 4:11](#); [Philemon 23-24](#)), and the author both of the Gospel of Luke and of Acts. To pen his Gospel, Luke relied on extensive investigative research believed to have been gleaned from the apostles, including Paul, and other eyewitnesses ([Luke 1:1-3](#)). Throughout his account, Luke hones in on Jesus' core teaching that salvation and redemption are available to anyone who believes-Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, Pharisee or tax collector.

INTRODUCTION

Two Approaches to Prayer

The parable in today's lesson reveals how Pharisees and tax collectors – societal polar opposites – approach prayer. The Pharisee prayed from an attitude of arrogance and self-righteousness, detailing his good character and works in contemplative prayer to himself. The tax collector drew near to God, praying from a repentant heart that acknowledged sin and begged for His mercy.

INTRODUCTION

Two Approaches to Prayer

Examining the dual prayers, we can appreciate the difference between self-righteous platitudes and true gratitude for God's mercy and grace. Jesus commended the tax collector, saying, "This sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God" (from v. 14, NLT). The parable's message to Christians is clear: humble faith encompasses every area of life, including our prayers.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: We will accept that a humble faith allows the power and presence of God to prevail.

I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

Jesus told parables to illustrate real-life issues. In the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector, He highlighted the differences in the content and manner of their public prayer; these, in turn, demonstrated what was so wrong about what the Pharisee said and right about what the tax collector said. From their prayers, we learn that prayer mirrors the heart. We also learn that prayer is the ideal vehicle for expressing gratitude for all God has done for us and brought us through. Unfortunately, the Pharisee's prayer fell short of true thanksgiving because it exclusively focused on self-exaltation, exposing his prideful heart.

[Luke 6:45](#) lets us know the importance of the heart as the source of good or evil.

I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

Answered prayer can spark arrogance. How do we share answered prayers? Some give God all glory, humbly admitting His role in our provision, protection, or other answered prayer. Others give a testimony peppered with sentences and phrases that begin with "I." If we are not careful, like the Pharisee, we can become haughty, attributing answered prayers to our righteousness, eloquent or anguished words, acts of service, or financial stewardship (tithes, offerings, "love gifts," etc.). The Pharisee's prayer made mention of things he considered noteworthy; the tax collector's prayer was devoid of such items.

I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It focuses on the type of person God approves of, and contrasts pride and humility.

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HUMBLE FAITH



I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

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Jesus proposes a parable to certain people who consider themselves righteous and despise others; it may be a reference to the Pharisees or the legalistic Jews ([cf. Romans 10:2-3](#)). The Pharisees regarded themselves as the pillars of righteousness and maintainers of a higher standard for obeying Israel's covenant stipulations. As such they became guardians and enforcers in matters of the Law, especially ritual purity, Sabbath keeping, and tithing. The concern for ritual purity expanded into a concern for table fellowship and keeping proper company. Excluded from table fellowship were those sinners who broke the Law, such as publicans and tax collectors. This explains the Pharisee's later distancing of himself from the tax collector.

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I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

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A Pharisee and a publican went up to the Temple to pray (v. 10). Private prayer in the Temple was possible any time, and public prayers took place twice daily ([Luke 1:9-10](#); [Acts 3:1](#)). The first hour of prayer was 9 a.m., the second at 3 p.m. These two times coincided with the morning and evening sacrifice ([Exodus 29:39](#)). Prayer also came to be viewed as equal to a sacrifice to God ([Psalm 141:2](#), [Proverbs 15:8](#)). The two men may have gone to the Temple at a spontaneous time or during these specific hours designated for prayer.

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I. HAUGHTY FAITH

Luke 18:9-12

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The Pharisee "stood and prayed." Standing was one of the many acceptable positions for prayer in Judaism, but in Matthew 6:5, Jesus points out the hypocrisy behind that posture. The Pharisee, with self-confidence, thanks God, first for all the bad things he does not do, then for all the good he does (vv. 11-12). He went up into the Temple to pray, but not to God; he "prayed thus with himself." He shows his righteousness by holding himself against not the Law of God but "other men" and even "this publican" (v. 11). The good people are known by their religious practice such as fasting twice a week and tithing from their possessions. The Pharisee, in his pride and self-righteousness, was guilty of the sin of self-sufficiency, which recognizes no need of God's power.

II. HUMBLE FAITH

Luke 18:13

The tax collector prayed to exhibit humility. He stood at a distance, considering himself unworthy to be near the Temple grounds. In contrast, the Pharisee believed he was entitled to God's presence. The tax collector's avoidance of looking at Heaven shows that he was aware of his sin and his unworthiness to stand before a Holy God. His posture shows he wants to experience mercy versus one who has no need for mercy.

II. HUMBLE FAITH

Luke 18:13

Instead of congratulating himself, he beats his chest in sorrow. This was not a happy or self-righteous prayer, but one of sorrow. The tax collector was sorry for his sins. He has no religious resume. The only thing he remembers is that his sins make him desperately in need of God. He has nothing to bring to God but his need. This is the correct posture for prayer; it is not about what we have done or can do, but about our desire for God and His mercy in our lives.

II. HUMBLE FAITH

Luke 18:13

In church, believers may look at how a person prays and assume that he or she is praying from a heart of arrogance or humility. All too often, we make snap judgments based on such attributes as volume (Is he/she "praying the house down" with loud, forceful words, or quietly asking for God's help?) or posture (Prostrate or standing? Hands lifted or not?). However, as the parable shows, our words are the true harbingers of haughty or humble faith.

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II. HUMBLE FAITH

Praying for Mercy

Luke 18:13

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

The publican's attitude and words show his humility and his profound repentance from his sins. First he is "standing afar off," at a distance from the sanctuary and others. Second, he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" as a sign of his unworthiness before God. Third, he "smote upon his breast" as a sign of profound grief, a common expression of mourning in the cultures of the ancient Near East. Here the publican shows intense sorrow for his sin.

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II. HUMBLE FAITH

Praying for Mercy

Luke 18:13

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Finally, he speaks simple words: "God be merciful to me a sinner." The words "be merciful" translate the Greek verb *hilaskomai* (**hi-LAS-ko-my**), meaning to wipe away or show mercy ([also Hebrews 2:17](#)). The word conveys the idea of God's mercy giving a total pardon. The publican prays for God's mercy so that his sins may be forgiven. He does not use a lot of words; his prayer is a cry from his soul.

III. HUMILITY'S REWARDS

Luke 18:14

In the parable, Jesus identifies two key rewards of humility: first, God exalts those who are humble. According to this world's way of thinking, we must exalt ourselves, but in the Kingdom of God, those who humble themselves receive God's exaltation. To go down in the Kingdom is to go up. A second reward is that God justifies the person who prays humbly.

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III. HUMILITY'S REWARDS

Luke 18:14

As maturing Christians, we want our prayers to be received and answered by God. That only happens when we walk before Him in humble faith, as evidenced by our daily Christian walk—including our prayers.

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III. HUMILITY'S REWARDS

Humble and Exalted

Luke 18:14

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Jesus declares that the publican goes back forgiven, unlike the Pharisee. The Pharisee goes home unaccepted, unjustified, and still under God's displeasure because he counts on his own merit. The publican is justified by faith without work ([cf. Ephesians 2:8-9; Genesis 15:6](#)).

Through His parable, Jesus teaches that justification is by faith, not works.

III. HUMILITY'S REWARDS

Humble and Exalted

Luke 18:14

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Jesus concludes the parable by saying "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" ([cf. Matthew 23:12; 1 Peter 5:5-6](#)). He here warns the disciples against the consequences of pride. Whoever exalts himself before men will be lowered. We cannot approach God on the basis of our own justice. Self-confidence and proud judgment toward others close the door of Heaven, even if we are zealous and religious as the Pharisee.

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LIGHT ON THE WORD

True Humility

True humility and repentance open the door of Heaven and get answers to prayer. When we pray, we must see God's holiness and our own miserable state as a repentant sinner. Then prayer becomes genuine.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: We will explore how humility is marked by the person who credits God and others for his or her success.

BIBLE APPLICATION

Public prayer offers a forum for people to be drawn humbly into God's presence. At times, however, public prayer can be a platform for individuals to showcase eloquence, educational training, or new attire. All prayer is not created equal. When given the opportunity, let us model humble faith via prayer that (1) seeks God's mercy; and (2) extends an invitation for us to model humility in every area of Christian service, including prayer.

STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: We will accept that Jesus hears our prayers.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Ask God to help you identify and eliminate self-exaltation in your own prayers. Try this: write down one of your recent public prayers (i.e., at a meal, at church, with a friend). Now, in light of today's parable, ask God's forgiveness for any pride that you exhibited. Then rewrite the prayer based on information you learned from today's lesson.

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Prayer

Thank You God,

For giving us opportunities to know that You are greater than we are. As we rest in You, may our humble spirits that are pleasing before You, be acceptable in all that we do and say.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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Next Sunday
May 24, 2026
Lesson 13
“Childlike Faith”
Luke 18:15-17; Mark 10:16