

Generosity: How God's Radical Grace Makes Us Givers

Study #1: "Generosity and God's Grace"

The Text: Luke 18:9-17 NIV

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

The Little Children and Jesus

¹⁵ People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁷ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Questions:

1. Jesus describes two men who went up to the temple to pray. What do the two men have in common? How do they differ?
2. What do their prayers tell us about both their view of God and what they believe is acceptable to him?
3. What do the Pharisees and Jesus' disciples (vv.15-17) have in common? How do they regard others of lower status?

The Text in the Bigger Story: Micah 6:6-8 NIV

⁶ With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

4. The Pharisee considered himself great because of his tithes and fasts, but in the Micah text we see that even the most extraordinary works are insufficient for meeting God's demands. What did the Pharisees and the readers of Micah fail to grasp about what God truly desires? What does this say about our efforts to earn God's approval?

Jesus Completing the Story

5. What do we learn from this parable about the necessity of Jesus' sacrifice for sin? How does his voluntary humility change our posture toward God?

Living Out the Story

6. To which of the two men do you more readily relate? Why?
7. What are some of the "good deeds" you rely on to earn God's favor?
8. How does the experience of God's graciousness and generosity to us, shown in the sacrifice of Jesus, radically alter our motivation for good deeds?

PRAYER

Praise God that it is his good pleasure to reveal his kingdom to "little children," those who are humble and poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3, 11:25-26). Praise him for Jesus, who humbles himself and became obedient to death on the cross, in order to share with us his resurrection and ascension.

Confess our tendency to be self-reliant and proud, which closes us off to receiving God's grace. Confess how easily we look down on those we deem insignificant and treat them with contempt, rather than compassion.

Ask God to reveal those areas in our lives where we do not depend on him or recognize his graciousness to us. Ask that he would show us our dependence on the idols of self, security, accomplishments, and acumen; pray for spiritual insight to recognize how flimsy and empty these idols are. Pray for humbled, repentant hearts that turn to him for grace and experience his compassion.

Philippians 2:3-8

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

[James Woods](#) has lost his Pacific Palisades home in the Southern California fires that continue to devastate parts of Los Angeles.

[Speaking on CNN](#), the 77-year-old “Vampires” and “Once Upon a Time in America” actor broke down in tears discussing the harrowing situation in his neighborhood.

“One day you’re swimming in the pool and the next day it’s all gone,” Woods said, speaking on-air with CNN’s Pamela Brown.

On Tuesday, Woods documented the fire sweeping the Palisades on X, posting photos and videos of his neighborhood engulfed in flames.

“There is no possession as priceless as friends and good neighbors during a tragedy,” [he wrote](#). “I can’t believe the blessings we enjoy, and I am humbly grateful.”