

Life Group Parables: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

Objectives: We want students to know and understand that there is only one way to obtain approval or righteousness from God. All of our confidence should be in Christ and not in ourselves. We want followers and those who are not followers to receive grace and mercy from Jesus and allow Him to declare us righteous.

Launch

Use your own words... (3 minutes)

What are some blessings in your life that you are really grateful for? How would your life look different if you did not have these blessings? (Ex. Health, Intelligence, Education, The nation you were born in, Family, Wealth)

How do these blessings impact your relationship with God? With others?

Explore

Set the scene: Read Luke 18:9-14

- **Who is the audience Jesus is speaking to?** (It's important to note the characteristics of the audience Jesus is teaching the parable to.)
- **Describe the story in your own words? Who are the characters and what type of men were they? How does it end?** (Pharisees were highly religious and the keeper of the law. Tax collectors turned on the Jewish people to collect taxes for the Roman government.)

In this parable the tax collector goes home justified while the Pharisee does not. Justification means the tax collector is able to stand rightly in the presence of God and the Pharisee will be condemned. We need to compare and contrast the difference in the prayers to see what sets them apart.

Break it down (observation):

The Pharisee

- **What are your observations about the Pharisee?**
- **What is his attitude towards God? How do you see this attitude reflected in his prayer?** (There is a lot that's not wrong with the prayer. He should give thanks to God for all things, pray in privacy, and be devoted in fasting and giving. The problem with the Pharisee's prayer was not that he

thanked God for his spiritual growth. It's because he thought his spiritual growth justified him.)

- **What is his attitude towards himself and others?** (confident in himself, thinks he's better than others, he's not following the command to love God and others)
- **Why does he feel so confident towards God?** (On paper, he's got some reason to be confident, even cocky. He can look around at others and think 'How could God not want me? Especially when I look around at your other options')
- **Does his confidence in himself change anything about his standing before God? What might be unsettling about this?**

The tax collector

- **What are your observations about the tax collector?**
- **What is his attitude towards God? Why is he so scared of God?** (Contrary to the Pharisee, this guy has done nothing right. He can't even say, 'Well, at least I have this going for me'. Instead, he knows his only chance to be with God is by hoping in God's mercy.)
- **What causes the tax collector to ask for God's grace and mercy?** (He realizes his only chance is to believe that God can change him)

Bringing understanding:

- **What do the Pharisee and the tax collector have in common?** (They both need to be justified by God. They are both sinners in need of a Savior.)
- **How have all of the great qualities of the Pharisee actually kept him from God's grace and mercy?** (He's learned to depend on his abilities to please God instead of embracing God's grace for his sinfulness)
- **Why does God respond to the tax collector's humility by justifying him**

instead of the Pharisee? (The tax collector knows his only chance to stand rightly before God is for God to choose him through His grace and mercy rather than anything he has done.)

Short Film:

Even though the Pharisee seems to be a more extreme example, we often do try to make ourselves more attractive in order to seek approval.

- **Watch the short film 'Not Evelyn Cho'.** (Found at globalshortfilmnetwork.com. Tip: Intro the film and ask everyone to think about 1)What is Sarah longing for? 2)What changes in her life and what doesn't?)
- **Discuss observations about film.**
- **What do you think Sarah is longing for?** (Make sure to hit on longing for approval or security through approval.)
- **How does Sarah grow during the film?**
- **What remains unchanged at the ending?**
- **Why did Sarah fail at getting to know the delivery guy?** (Her strategy was to make herself more attractive rather than to just get to know him.)
- **In what ways do we try to get approval from God? What is the good that comes? What is the bad?**

Apply

A relationship with God should spur you on towards growing in Biblical living. While this growth should produce confidence in our relationship with Christ, this confidence should always be based in humility in what Christ has done for us instead of confidence in what we can do for God.

(Choose the best application questions for your group.)

- **How can confidence in yourself keep you from your need for Jesus?**
- **What causes you to think you are more deserving of God's love than others are?**
- **Why is there just as much need for Christ in your life now as any other time?**
- **When the tax collector came to God he was scared. What are truths about God that you need to be reminded of to build your trust in Jesus?**

- **What are areas in your life that you want to fix for God's approval rather than confess your need for God's grace?**
- **One quality you see in the tax collector is dependence on God's grace. What keeps you from depending on God's grace over your merit? What would it look like to live this week depended on God?**
- **Show 'Not Evelyn Cho' to a friend and discuss the film.**

Announcements (5 minutes)

- Set up meeting time/place to go to Thursday Night Cru
- Freshmen Overnighter this weekend

Life Group #2: The Parable of the Soils

Mark 4:1-9; 13-20

Purpose:

Continue to take time to establish trust and relationships. There will be a good # of new people and 2nd timers. Give them space to find their place and be comfortable. Try to find “on-ramps” for them to contribute to the conversation.

Text

Mark 4:1-9, 13-20

Challenge

What soil condition am I?

Critical Event

Icebreaker

Time:

25 Minutes getting to know one another
20 Minutes discussion
5 minutes Pray
3 minutes announcement

Objectives: We want students to evaluate the state of their life. We want them to determine if they are listening to and receiving the Word of God. We want them to see that Jesus alone is the source of life.

Getting to Know You (15 minutes)

Ice breaker that helps us get to know each other. It still takes time for people to start to feel their place. Plus, there is a good chance a number of new ppl. will come.

Lifegroup Vision

Continue to explain and cast vision for Lifegroup. Continuity helps 2nd timers continue to see what they are part of. Don't assume people's spiritual backgrounds or that they understand the purpose of Lifegroup. Here is a suggestion: *We understand all kinds of people come to Lifegroup, where ever you are in your journey we are glad you are here. We believe that Jesus is the King who is worth following with all of our life. We also know that people are at different places in that process. We want this to be a safe place where people can follow Jesus no matter where they are at in the process.*

The Hook Use your own words... (3 minutes)

How did you decide to come to college and BGSU? What factors were important for you as you looked for colleges?

Of course most of our major decisions (who do date, where to work, or where to choose to start my new college life) we have a bit of a process to make our decision. We evaluate our values and priorities then we evaluate our options to make the best decision.

Evaluation is also important when it comes to personal and esp. spiritual growth. Where am I at? What am I looking for when it comes to my relationship with God? What do I hope to get out of it? These are just a few questions that we are consciously or unconsciously asking ourselves. We'll Jesus told a famous parable to help people evaluate the condition of their spiritual life.

The Book

Set the scene: Read Mark 4:1-9

•What are some ways you could define the word “parable”?

•Jesus often taught in parables, why do you think he chose to teach this way?

In general, parables are stories designed to make one main point. As you read this story, what point do you think Jesus is trying to communicate? (Are you someone that hears and applies the Word of God? It is ok if people do not get it right away.)

Break it down (observation):

•What is the contrast in the story? (he contrasts the different types of soils)

•Describe each soil in your own words.

Don't Forget

1. Pass around a clipboard and pen for names, room numbers, phone numbers and email
2. Arrange a place and time to meet in order to go together to the weekly meeting.
3. Bring extra Bibles.
4. Start to initiate time with LG attendees outside of LG to build relationships (lunch? Disc Golf?)

Helpful Hints

1. Ask open-ended questions and allow time for people to answer. Don't answer your own question. Instead, rephrase it. Feel free to ask as many or as few of the questions provided as you want as long as they understand the passage.
2. Watch the clock. Try not to rush. (Keep the first Lifegroup under 50 minutes).
3. Stay on track.
4. Trust God and don't forget to breathe.

•Describe the “problem” hindering the seed growing in each soil. *(each have a depth problem, also the third has things that choke out the growth)*

•What is the result of the seed falling into good soil? *(fruit is produced)*

•What do you think this parable means for you today? Most of the time Jesus does not interpret the parables. However, his disciples were confused so he interpreted this one so we can know exactly what the parable means.

Bringing understanding: Read 4:13-20

•In general what do the soils represent *(different lives of people)*

•What does the seed represent?

•How would you define “the word”? *(In general it would describe the Bible, but specifically it is the message of Jesus- “the good news”)*

•Jesus could have said the Word is like a sword or a hammer. Why do you think Jesus uses the illustration of a seed?

The first three soils:

•Since each soil represents a type of person, who might each soil represent in the day of Jesus? *[Soil 1- hard hearted religious leaders; Soil 2- the crowd looking for a miracle; Soil 3- His family who was embarrassed by Him (3:20)]*

•How do we see each of these three soils represented in lives today?

•What are things present at BGSU that has potential to choke out the Word?

The good soil:

•In the parable, what makes the 4th soil good? *(It was able to receive the seed with depth and allow it to grow without things choking it out)*

•What are the characteristics that make a person “good soil”? *(they hear the Word, they accept it and bear fruit)*

•What does it mean to “accept” the Word? *(to embrace it and apply it)*

•What does it mean to bear fruit? *(to become like Jesus, to experienced life change)*

The Took (Application)

•Which soil best represents your life right now?

•Which one do you want to represent your life?

•We all have concerns and priorities that keep us from seeking God's kingdom. What is a concern you have or a priority in your life that you believe is keeping you from pursuing God's Kingdom?

•What is one thing you need to do in order to hear and embrace the Word?

It is important that people do not leave thinking that they need to do good things. The point of this passage is that each person evaluate how they are hearing. Do they hear and take it to heart or not. For the “seed” to be effective it needs to be internalized and applied to our heart.

Part of “hearing” is applying the basic gospel message to our heart. We need to explain the good news to people have a chance to embrace this message!

Announcements (5 minutes)

- Set up meeting time/place to go to Thursday Night Cru
- Freshmen Overnighter Next week
- Fall Getaway: September 25th-27th at St. Mary's. A great opportunity to develop real friendships in Cru. We will have fun outside, chilling, learning, and eating. First Years are only \$30 and if you register by Sept. 18th you get a \$10 discount.

Prayer

Life Group #4: The Parable The Rich Fool
Luke 12:4-34

Purpose:

We want to learn how to be on our guard against all kinds of greed. We want to treasure God and His Kingdom more than possessions. We want to reorient our life around God vs. food, clothing and money

Text

Luke 12:4-34

Challenge

What does it mean to live life in light of God's eternal Kingdom

Critical Event

The Took

Time:

25 Minutes getting to know one another
25 Minutes discussion
5 minutes Pray
3 minutes announceme

Ice Breaker/Game/Group Interaction

The Hook

Have you ever had a near death/trauma experience? How did that help you gain perspective on your life?

150 years ago many Christians were involved in owning and trading slaves (to be fair many Christians were instrumental in abolishing slavery). This is a sad and embarrassing reality for most of us. 150 years from now when people look at Christians from 2015, what would be sad and embarrassing for them?

What are ways that people waste their life?

The Book

Read Luke 12:4-34

•What are the main themes covered in these verses? (*Greed, Anxiousness, eternal perspective, trusting God to provide, trusting God has my best interest in mind*)

These verses provide the context for our parable tonight.

•What is the point Jesus is trying to make with the parable vs. 16-21? (*the purpose of life is being "rich toward God" and not storing up wealth for ourselves*)

•Right before the parable, Jesus say's to "watch out! Be on your guard..." against what? (*all kinds of greed or covetousness*)

•How would you define greed? (*Greed is an excessive desire to possess wealth, goods, or abstract things of value with the intention to keep it for one's self. Wikipedia*)

•How would you define coveting? How does coveting affect our relationships?

•What are your thoughts about Jesus replying to the brother, "Man, who made me judge over you?"

•Why does Jesus tell everyone they need to watch out or be on their guard against greed? (*because people are blind to greed. It is easy to justify our greed. Greed does not look as obvious as other sins...*)

•What are some of the negative consequences of greed? (*Ruins community; people are used instead of cared for; families split; etc... c.f. 1 Tim. 6:9-10; Col. 3:5*)

Don't Forget

1. Pass around a clipboard and pen for names, room numbers, phone numbers and email
2. Arrange a place and time to meet in order to go together to the weekly meeting.
3. Bring extra Bibles.
4. Start to initiate time with LG attendees outside of LG to build relationships (lunch? Disc Golf?)

Helpful Hints

1. Ask open-ended questions.
2. Bring a computer/ipad to have ppl. register for Fall Retreat at Lifegroup.
3. Stay on track.
4. Trust God and don't forget to breathe.

•What perspective is the Rich fool living from?

- *Thinking of yourself as the owner and not just the steward (v. 17-18- notice the use of "I" and "my")*
- *Hoarding treasure for self without being rich toward God and His plans. (v. 18)*
- *Trusting in money/stuff to bring you security and not trusting in God for that. (v.22-30)*

•What is the "turn", what new light does the turn put on the Rich man's possessions?

•This is the only parable where God speaks, how does God respond to the man in the parable? (*You fool! Verse 20*)

•How do you feel about God's response?

•What does Jesus seem to think is most important? (*To focus on material things and not be concerned with the spiritual things is a grave long term error- it is foolish*)

•Since none of us have a lot of money, does this message apply to us?

•How does this message fit with the message of our culture?

Of all the parables of Jesus this one is especially counter-cultural to the typical American view of money and stuff. We have 401K's and pensions and retirement... **So what can we do about it?**

The Took (10 minutes)

•According to the passage, what are things we can do so we don't live a foolish life?

There are at least 2 ways:

1. **Seek God's Kingdom first** (v. 31) or *be rich toward God (v. 21)]. We need to not only stop running after money, but we need to invest in eternal things. We need to exchange our treasure from things of the world to eternal treasures. We need to run after God's rule and the things He cares about.*

What does it mean for you to "seek God's Kingdom"? (*Consider why each of you are in college... to get a job to earn money, to be secure. How does this rub up against those desires for financial security?*)

2. **We need a radical experience of God's grace** (read v. 32). *We do not need to be fearful and chase after things for security, because our loving Father knows our needs and has already given us the Kingdom! When we realize that God was **pleased** to give us the*

kingdom, then we can give radically. When we know that we already have been given the kingdom, we can choose to invest in eternal things.

- **We all deal with anxiety (wait 'til mid-terms). When we start to discover places where we are seeking security because of worry, what does it look like for us to trust God?** (*Think of some practical ways of trusting God to provide for what we need... friends, money, jobs, leadership opportunities, etc.*)
- **What is the contrast that Jesus is making in v. 34?** [*if you treasure yourself you will seek to gain stuff for you, if you treasure God and what He treasures (like people) you will use your stuff for His purposes*]
- **If you were to look at your treasure (where do you spend your money) what is most important to you?**
- **What does it look like to wake up tomorrow and begin to trust God in places were you feel anxious or worried?**

Announce

- Set up meeting time/place to go to Thursday Night Cru
- Barn Bash: Free, starts at 7pm. Music, games, fall food, s'mores... wear your barn clothes! Set up rides as a Lifegroup to help get people there.
- Fall Retreat: September 25th-27th at St. Mary's. A great opportunity to develop real friendships in Cru. We will have fun outside, chilling, learning, and eating. The cost for Fall Retreat is \$65. First Years are only \$35 and if you register by Sept. 18th you get a \$10 discount. *Register online at Lifegroup!

Pray: Try to be aware that prayer is just not a thing you do. Be aware of people's needs and switch it up from time to time (whole group, split men/women, groups of 4-5). Encourage ppl. there is no pressure to pray, but also encourage sharing real needs from their lives as they come up.