

UNLIKELY CONVERTS

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) 09.07.08

- Monday** Re-read Luke 18:9-14 and pray the Lord's Prayer, meditating on "forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me." Thinking about this parable, who do you think is our community's equivalent to "Tax Collector?" Remember that in Jesus' day, Tax Collectors were of Hebrew descent who contracted themselves out to a pagan, foreign Empire. They were notoriously corrupt and perceived as traitors. Who might today suffer under the stigma of second class citizens? Teen moms? Recovering homosexuals? Those of Middle Eastern descent, especially in the wake of 9/11? Check yourself, "What are the ways—be it ever so subtle—that I find myself looking down on others in an attempt to exalt myself? God, forgive me my trespasses!"
- Tuesday** Here is a simple Scriptural prayer to meditate on today: *"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by you will they were created and have their being."* (Revelation 4: 8, 11 NIV). The way to recognize your own need for God is to be alone with God. Get by yourself! My student minister once said, "You are who you are when you are by yourself." There's no one to impress or prove yourself to—other than God. Very quickly when we are alone and God shows up we confront the "brutal facts of our current reality": (1) God is holy; (2) I am not. (3) Only He can make me holy. When I see this reality and accept it, I am led—not to compare myself with others—but to seek what only God can give.
- Wednesday** Some of the Pharisees created their own standard of righteousness. In what ways do we do that today? Have we been guilty of creating a man-made code of Christianity, whereby we judge others? Have we been guilty of manufacturing "I fast twice a week" lists, which go far beyond what God ever intended? Our insistence on keeping these self-created lists creates a spiritual caste system; we become spiritually proud. What would be on your self-created righteousness list? In other words, what are you doing that Christ has not asked you to do; yet in doing them you think you're close to Him? From whom/what other than Christ am I seeking approval?
- Thursday** A very popular first century male Hebrew prayer was, "God I thank you I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." Paul inverts this in Galatians 3:28—*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ."* If God declares a Tax Collector his child; that makes the Tax Collector my sibling! Pray for the opportunity to tell someone that your church family is a "come as you are and Christ will do His work" kind of church!
- Friday** Before you go to work, meditate on the Tax Collector's prayer for 10 minutes: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!" Pray that over and over.
- Saturday** Go to a distraction free place. Read John 1. Sit in solitude for 15 uninterrupted minutes. Pray for your preacher and Sunday's services!