

November 7, 2012

Why Should I Give

Malachi 3:6-12

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

A Heart That Pleases God

Luke 18:9-17

LESSON FOCUS*"All who make themselves great will be made humble."* (Luke 18:14)*"All who make themselves great will be made humble, but all who make themselves humble will be made great."* (Luke 18:14)**Sermon Focus:**

When we give with the right attitude we reap great blessings from God. The blessings are not financial in nature, but spiritual. When we trust God with finances and give back to him first we begin to see how He cares for us.

Lesson focus:

In Jesus' day the Pharisees were the strict Jews. They believed. They were disciplined. They took the Law seriously - so seriously, in fact, that they created a "hedge" around the law, the Oral Law, with the idea that if they kept the rules of the Oral Law (the tradition of the elders), then they wouldn't break the Mosaic Law.

We too, have our "hedge" around the law. At various times and in various churches there have been rules against many things. None of these is stipulated clearly in the scripture, but each comes from a desire to please God and avoid godless ways.

And there's nothing wrong with rules. Each family has to have family rules. Each church needs to have family rules, too. It's a requirement of any human organization. We just need to keep our rules in perspective, and realize that they are not necessarily God's rules, but derivatives of God's rules.

A problem arises, however, when we are "confident in our own righteousness" or "trust in" our own righteousness to save us and justify us before God. When we move from righteous living -- which is right -- to trusting in that righteous living to give us a standing before God, then we commit a fatal error. In that case it becomes self-righteousness.

Pharisees were members of an exacting party of the Jews who believed in strictly observing God's law. The tax collectors, on the other hand, followed another law entirely -- the law of the Roman oppressors. It was their job to collect taxes for the Romans. They worked on a tax farming system. Chief tax collectors bid on the contract for collecting taxes for a certain district. If they won the contract they would be responsible for delivering to the Romans the amount of money agreed upon. Then these chief tax collectors would employ others who resided in the various villages and sections of town to collect the tolls, taxes, and tariffs.

Tax collectors weren't just hated because they were considered turncoats and traitors. They were also considered cheaters. They would sometimes assess more taxes than was legal. If a farmer or businessman or caravaner couldn't or wouldn't pay, they would turn him over to the soldiers. Extortion and threats were part of this system. Tax collectors were considered the scum of the earth.

It isn't hard to see the contrast between them -- the righteous Pharisee and the morally bankrupt, turncoat tax collector.

This parable teaches the importance of humility before God, and the story of Jesus and the children that follows this (18:15-17) underscores this point. Faith and humility are marks of the men and women who follow Jesus. May they be earmarks of your character and mine, as well!

BIBLE STORY

**Why Should I Give Wk 3
A Heart That Pleases God**

**Malachi 3:6-12
Luke 18:9-17**

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use Tell the Story below. Use visuals to help tell the story. Use a picture Bible to help children see the story.

Jesus continued teaching the people about many things. He taught them about the importance of prayer, and praying without giving up. Then He told a story to the ones who thought they were better than everyone else.

Jesus said a Pharisee (teacher of religious laws) and a tax collector both went to the Temple to pray. The Pharisee stood alone and prayed, “God, thank you that I am not like the sinners who steal, cheat, or do other bad things. Thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there. I give up eating twice a week, and I give you a tenth of the money I get.” This man didn’t worship God— instead, he told all of the things he did. He was too proud of himself.

The tax collector prayed too, but his prayer was quite different. He could not even look up toward heaven. He was so sad and ashamed of his sin that he beat his chest. He prayed, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” He humbled himself before God and asked God to forgive him.

Jesus said that the tax collector went home right with God, while the Pharisee did not. Then Jesus said, “All who make themselves great will be made humble, but all who make themselves humble will be made great.” What did Jesus mean by that? The Pharisee did good things, but his heart was not right with God. He glorified himself and his actions instead of glorifying God. He was just a person, and he was not perfect. But he looked down on others, and that was a sin. He had pride in his heart, which is not pleasing to God.

The tax collector pleased God because he recognized his sinfulness before a holy God. He had a humble heart, which is what pleases God. God does not like pride. Pride is when a person thinks they are better than others. They don’t think they need God. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18 that pride leads to destruction.

The heart that pleases God is a humble heart. A person with a humble heart understands that without God, we are nothing. We need God to forgive our sins. Only through Jesus can we receive forgiveness and have our heart made clean. Everything we have and are is because of God. We cannot take credit for anything! We must give all the glory to God.

On another occasion, some people brought their children to Jesus so He could bless them. Jesus’ disciples told them to leave Jesus alone, but Jesus told them to let the children come to Him. He said the kingdom of God belongs to people like the children. Then He said, “I tell you the truth, you must accept the kingdom of God as if you were a child, or you will never enter it.” In other words, we must humble ourselves before God and have complete faith in Him.

The Pharisee thought that he “had it all together” because he looked good on the outside—the part that other people saw. But who he was on the inside, his heart, did not make God happy. The tax collector, on the other hand, was considered a “sinner” by the Pharisees. But this tax collector came to God with a humble faith, and so was forgiven and made right with God.

God wants each of us to come to Him this way—with a humble heart. We don’t need to tell Him about all the good things we think we have done or list our good qualities to Him. After all, those good things all came from God in the first place! We just need to worship Him and lift Him up. Then we will have the right attitude when we come to Him in prayer.

BIBLE CHALLENGE

“All who make themselves great will be made humble.” (Luke 18:14)

“All who make themselves great will be made humble, but all who make themselves humble will be made great.” (Luke 18:14)

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn this verse.

Have kids cut out hearts out of construction paper, or have them pre-cut. Have them write the memory verse on the heart. Talk about what it means to have a humble heart.

Play a form of “Red Light, Green Light” to help the kids understand the story. Use a green piece of paper (for the green light) and a red piece of paper or a stop sign (for the red light).

Explain to the kids that they will tiptoe forward when they see the green sheet and tiptoe backwards when they see the red sheet.

Share that the children were going to Jesus (hold up a green light) when Jesus’ friends told them to go away (red light). Jesus saw this and asked them to come (green light).

Play several times or take turns in letting kids hold up the sheets of paper.

GAMES

Game: Human Bowling

*Bible Focus_Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16;
Luke 18:15-17; 1 John 3:1*

Materials

Bibles, masking tape, playground ball or basketball.

Preparation

Use masking tape to mark a starting line.

Lead the Game

1. You and every other child are important to God! Jesus showed His love for children when He told them to come to Him. Jesus' disciples tried to stop the children from seeing Jesus by sending them away. Let's play a game to remind us how much Jesus loves children and to remember that each of us is important to God!

2. Select a volunteer to be the bowler. The remaining students—the human bowling pins—stand approximately 10 feet away from the starting line in bowling-pin formation. Students stand one arm's length apart (when arm is extended, student's fingertips touch a nearby student's shoulders).

3. Bowler names a way God shows love (answers prayer, forgives sins, gives courage, helps us do right) and rolls ball, trying to hit the feet of one of the human bowling pins. The "pins" must keep their left feet on the floor, but they may move their right feet to avoid being hit by the ball. First student hit with the ball becomes the bowler for the next round. Continue game as time permits.

Options

1. For groups larger than eight or nine students, form more than one game.
2. For each new round, "pins" reform with students who were in the back moving to the front.

Discussion Questions

1. How are important people usually treated?
2. How do we know that we are important to God? Have a student read 1 John 3:1 aloud.
3. What things does God do to show you that you are important to Him?

ANOTHER GAME

“After You”

Bible Focus: Luke 18:9-14; Philippians 2:3

Materials

Bibles, one tube sock for each pair of students.

Lead the Game

1. Jesus told a story about a person who humbly asked God for mercy. When we care about others, we remember God’s love for them, and our humble and gentle attitudes help us not look down on them. Let’s each practice a humble attitude by putting others first in our game today.
2. Students form pairs. Pairs stand on one side of the playing area.
3. Give each pair a tube sock. Partners hold sock between them, each with one hand on the sock. Pairs practice stepping over the sock, one foot at a time, without letting go of the sock.
4. To begin game, students stand at one side of the playing area. At your signal, one student in the pair says “After you,” and his or her partner takes a step, putting one foot and then the other over the sock. Then the partner who stepped says “After you,” and the other partner takes a turn. Students continue in this manner, moving across the playing area and back.
5. After all pairs have returned to the starting area, ask the pair who finished first to answer one of the Discussion Questions or play several more rounds and then lead the discussion.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of a humble and gentle attitude?
2. Ask a student to read Philippians 2:3 aloud. What does this verse say about having a humble attitude?
3. When we have humble attitudes, we don’t spend our time comparing ourselves to others. What should we think about instead?