

The Widow & The Judge Luke 18:1-8

Today, many people are suffering from a disease known as “lottery fever,” the gambling craze sparked by million-dollar lotteries. A person’s chances of winning are very small, so small that you would think people would soon get discouraged. Yet millions go on playing the lotteries unsuccessfully all their lives. They never lose hope.

Group Discussion. What wild and absurd schemes have you put your hope on? (Try thinking back to childhood days). It reminds me of many old sitcoms on televisions. Many of the characters often said, “this is the best idea I’ve every had.” But almost 100% of the time, the schemes never worked. But they didn’t lose hope that it would.

Personal Reflection. Think of a time when you became discouraged about a need or concern you had been asking God to meet in your life or in the life of another. What caused you to become discouraged? What did you do?

Praying Christians sometime give up hope. Why? Why do many of us stop expecting anything when we pray “Thy will be done”? In this parable, Jesus tells us why we should always pray and never give up.

Read **Luke 18:1-8**.

I must confess that I am often led back to the first verse of this passage of scripture. It is as if Jesus is telling me to keep praying.

Discussion:

1. The key words or phrases of the first verse are, “ought always to pray” and “not to faint.” It is as if Jesus is expressing an obligation or giving advice to the readers and hearers.
 - **Ought**—used to express an obligation, advisability.
 - **Always**—at all times, forever. (This doesn’t mean non-stop, endless repetition or painfully long prayer sessions. It means when the situation or circumstance comes to mind, pray about it). Sometimes we have long prayers in dedicated devotional times; at other times, short prayers concerning the matter. Always praying means keeping our requests constantly before God as we live for him day by day, believing He will answer.
 - **Pray** (Prayer)—having honest conversations with God. Prayer is not only asking God for things (petitions), but prayer can be intercessions for others, thanksgiving, adoration, or praise to God.
 - **Faint**—to lose heart or hope, to lose courage or spirit, to become weak.
2. The characters in the parable are drawn sketchily but vividly. This leaves us room to use our imagination to portray images of those in the parable. What images come to mind when you think about the widow?
 - The judge?

3. The widow in this parable was very persistent. A few reasons for her persistence; she really desired or needed to be avenged of her adversary and she believed or knew that the judge could grant her request. She was determined to have her needs met.
4. "Persistence" or "determination" of this sort can be described as unceasing, unwavering, unshakeable, steadfast, faithful and confident. Any other words to describe the widow's determination?
5. As we look at **verses 4-5**, the judge acts in behalf of the widow. He is motivated to act because he sees the persistence of the widow. Even though he doesn't fear God nor respects man, she wears him because of her continual determination.
 - The Amp. Bible reads (**v. 5**), "yet because this widow continues to bother me, I will give her justice and legal protection; otherwise by continually coming she [will be an intolerable annoyance and she] will wear me out."
 - There is a footnote in the Amp. Bible also that states "Or in the end she will come and give me a black eye."
6. What we believe about God and how we feel about Him when we pray may not be the same. For example, I may believe God cares for all my needs, but I may feel discouraged that He hasn't help me get a job. This can be a trick of the enemy to get us/me to stop praying.
 - These times can be an opportunity for us to examine our internal conflicts and pray to God for strength and wisdom to overcome the conflicts. Truthfully, there are times when it is extremely difficult to ignore our feelings. There are times we have to push beyond our feelings and focus on our faith.
 - In **Mark 9:23-24**, Jesus told a man that had brought his demon possessed son to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The father said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The response seems contradictory. But the attitude of trust and confidence that the Bible calls *belief or faith*, is something we can not obtain without help. Faith is a gift from God (**Ephesian 2:8-9**). No matter how much faith we have, we never reach the point of being self-sufficient. Faith is not stored away like putting money in a bank. Growing in faith is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.
7. I would describe those that pray to God like those in **verses 6-8** as those that are persistently seeking God for an answer or intervention. They are faithful and firm in their belief that God can and will answer them. You might even say that they are desperate.
 - There are times when we have to cry out to God.
8. This parable is one about comparison between God and the unjust judge. We can expect our loving and compassionate heavenly Father to answer the prayers of His children quicker and to avenge His children. God would be moved out of love and compassion for His chosen ones, not out of annoyance!

9. Jesus told this parable to show us that we should always pray and not give up (v. 1). But the question at the end of **verse 8** expresses some uncertainty of finding faith on earth when the Son of man comes.
- **Matthew 24** describes the times prior to the return of Christ. The apparent suffering could dampen the faith of many. **Matthew 24:12** states, “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Circumstances may look so bleak and hopeless that believers will be tempted to give up hope.
 - But Jesus encourages us by promising that “the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (**Matthew 24:13**).
 - His assurance applies not only to the final moments of history but to any trials or difficulties we experience as his followers.
10. When are you most tempted to give up praying about someone or something?
11. How can this parable encourage you to keep on praying?

Closing Thoughts:

- **1 Thessalonians 5:11-23** reads like a checklist for encouragers. The command to “encourage” others is found throughout the Bible. On this checklist is “Pray without ceasing” (**5:17**). We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to have a prayerful attitude all the time.
- This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing His presence within us, and determining to obey Him fully. Then we will find it natural to pray frequently, spontaneous, short prayers.
- A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

Ephesians 6:18: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

Prayer: *Think of one or two areas where you are discouraged and ready to give up praying. Ask God to help you to be persistent in prayer.*

Now or Later

If there is some important concern you have given up praying about, begin praying about it again. Develop a plan to keep praying for this concern..