



Gary Inrig – The Parables (Seeing Myself)

Read the Chapter in Advance of the Weekly Study. Make a Mental Note or Jot Down Something That Struck You – “Strange, New or Different”.

Week 11 – Read Chapter Eleven: “Seeing Myself” - Read – Luke 18:9-14

Opening Prayer: Invite God to humble hearts and open minds to His truth.

Overview: This lesson holds a mirror up that we might not want to look into. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector contrast the difference between a God-centered life and a self-centered one. We live in a culture that constantly tells us that we need to feel good about ourselves, and so - we may just “keep score”, comparing ourselves to others – to reinforce just how wonderful we think – we are. The Pharisee's prayer was true —he did fast twice a week and tithe faithfully—but he was worshiping at the altar of self - rather than humbly laying his heart bare before God. The tax collector (on the other hand), standing at a distance with downcast eyes, could only offer up seven desperate words: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Scripture tells us - *It was this broken man, not the religious Pharisee who went home justified before God.* Self-worth isn't found by recounting our accomplishments to a Holy God (who already knows all about us anyway) - but by seeing ourselves (our thoughts and actions) in the light of God's perfect Holiness and His gracious forgiveness in Jesus Christ. When we get a glimpse of ourselves from that benchmark – hopefully we can't help but be humbled.

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" –Paul of Tarsus (Romans 7:24)

The answer is always Jesus Christ!

SOME KEY POINTS:

- **Self-worth** – whether through religious performance, worldly achievement, or even New Age thinking, is deceptive. Any confidence based on us rather than God leads to spiritual blindness.
- **True self-image** comes from seeing God clearly. Only when God is truly seen for who **He is** can we see ourselves for **who we are—sinners in desperate need of grace.**
- **Justification** is God's declaration, not our feeling. The tax collector went home justified—declared righteous by God—not because he felt worthy, but because he humbly depended on God's mercy. He threw his heart on the Altar of God's Mercy.
- **Biblical humility** means accepting God's evaluation. We are simultaneously sinners (unworthy in and of ourselves) but also saints (exalted by God's grace through Jesus Christ).
- **Life** finds its purpose when centered on God, not self.

Read Luke 18:9-14 together as a group.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- When you were growing up, what were you most proud of accomplishing? How did that achievement shape how you saw yourself compared to others?

- Gary opens up with observations about our culture's obsession with self, self-esteem and self-fulfillment. What examples of this have you noticed in: Social media? Advertising? Self-help books/motivational content? Even among Christians?

- The Pharisee probably wasn't lying in his prayer—he probably did fast twice a week and tithe faithfully. So, what exactly was wrong with his prayer?

- What specific actions, words or attitudes showed the tax collector's humility?

- The book states that: "*Humility is the way of life in the kingdom.*" What does biblical humility actually look like? How is it different from having low self-esteem?

- E.W. Tozer said, "*In himself, nothing; in God, everything.*" How does this perspective change the way you might think? The way you might pray differently? The way we view ourselves and our accomplishments? The way we relate to others?



Things to Do this Week - Try to Put Into Practice One or Two

1. **The Prayer Audit**-Each day this week, pay attention to your prayers. Are you praying to God - realizing who He is (*conversationally discussing & 'reasoning' together*) or is it only *about* yourself, your accomplishments, needs and wants?
- **The Comparison Fast**- Identify an area where you routinely might compare yourself to others (social media, career, parenting, spirituality, etc.). Commit to "fasting" from that comparison this week and instead focus on God's view of you. Replace that thought pattern or notion with a truth from the Bible.
- **Practice the Tax Collector's Prayer**-Begin each day this week with a simple prayer: "***God, have mercy on me, a sinner.***" Let this attitude of humility shape your entire day.

Closing Prayer: *(this prayer is only a suggestion - please be encouraged to pray your own as the Holy Spirit leads)* –**Note: If there are any needs that have arisen during the study tonight – lift these up - especially.**

Lord God – we lift up any and all of these areas of self-pride and self-reliance that we may be hanging on to. Our self-is esteemed only in You – we recognize that we are each of us Your unique creation – that ... all that we have, and all that we are – comes from you. Even our faith is a precious gift – we can claim nothing as our own but Your Love and Your Mercy and Your Redemption –(and it's nothing that we have done ourselves – it is simply only by our belief and trust in you – our Faith in Jesus Christ) that turned us pitiful sinners into beloved saints in Your Kingdom. Help us to embrace this humility (*moment by moment*) as You have modeled it. Thank You for Your mercy – help us to be just as merciful to others and to always remember that it is by ... You alone ... that “*we live and move and have our being*” – (Acts 17:28). *Help us to grow continuously in You and Your Humility- we pray this in Jesus name amen!*