

Daily Discipleship

Luke 18:1-8

Discipleship: *A New Persistence*

Focus Question: *How do you pray always?*

word of life

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.”

Luke 18:1 (NRSV)

Read Luke 18:1-8

What an introduction for a parable! Jesus desires his followers to pray constantly and to not lose heart. He knows life on earth can be filled with difficulties and trials. Illnesses, accidents, economic woes, broken relationships, and other heartaches can wear people down, leaving them discouraged and disheartened.

1. *What does it mean to “lose heart”?*
2. *What causes someone to “lose heart”?*
3. *What role does prayer have in a person not to “lose heart”?*

The parable describes a judge who has no respect for God or people. He appears to claim a place for himself above others. Into the story comes a powerless widow who persists in making requests to the judge. Technically, she has no voice because she is a woman. The fact she is a widow makes her that much more marginalized. But she does not remain in a confined role assigned to her; she boldly appeals fervently to the judge.

Her request to the judge is specific to her life as she asks, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” (Luke 18:3 NRSV). Yet, the details of her case are left unspoken. What enemies and opponents might she have? What makes this a justice issue? Have people tried to take advantage of the widow?

4. *Describe this widow.*
5. *What might she be requesting from the judge?*

At first the judge refuses to respond to the widow’s request. He seems to underestimate the persistence of the widow. By the end, the judge has been worn down, and in order to get rid of the widow, the judge complies and fulfills her request. It is unclear if the request was worthy or not. The judge does not respond out of a sense of justice or a depth of compassion. He simply wants her to be gone.

6. *Can you identify with the judge? Have you ever been worn down by someone’s request? Explain.*
7. *Did the judge act justly? How or how not?*

Jesus connects his parable to God. If an unjust judge can respond to the persistence of someone in need, imagine what God can do with our prayers for justice. When it comes to issues of justice and the cries from the helpless, God will respond.

8. *What is a cry for justice? Give an example.*
9. *What issue of justice might get someone to pray day and night?*

Jesus compares and contrasts the unjust judge with God. Humans are to be more like the persistent widow who prays to God unceasingly.

10. *Is this parable suggesting God responds to us in order to get rid of us? Explain.*
11. *What can you learn from the widow in the parable?*

word among us

Two-year-old Erika wanted a cupcake from the table, but she couldn't reach it. She kept pulling her mother's skirt and asking for it. Her mother was so engrossed in the conversation; she ignored the request for a while. Enough. She stopped herself in the middle of her sentence and gave her daughter what she wanted—a frosted cupcake.

Sixteen-year-old Peter wanted to borrow the car for Friday night. His parents had refused to consider the option. Each day and night he brought up his requests. Over and over he talked about his request and vowed to take good care of the car. Finally, the parents were worn down. Enough. The parents agreed to loan him the car.

Malachi had always wanted a dog. His bride had never been around dogs and was quite hesitant about the prospect. Malachi began his campaign for a dog with just a single picture on the refrigerator. Then a few more pictures appeared in strategic places, including the bathroom mirror. Enough. Finally his bride agreed to get a dog.

1. *What are some examples of when you have been worn down by someone's request?*
2. *When have we worn down God with our prayer requests?*
3. *What keeps us from praying always and persistently?*

Jesus wants his disciples to pray always. Sometimes it is hard to find time for daily devotions let alone to pray at all times and in all places. But Jesus knows when we pray unceasingly, we change. Our prayers might begin by telling God how to do business and to focus on our own will, but prayer has the ability to transform the one who prays. At some point we shift to God's will and a prayer for God's justice on this earth.

The widow was clear, single-minded, and consistent in her requests. She was a victim of injustice and needed the assistance of the judge. Clearly, she was not going to let go until justice prevailed.

4. *What issue of justice concerns you?*
5. *How do you pray about that?*
6. *What do you pray fervently for?*
7. *If you have no fervent prayer, how might you discern your prayer request?*

Jesus encourages people to pray and not lose heart. If our prayers do not get answered instantaneously, we can lose heart. Living with injustice on a daily basis can become discouraging.

8. *Who has inspired or is currently inspiring you to keep the faith?*
9. *What do you do when you become disheartened?*
10. *What do you hope you remember from this passage?*

Prayer

Wise and Just Ruler, hear our prayers for justice. Use us to work towards your justice on this earth. Amen

Dig Deeper

Genesis 32:22-31

last word

Make a plan to pray always !
Share that plan
with other one person.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2007 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelism/dailydiscipleship

10/21/07 Page 2 of 2