

Small Group Guide

WHY PRAY? TO REMAIN FAITHFUL

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Jim Shaddix

November 11, 2012

Luke 18:1-8

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool, not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

TO REMAIN FAITHFUL

Luke 18:1-8

The reason for the teaching...

(Luke 18:1,8; cf. Genesis 6:2,5; 19:4-5; Matthew 24:13; Luke 17:20-37; 18:8; James 1:27; Revelation 21:7-8)

God has ordained persistent prayer as the primary means by which we remain faithful as we wait for Christ's return.

Jesus return will be evident to everyone because...

- It will be dramatic.
- It will be discriminating.
- It will be devastating.

Remaining faithful is difficult because of...

- The delay in Christ's return.
- The disregard for Christ's gospel.
- The deception of godless living.

The one who endures to the end will be saved. – **Matthew 24:13**

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The help that is promised...

(Luke 18:2-8; cf. Matthew 7:7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 4:16; 10:32-39; James 1:27; 5:1-11; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 2:5-9; 3:1-15; Revelation 5:8; 6:9-10; 8:3-4)

God—at just the right time—will give both grace and justice to His children who pray persistently.

The glory of God's gracious help...

- God graciously set us on alert regarding the danger of false faith that doesn't last.
- God graciously determined to include us in the process of persevering faith.
- God graciously ordained a relationship between our prayers and Christ's coming.

The question on the table...

(Luke 18:8; cf. Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:13; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 4:6-7; Revelation 22:17,20)

When Jesus gets back will He find us—individually and corporately—praying persistently and living faithfully?

Praying persistently for persevering faith...

- Long for Jesus to come back.
- Let the rejection of the gospel bother you.
- Look at the routines of everyday life through the lens of the coming kingdom.
- Pray 'as you go' as well as 'in the secret place.'
- Pray for God's reign in your life and in the world, now and forever.
- Pray for both God's help today and our hope tomorrow.

Message Summary

Today's message from Luke 18:1-8 examines Christ's parable about a wicked judge and a persistent widow. By examining the reason for the teaching, the help promised, and the question asked, we learn several things about the purpose of prayer in believers' lives. First, God has ordained persistent prayer as the primary means by which we remain faithful as we wait for Christ's return. This prayer series begins after a message series on Revelation, giving us insight into how we are responsible for waiting well. Luke 18's parable is told in response to the question Jesus addressed in Luke 17: when would God's Kingdom come? We find ourselves anxious for His return in glory, yet we are here with a mission to accomplish for Kingdom purposes. Second, prayer strengthens us to remain faithful and enables us to endure to the end. At just the right time, God will give grace and justice to those who persistently persevere in prayer. The character of the judge is unlike God, showing us how incredibly God will lavish His people with grace and justice because of His great love for us. We are left with a question to answer: at His return, will Christ find us praying persistently and living faithfully?

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- As we look forward to Christ's return, how do we evaluate whether or not we are waiting well?
- Why is prayer so hard sometimes? At what times in your life has it been easiest to pray?

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- Why is valuing prayer essential to completing the mission Christ gave us to make disciples? Does the way you pray show that you value prayer?
- What does it mean not to “lose heart” (Luke 18:1)? When have you lost heart in your faith? How did prayer play a key role in maintaining a Kingdom focus?
- Read Matthew 24:12-13. Why are we all in danger of losing heart?
- Pastor Jim noted that as Jesus referred to the days of Noah and Lot in Luke 17:26-30, His mention of the every-day things (instead of the more notable and grave sins they committed) reveals that God will judge godless, routine living. Do you struggle with the deception in daily, routine, godless living? If so, how? In what ways does Spirit-led, Word-driven prayer help you see through deception?
- What are some examples of being Kingdom-minded in routine, daily living?
- Why did the judge help the widow in Jesus’ parable? Why does God want us to depend on Him persistently?
- Pastor Jim said that God is just as concerned with the process as He is the product. Endurance is the product, but prayer is the process. How is it an act of God’s grace for us to be included in the process?
- Why is it essential to pray continually as you go about your day and also in the secret place? What happens when we fail to pray in the secret place? What happens when we fail to pray throughout the day?
- This week, how have you been challenged to keep the secret place of prayer sacred? What people and things do you need to pray about? How can you as a small group pray for each other this week?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from the worship guide)

- **Church:** Praise God that He graciously invites us to talk with Him through prayer. Worship Him for His righteousness and justice. Pray for God’s justice to be known throughout the world. Pray for His return. Ask Him for His strength and encouragement as we await Jesus’ second coming. Praise Him for His faithful and trustworthy answer to our prayers.
- **Local:** This week we are praying for several outreach initiatives that are focused on helping those in poverty during the Thanksgiving season. We are also praying this week for Pastor Kris Broadhead, Mosaic Church.
- **Global:** This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partners Doug and Laura serving in Southeast Asia. Doug and his family are engaging an unreached people group through sports camps on university campuses. He and his family have received Short-Term teams and are currently hosting a group of Mid-Termers, using them to engage college students with the gospel and strengthen the work in their city.