

TEXT Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-14

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to tell that God is displeased with self-exaltation, but He will honor those who honor Him and maintain a humble spirit in their attitude toward others.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. — James 4:6

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

**ANSWER
TITLE:**

The Right Attitude

**SEARCH
TITLE:**

Chief Rooms; Publican and Pharisee

REFERENCE INFORMATION

In James 4:6 we read, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." God hates pride. According to many theologians, that is what caused Satan to be cast out of Heaven. Satan appealed to Eve's ego when he told her that the fruit on the tree in the midst of the Garden would make her wise (Genesis 3:5). The idea so tempted Eve that she disobeyed God and ate of the fruit. From that time on, pride has been found in the hearts of mankind, and unless repented of, will bring certain judgment.

As early as 145 B.C. there were three Jewish parties

existing: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Pharisees separated themselves from those who neglected the Law. Their piety made them popular, but Jesus condemned their self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

There were two kinds of "publicans," or tax collectors, in Jesus' day: 1) the tax gatherer who collected land, income, and poll taxes; 2) the more hated customs men who collected tolls on everything from bridges to food. The Bible does not state what kind of tax collector the publican in this text was.

YOUR OPENER

Chief Rooms; Publican and Pharisee

TEXT: Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-14

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10

KEY VERSE: All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

RESPONSES

1. These men were no doubt very much concerned about prominence and place. Ask your students why this attitude is not in accord with Christian behavior. They should see that Christians are not self-promoting individuals, but rather have the objective of glorifying God.

2. Your students' responses should provoke a discussion regarding prominence and place. People active in the church must guard against self-promotion. If, because of our privileges in the Gospel, we are in positions of performance or leadership, we must remember that our business is to glorify Christ, hiding behind His cross. The place occupied is unimportant. God's final assessment could be opposite to the human one.

3. Your students' answers should be directed to zero in on motives. Could it be that the chief Pharisee's motive for inviting those present was selfish? Possibly he was hoping each would, in turn, give him honor or return the favor. Perhaps his real purpose was self-exaltation. He may have wished that each Pharisee present would cultivate his friendship because of who he was.

4. He was instructed to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. The discussion should center on the fact that love for our neighbor, not self-exaltation, will be the motive for invitations if we are a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. Then we will be blessed here and rewarded hereafter. The students should understand that Christ was not condemning having dinner with friends. He was condemning selfish motives.

Doing things which appear right before others does not guarantee a right standing in the sight of God. Jesus probed the hearts of the men who were invited to the dinner as they sought the chief rooms in which to eat, and told a parable about taking the lower place. The parable also brought out that one should not invite his friends, relatives, and rich neighbors to his dinners, but rather the poor, lame, maimed, and blind. Our motives will determine our reward. Humility, not self-exaltation, is a hallmark of the Gospel. This is demonstrated again in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

1. Why do you think that those who had been invited to dinner by one of the Pharisees chose the chief rooms in which to eat?

2. How could church meetings be a possible place of testing a Christian's motives in regard to "place seeking"?

3. Why did Christ advise the chief Pharisee not to call friends, brethren, kinsmen, or rich neighbors to his feasts?

4. Whom did Jesus advise the Pharisee to call to his feast? Why?

15

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

5. What was commendable about the Pharisee who went up to the Temple to pray? What was abhorrent to God about the same Pharisee?

6. What did the posture and actions of the publican in our text indicate about his approach to God?

7. Why is it so difficult for people to pray the simple, one-sentence publican's prayer? Why is it vital that they do?

8. Explain the difference between the publican's justification and the Pharisee's.

9. Explain Luke 14:11, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

5. The Pharisee would not seize another's property through false pretenses. He would not deal unjustly with his neighbor, taking advantage of him, for example, in some business deal. He would avoid all manner of uncleanness, including adultery. He fasted and gave tithes. All of these things were commendable. But one sin blanketed all the Pharisee's goodness and resulted in his condemnation—pride! In Proverbs 6:17 we find that among the seven abominations that God hates, the first is "a proud look." Pride caused Lucifer to fall from Heaven and become God's arch-enemy, Satan. Pride in their own good works has kept many people from believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and making Heaven their eternal Home.

6. The words "standing afar off" probably signified that he felt unworthy of God's favor. The fact that he "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" conveyed his deep distress and his consciousness of guilt. When he "smote upon his breast," he was expressing extreme grief for the sins he had committed, and his desire to be forgiven. When he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," it was his confession of guilt. The students will understand that in that way, the truly penitent sinner will come to God.

7. In many cases, the reason probably is pride. Your students' answers should bring out that in the world today it is popular to talk much about self-assertion and self-worth. Courses and seminars are offered on these subjects, but little is said about humility. And yet the humble way of the Cross remains the only way to God's forgiveness. The first of the Beatitudes says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). No matter how good he is, a person is guilty before God until he asks forgiveness and is justified by the grace of Jesus (Romans 3:23). Without Calvary there would be no forgiveness.

8. Only the publican received God's justification and forgiveness. The Pharisee was justified only in his own eyes. He remained condemned by God. The students should realize that, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). The root cause for continuing in that way is usually pride. Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

9. Your students' explanations of this passage is a good way to conclude your lesson. What is the final goal of the true Christian? Obviously, it is to be received into Heaven. Could we ask for any greater exaltation? If the requirement is humility, surely it is incumbent upon us to strive for that attitude.

16

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

When a person exalts himself, what kinds of things does he think about and do? Why does exalting oneself anger God?

How did Jesus himself show humility? Why must we follow His perfect example?

Are the unsaved the only ones who exalt themselves? Can a Christian exalt himself? If so, how?

How do you think God resists the proud?

What would you say is meant by the phrase, "but giveth grace to the humble"?

How can you relate the key verse to your everyday life?

Do you think only adults are proud? Why? What are some of the things young people do that show they are proud?

How can we humble ourselves?

How did Jeff, in our ANSWER story, show that he was humble?

THINGS TO DO

Ask two people to come to your class and pantomime the parable of the publican and the Pharisee as you read the parable to your class. Set the room up as a beautiful temple (if possible) with art work done on a large piece of paper or cardboard. Use costumes from past Christmas plays. Follow up with discussion questions, asking the students to compare themselves with the two characters in the lesson. Ask them which one they want to be more like, and why.

Take two items to class with you, one imitation and the other genuine; for example, candy, money, or a flower. You could also have the imitation to be larger and possibly more pleasing to the eye. Explain to the students how the imitation is different from what it appears to be.

It isn't made of the same things as the genuine. The Pharisee in our lesson was like the imitation, but the publican was a genuine believer. He was small in his own sight but his repentance was genuine, and thus great, in God's eyes.

Have class members act out a skit showing what a proud person is like. Then have them act out a skit showing what a humble person is like. Discuss the skits, directing them to pinpoint the kind of person that God wants us to be.

Answers for ANSWER

Be Humble

God honors a humble spirit. Find Psalm 138:6 in your Bible and write it on the lines provided. Then write each of the words from that verse in the fill-in below. Memorize the verse so you will always remember what God expects of you.

*Though the Lord be high,
yet hath he respect unto
the lowly: but the proud
he knoweth afar off.*

