

MODERN PARABLES Part 4: The Widow and Judge 10.17.10

Jean reads Luke 18:1-8 ESV

Movie: The Widow and Judge [16:08]



Introduction: How many would admit to being discouraged from time to time? We have an expectation of how things are going to work out and our life seldom works out quite as well as we hope it will. And we get discouraged. This is especially true of our faith. When we become a Christ-follower, we envision this great mountain-top relationship with God and yet it sometimes seems as if God is silent. And in those most discouraging times the last thing we feel like doing is to pray. This is the topic that Jesus had in mind when he told the Widow and Judge parable and the focus of our talk this evening.



Remember our Parable Primer Interpretation Principle:

Look for the main idea Jesus wanted to share

This is an especially important principle to recall with this parable because our strong temptation is to go in a different direction than Jesus intended. **So what is the main idea Jesus intended?**



The main idea with the Widow and Judge:

The connection between **PRAYING** and **FAITHFULNESS**.

The parable is actually told in verses 2-5. It is sandwiched between two different statements by Jesus. For us to have the correct context for the parable, we need first to look at what Jesus had to say:

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” Luke 18:1 NIV

That’s about as straight-forward as it can be. THE REASON Jesus told us the parable is to show how we should always pray and not give up and become discouraged. He follows the parable with this:

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on earth?” Luke 18:8 NKJV

This is a future question. When Jesus comes back will he find that his followers are still faithful, still praying, still connected, still believing. **Or will they become discouraged and give up?**



One of Paul’s favorite verbs: ἐγκακέω enkakeō. This is the word for becoming tired, losing heart. It’s translated sometimes as growing faint, growing weary, becoming discouraged. Paul uses it five times, both of himself and of other Christians:

- “So we do not lose heart.” 2 Corinthians 4:16a ESV
- “As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.” 2 Thess. 3:13
- “So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.” Ephesians 3:13 ESV
- “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.” 2 Corinthians 4:1 ESV
- And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9 ESV

Jesus, on the other hand, uses the word only one time in the gospels. Only here in Luke 18:1 to introduce us to the parable of Widow & Judge.

“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1 ESV.



Other translations of ἐγκακέω enkakeō:

- KJV: not faint
- GNT: not become discouraged
- ISV: never give up
- MSG: never quit
- NCV: never lose hope



The reason context is important is this:

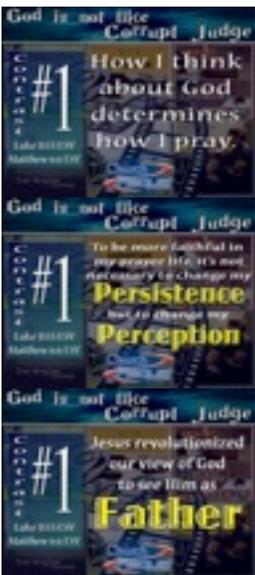
The Widow and Judge Parable teaches us a lesson from CONTRAST

The main lesson is NOT that if you will only be persistent in your praying that eventually God will weary and answer your petition. Isn't that the lesson you typically hear? The widow was persistent in her prayer. She never quit. You be persistent in your prayer too. Keep praying. Eventually God will give in and grant your request.

Problems with this theology: (1) Views God as this being that doesn't really want to give us the desires of our heart. (2) makes us feel guilty because when things don't work as we'd like apparently we just weren't persistent enough. In other words, it's our fault.

However, Jesus is using this parable as contrast in 2 ways:

Contrast #1: God is not like the corrupt judge.



☹ How I think about God determines how I pray. If I see God as this tight-fisted and non-caring SuperBeing, then I will come into His Presence reluctantly and infrequently. But if I view Him as my loving Pappa, Who loves me and desires a relationship with me then I'll come into His Presence eagerly and often.

☹ *To be more faithful in my prayer life, it's not necessary to change my PERSISTENCE, but to change my PERCEPTION.* The point of this parable is that for me to remain faithful, I must be in communication with God (praying.) And the best way to remain faithful is to change how I perceive God.

☹ Jesus revolutionized our view of God to see Him as FATHER. The Jewish faith viewed God as personal, but not in the intimate Abba Poppa Daddy role that Jesus taught:

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:13 ESV

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven..."
Matthew 6:6 ESV

(Caveat) Father Role meant to help us: Our minds are limited. Father gets us close. But God has no gender. And some struggle with poor parenting models, especially with "daddy."

Contrast #2: We are not like the poor widow.

☹️ The widow had three obstacles to overcome:

- ☹️ She was a **woman**. In the ancient world of Jesus' day a woman *had no standing* in court. She wasn't considered to be a real person. Equivalent to a child or to an animal. She could have babies and influence her man. She could not go to court on her own.
- ☹️ She was a **widow**. For a woman to go to court, she would need a man to go for her. Usually this would be her husband. But because she was a widow, *she had no friend, no advocate* on her side.
- ☹️ She was **poor**. If being a woman and a widow was not bad enough, she was also poor. A wealthy widow might be able to pay for representation. The courts were corrupt enough that only those approved and accepted could enter the judges tent. This meant bribing someone, which she could not afford to do. Therefore *she had no access*.



☹️ Unlike the widow, we have **STANDING** before God.

Jesus gives us a contrast that we are NOT like that widow. We have standing before God. God hears our prayers. He cares for us more than the lilies in the field. He wants us to have food and shelter. He cares when we are mistreated. Because of Jesus, we are no longer strangers and aliens to God... we are INSIDERS!



“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”
Ephesians 2:19 ESV

The Bible tells us that we are “fellow citizens” with all the saints who have gone before. We are members of the household... members of the family. We don't even have to worry about going to court to have God the Judge hear our case, we sit at the same dinner table with Him daily! In another place the Bible says we are “fellow heirs” with God's Son! **Here's the way Peter describes our standing:**

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession...” 1 Peter 2:9a ESV

Think of these descriptors: you are **chosen**. You are royal. You are the priesthood. You are holy. You're in God's nation. You are His possession! How different would your prayer be if you knew this and believed this?

☹️ Unlike the widow, we have **A FRIEND** with God.

One of the most incredible things Jesus said the night before his crucifixion was that Christ-followers are not called “friends”:

“I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father.” John 15:15 MSG

When you come before God in prayer, you really are coming as a friend, as an insider. As someone who knows what the master is thinking and planning. Remember that Jesus in human form, didn't always know some details. But you are on same footing as Jesus!



Not only are you on same footing as God the human Son was in prayer, but you also have Christ's Spirit to help you in your prayer:

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” Romans 8:26 NIV

Unlike the widow, you are a friend of God AND you have a friend with God - your advocate sitting at God's right hand - God's Son and your interceder, comforter, counselor, sitting at your right hand!



🕒 Unlike the widow, we have **ACCESS** to God.

Paul tells us this as plainly as possible:

“For through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” Ephesians 2:18-19 ESV

Illustration: Parenthood. Mom of teenage daughter gets tickets to see band. In long line. Only insiders get in. Clear they are outsiders until their friend comes along. Because of our standing and our friendship with God, we have access! We're not outside, standing in line. **It's important we remember why this is so:**

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession... Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.” Hebrews 4:14, 16a ESV

Our reason for confidence in praying before God' throne is NOT because of who we are or what we've done, but because of what Jesus, God's Son, has already accomplished for us. If we hesitate, if we are fearful, if we don't believe it will make any difference, it's as if we are saying that what Jesus accomplished wasn't good enough. Our confidence is built upon Christ!

The widow in Jesus' story had no wealth to use to have her case heard. But we come to the throne of grace with the abundance of God's riches according to Christ's glory, which is great!

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19 ESV

Conclusion: Discouragement is cancer that can grow and rob us of our joy and our relationship with God. It takes away the confidence we have in knowing God is on our side. It robs us of our faith. Conundrum because the antidote, prayer, is the hard thing to do when we are down and discouraged. I won't lie to you. It is work. It is not natural. It is hard.

Personal Illustration: I fight discouragement all the time. That may seem like a surprise to you because I come across as a positive thinking kind of guy. But in the ministry, especially of a new young small church, it is easy to get discouraged. I see you as a church and know how wonderful it is to be here. I love our fellowship. I love our services. I love it when I'm here with you. And I sense the same from you. So why are there not more people? Why don't others see what I see? Why do some come and not keep come back? It can be discouraging.

Solution? Talk it out to God. He reminds me we are where we need to be. We are doing His will. He is pleased. That's what is important. Easy to lose sight outside of prayer life. What has you discouraged?