



## A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Series Theme: Stories of Jesus  
Text for the Week: Luke 18:9-14  
Story for the Week: The Pharisee and Tax Collector  
Message for the Week: An Inclusive Community

**Week Eleven**  
**Sunday, August 28**

### Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

Have you ever pretended to be someone or something you are not? If so, why did you pretend?

### Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

### Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Luke 18:9-14](#) out loud.

[Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

## Respond / Reflect:

In what ways have you compared yourself to others? Share some examples.

What do you think about the Pharisee in Jesus' story? What do you think about the tax collector in the story?

When was the last time you encountered a "tax collector" (somebody who recognizes their need for grace)? What did you learn from them? How did you demonstrate grace?

What is righteousness? What is self-righteousness? Why is Jesus so concerned about self-righteousness?

What "*barnacles*" do we attach to this parable?

How would you describe the community that Jesus started? How does Covenant Church compare?

On a scale of 1-10, how inclusive is Covenant Church's community? Why do you rank it there? What can we do to make our community more inclusive?

## "Try It!"

Make a list of the different "us / them" groups you notice in our world today.

Discuss how Christ's community could (should?) impact this growing polarization in our world.

## Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

*Father, we confess that we have messed up. Have mercy on us, for we are sinners. Father, give us the courage to acknowledge what you and everyone else knows – that our lives would be a train wreck without you, without your Son, and without your grace. Father, having received your grace, help us to extend that same grace to others. Help us to accept and embrace those we once considered inferior, beneath us, not as spiritual as we are. Forgive our self-righteousness and judgmentalism. Give us a humble spirit. Pour out your mercy on us. In the name of Jesus our teacher and rabbi. Amen.*

## Missional/Spiritual Practice for the Month: Blessing Students and Teachers

During the month of August, you are encouraged to bless the students and teachers in your community. What students and teachers live in your community? What public and private schools (elementary, middle, high school, college/university, home school) are in your community? How could you bless and encourage them as they begin a new school year?