

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14

One of the greatest gifts God gives us is the freedom to come to him as we are. We don't have to make ourselves "good enough" to be acceptable. We don't have to have achieved a certain level of holiness to approach him, and our past does not disqualify us.

Monday: Do you come to God relying on his mercy or do you rely on your accomplishments and works? Let's meditate on the difference today.

Tuesday: Does your sin and brokenness keep you from coming to God? Pray for the mix of humility and confidence that enabled the tax collector to approach God trustingly, despite his sin.

Wednesday: Like the tax-collector, acknowledge your sin and unworthiness to God, trusting him to justify you in his mercy, even if you feel undeserving.

Thursday: How do you view those who are less mature in the faith or who are more obviously broken in their behavioral patterns? Ask God to help you see them as he does.

Friday: Thank God that he loves us and is interested in who we truly are, even with all our failings, so we don't have to impress him or put our best foot forward. What an amazing gift that is!

Saturday: Ask God to help you give the gift of grace and acceptance to others who may not have earned or deserved your respect.