Scripture
Luke 18:9-14

Open before God

Our strongest prayers are offered with humility.

- Jesus tells about the prayers of two men: a Pharisee, a respected teacher, and a tax collector, a despised traitor.
- For young children, we affirm that God hears the prayers of those who are sad and sorry, not just those who are glad.
- Today’s session invites children to explore Jesus’ story through song, dance and roleplay.

Question of the Week
When have you felt you prayed like the Pharisee? like the tax collector?

Core Session
- Getting Started
- Gospel Story: The Great Man and the Lowly Man (optional: two stuffed animals)
- Story Ritual Game
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Prayer Corner: Decoration (cloths, candles, flowers, leaves or other natural materials, ribbons, sticks, yarn, Bible)
- Art: Cordero’s Storyteller and Children (play dough)
- Song and Dance
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More About Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- What’s a Learning Style
- The World of the Bible: Pharisees
**Getting Started** (5-15 minutes)

Children talk about different kinds of prayer and draw pictures of themselves at prayer.

Sit in a circle with children. Ask:
- When do we pray? *(Encourage many different answers, for example, at mealtimes, at bedtime, in church, etc.)*
- What kinds of words can we use when we pray?

Distribute paper and felt pens or crayons. Ask:
- Can you draw a picture of yourself praying?

Ask volunteers to show their pictures. For each picture shown, ask:
- *(Ask the child.)* What prayer are you saying? *(Affirm each child's prayer by repeating at least part of the words, then say, “God hears this prayer!”)*

Close by saying:
- God hears all kinds of prayer.
- Today’s story is about two men saying two different kinds of prayer.

**Gospel Story** (5-10 minutes)

**The Great Man and the Lowly Man**

Find cut-out storytelling visuals for use in telling today’s story attached to this document. Or simply use body language to convey the differences between the two men in story: draw yourself up and speak in a proud voice as you portray the Pharisee. Bend low and speak in a humble voice as the tax collector.

Two men came into the temple to pray. One man stood up, tall and proud, and said, “God, I’ve done everything I should. I’m good all the time. I’m better than any other person I know. I’m sure glad I’m not like that bad man over there.”

The other man was sad. He didn’t stand up. He didn’t even lift up his head as he said, “God, I’m sorry. I’ve been bad. I need your love.”

Jesus said, “I like the way that sad man prays. I’m glad he can tell God he’s sorry. God listens to that man!”

**After the Story:** Ask:
- How can we say we are sorry to each other? *(Help children act out their answers.)*
- How can we say we are sorry to God? *(Help children act out their answers.)*

**Story Ritual Game** (5-15 minutes)

Children play a response game based on today’s story. This short game may be all some catechists (with 20 minutes or less) have time for. For a longer session, choose Enrichment activities from pages 3-4.

Ask one volunteer to be Jesus. Other children sit scattered about the room. Teach children this repeated dialogue:

*Jesus:* Are you the sad man who prays?
*Child:* Yes.
*Jesus:* How does the sad man pray?
*Child:* I’m sorry.

When the child completes the ritual, he or she gets up and follows Jesus. Jesus continues until all the children have been collected in line. This game can be repeated several times, with other children playing the part of Jesus.

Some children may vary the words, or say their own prayer. Accept these variations as part of the game. God does hear all prayer.

**Praying Together** (5 minutes)

Say:
- Let’s try making our own prayers. I’ll start a prayer—but I’d like help finishing it! You only have to finish the prayers you want to finish.

Begin these prayers. Encourage volunteers to help finish the prayers. After a moment of silence finish each one yourself, too:
- Jesus, I’m glad that...
- Holy Spirit, I’m sad about...
- God, I thank you because...

If you have done today’s Prayer Poster activity, attached to this document, use any new names that the children have suggested, too. Close by praying:
- Thank you for hearing us when we’re sad. Thank you for hearing us when we’re glad. Thank you for hearing us whenever we pray to you. **Amen.**

**Note:** Distribute this week’s *At Home with the Good News* to group members as they depart (or e-mail it to families after the session).
Discover the Good News

(5-10 minutes)

On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find “snapshots” of children telling when they feel free. This freedom is the child-sized version of the tax collector’s going home “right with God.” Use the page to connect today’s story with the children’s everyday lives. Read the stories to the children. Say:

◆ In today’s story, the sad man felt free when he told God he was sorry.
◆ When do we feel free or happy?
◆ When do we feel close to God?

On page 2 of Discover the Good News, you’ll find prayer phrases children hear in church. You can use this page to review these prayers with the children.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From Singing the Good News, sing together:

◆ “Kum Ba Yah” (songbook p. 9)
◆ “Keep On Prayin’” (songbook p. 11, also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Prayer Corner (10-20 minutes)

Decoration

Activity Soundtrack: Play “Simple Gifts.” (Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.)

Children decorate a corner of the room to use as a prayer corner. If possible, leave the corner decorated from week to week. If you can’t do this, store the materials for the prayer corner in a box. A cardboard produce box with a lid makes an excellent storage box. Each week, bring out the box and invite one or two children to set up that week’s prayer corner.

Choose a place for the prayer corner. There you can place a small table, a chair or even a box. Invite the children to use some or all of these ideas to decorate the corner:

◆ Drape the corner in colorful cloths.
◆ Set up candles on the corner.
◆ Arrange flowers, leaves or other natural materials in a beautiful pattern.
◆ Tie or drape ribbons on the corner.
◆ Wind yarn around two crossed sticks to hold them together. (If you know how to make God’s Eyes by winding yarn over and around the crossed sticks, you could help the children make God’s Eyes for the prayer corner, too.)
◆ Tape to the wall near the corner the Prayer Posters made today (you may have others from previous sessions as well).

When the corner is decorated, open a Bible reverently and place it on one corner. Tell the children that this special book of stories about God and Jesus has a special place in the prayer corner.

The children will probably want to use their new prayer corner right away. Go ahead and say a prayer with the children now. You can use the prayers in Praying Together now and repeat them at the close of the session.

Art (10-15 minutes)

Cordero’s Storyteller and Children

Gather children around the poster of Helen Cordero’s pottery figure Storyteller and Children, attached to this document.

For this exploration, invite children to make their own storyfigures. Distribute play dough or other modeling material. Invite children to make figures of people or animals who want to hear a story. Open a Bible to today’s scripture: Luke 18:9-14. Invite children to arrange their figures around the open Bible. Either read aloud the story from the Bible or retell the story found on page 2.
**Song And Dance** (5-10 minutes)

Children help you compose a song and dance that affirms this truth: God hears all our prayers.

Stand in a circle with the children. Teach them to sing these words to the tune of “Go Tell It On The Mountain”:

Chorus:

> Go tell it on the mountain,
>   Over the hills and everywhere,
> Go tell it on the mountain,
>   That God will hear our prayer!

Invite children to suggest dance motions to this verse. For example, you could sway and clap to the first line; raise your arms in an arch and turn on the second line; join your raised hands and step to the center on the third line; and release hands, slowly lowering your arms on the fourth line.

When children can sing and dance easily to the chorus, help them add verses. (Children can stand in place and clap or sway on the verses, to simplify the song and dance.) Children invent verses by completing these sentences:

- **Verse one**: Sometimes I’m feeling...
  - Verse two: God hears me when I’m...

Examples:

> Sometimes I’m feeling sorry,
>   God hears me when I’m sorry,
> Sometimes I’m feeling sad,
>   God hears me when I’m sad,
> Sometimes I’m feeling happy,
>   God hears me when I’m happy,
> Sometimes I’m feeling mad...
>   God hears me when I’m mad...

An easy way to make up verses is by singing the first words in common and having each child take a turn finishing the line. As soon as you have four lines to the verse, sing and dance the chorus again. Do not expect the children to compose verses that rhyme.

**Young Children and the Gospel**

In today’s gospel, Jesus tells of two men praying. One man, a Pharisee, is esteemed by most people. The other man, a tax collector, is despised by most people. The Pharisee announces how pious he is, while the tax collector prays, “Be merciful to me, a sinner.” Jesus commends only the sinner’s prayer.

We miss the point of Jesus’ story if we cast the Pharisee as a bad guy. There is no reason to doubt that he was genuinely seeking God and genuinely generous to the poor. Jesus chooses such a character precisely because his righteousness is obvious to his listeners.

Young children are open to the idea that some people are “too full of themselves.” The more subtle message, that sinners may be more open to God than the genuinely righteous, is a theme we can only touch on by explaining that God loves our prayers when we are glad or sad.

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  - A printable version of today’s *Gospel Story* for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  - *Storytelling Visuals* to assist you in telling today’s story.
  - Instructions for a simple *Prayer Poster* activity designed to reinforce today’s themes.
  - Directions for a *Prayer Roleplays* for practicing prayer in everyday situations.
  - Cordero’s *Storyteller and Children*, to be used in today’s Art activity.
  - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News*, to print and distribute or to e-mail to families for use at home.

- Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  - Information on Fall-C’s *Models of the Faith*.
  - A reproducible handout for parents titled *Sharing God’s Word at Home*.
  - An article for catechists and/or parents exploring *The Church Year*.
  - A helpful article for catechists explaining how *Using Music in Faith Formation* enhances religious education.
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News*. 

© 2016 Published by Morehouse Education Resources, www.ChurchPublishing.org. All rights reserved. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce this page for use in the purchasing congregation only.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings define lowness and celebrate its virtue. The author of Sirach advocates the rights of the humble, the poor and those who acknowledge that true justice comes from God alone. In 2 Timothy, Paul looks forward to the reward of his many humble labors for the faith. In Jesus’ parable in today’s gospel, two men come to pray, but only the humble man leaves justified by God.

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18
The book of Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus, bears the name of “Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach” (50:27), a teacher of Hebrew wisdom and traditions. Sirach, like the book of Proverbs, falls into the category of wisdom literature. It discusses the way to live a righteous life, especially in the areas of relationships, finances, business conduct and personal habits.

In today’s reading, Sirach insists that, though in this life the rich are powerful, God will advocate the rights of the humble and poor. This support is not partiality; it is God’s way of pleading the cause of the weak, evening the scales and establishing justice. This justice is a response to the persistent prayers of the humble, those who serve faithfully but who also understand that true justice comes from God alone.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Today’s reading records Paul’s final farewell. He speaks of himself as one whose life is ebbing away, “poured out as a libation” (v. 6). Like a boxer or runner, he has completed his event and guarded the deposit entrusted to him. Wreaths and crowns were worn by Jews as a sign of honor and joy at feasts and weddings; for Greeks they were a sign of a victorious athlete.

The “lion’s mouth” is a common Old Testament metaphor for violent death; thus here it may be used figuratively for the imperial power. Verse 18 seems to echo the Lord’s Prayer. Paul acknowledges that his work is finished, and he looks forward both to God’s reward and Jesus’ return.

Luke 18:9-14
The passage about the Pharisee and the tax collector concludes the long section of material (found only in Luke) called by some “the gospel of the outcast” (chaps. 15–18). The Pharisee seems truly thankful. According to the beliefs of the times, he shows an honest and laudable desire to contribute to the coming of the kingdom by fulfilling the law. Indeed, he exceeds the demands of the law.

Fasting was required only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Pharisees, however, fasted twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays. Likewise, the law required a tithe of all produce of grain, fruit and herd. The Pharisee extended his tithe to include all his income.

The tax collector, whose occupation branded him as an extortioner and traitor, knows he has no merits of his own. Using the language of Psalm 51, he throws himself on God’s mercy. It is he who is “justified” (v. 14), that is, accepted, made right with God. This is the only place this verb appears in the gospels using the familiar Pauline meaning.

Reflection
Transpose today’s parable to contemporary churches and the parallel becomes painfully clear. To oversimplify the scene for dramatic effect, visualize those who wear the vestments, the choir robes, the garments of respectability. Their names are engraved on the plaques of Big Donors; their children are altar servers; their phone numbers are listed in the bulletin should anyone need a casserole. They serve on committees where they wield considerable clout. They know the proper responses and when to sit or stand; they sing with assurance.

Then look to the margins of the congregation, at those who arrive too late to get a seat. They are bewildered by songs and prayers in a language not their own; their marriages aren’t sanctioned; they or their children have not been officially enrolled on the church roster. They may lack the courage to come forward for communion; they may feel insecure about their shaky status. From a deep longing, they croak an almost inarticulate prayer. It may sound like a garbled “help.”

To borrow a question from Jesus, “Which one goes home justified?” Perhaps in God’s infinite mercy, both groups do. In her poem “Singapore,” Mary Oliver refers to “the light that can shine out of a life.” Can we see the light in both kinds of lives?
The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today we consider the impact of the basic Christian insight that our God plays no favorites (CCC, #74). Although we believe that we have been called into a special covenant relationship, we also believe that, since there is only one God, God must somehow be the God that all other sincerely religious people are seeking (CCC, #839–48). We can learn to find God by following Jesus’ example and teaching on prayer (CCC, #2599–2615). Through prayer we discover who God is, who we are and how we ought to relate to God.

What’s a Learning Style?

Our learning style is our personal window on the world. This style determines how we think, make judgments and experience people and events. From among the many that have been proposed, we can identify three very general styles of learning:

◆ learning by hearing and speaking (auditory style)
◆ learning by seeing (visual style)
◆ learning by moving and touching (kinesthetic/tactile style)

Each of us uses all three styles but most of us favor one. Unlike characteristics that change with age or stage of development, our preferred learning style tends to remain constant throughout life. In each session at each age level, Living the Good News includes a range of activities designed to meet the needs of learners with varying styles.

Remember that all ages have preferred learning styles. Bible study need not always be limited to discussion.

In Living the Good News sessions, you will find activities to choose from, as well. If you observe a preferred learning style, you can also make use of that person’s gifts in teaching others. For example, auditory learners might record stories and music for another group.

Even in a small room you can move tables to the corners and set up an activity at each table. Each table or area of the room becomes a “learning center.” Learners can then choose where to work according to their preferred style. You can also encourage learners to “stretch” by trying other learning styles.

The World of the Bible

Pharisees

Members of the Pharisee party, a lay group within Judaism, possessed a zeal for Jewish law. They believed that the law of Moses was God’s will for them, and they desired to live it perfectly in every detail.

The Pharisees’ devotion to the law was also the root of their problems. Their religious lifestyle demanded so much that a sense of elitism developed. Their observance of the law not only made them separate (the word Pharisee means “the separate ones”) but hardened their attitude toward those who did not keep the law as completely. Their approach often led to a legalistic concern for outward observance.

The portrait of the Pharisees in the gospels is probably more a reflection of the party’s powerful role in reforming Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE than its role during the life of Jesus. Strained and broken relations between Christians and Jews may have led the writers of the gospels to portray the Pharisees as a stereotype of the negative response to Christ. The gospels, after all, were catechetical documents written for Christians, to nourish a positive response for following Jesus.

The evangelists are not as interested in the Jewish Pharisees outside the community as they are in pharisaic attitudes inside the community. The evangelists use the Pharisees to show that in each of us lurks the possibilities that led to the pharisaic style of response to Jesus. When we Christians recognize our own tendencies to hypocrisy, elitism, legalism and self-righteousness, then the evangelists will applaud. They want us to identify and deal with the Pharisee in our own hearts.

Pharisees

Members of the Pharisee party, a lay group within Judaism, possessed a zeal for Jewish law. They believed that the law of Moses was God’s will for them, and they desired to live it perfectly in every detail.

The Pharisees’ devotion to the law was also the root of their problems. Their religious lifestyle demanded so much that a sense of elitism developed. Their observance of the law not only made them separate (the word Pharisee means “the separate ones”) but hardened their attitude toward those who did not keep the law as completely. Their approach often led to a legalistic concern for outward observance.

The portrait of the Pharisees in the gospels is probably more a reflection of the party’s powerful role in reforming Judaism after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE than its role during the life of Jesus. Strained and broken relations between Christians and Jews may have led the writers of the gospels to portray the Pharisees as a stereotype of the negative response to Christ. The gospels, after all, were catechetical documents written for Christians, to nourish a positive response for following Jesus.

The evangelists are not as interested in the Jewish Pharisees outside the community as they are in pharisaic attitudes inside the community. The evangelists use the Pharisees to show that in each of us lurks the possibilities that led to the pharisaic style of response to Jesus. When we Christians recognize our own tendencies to hypocrisy, elitism, legalism and self-righteousness, then the evangelists will applaud. They want us to identify and deal with the Pharisee in our own hearts.