

Rossville Church of Christ Doorpost Devo



April 16, 2023



Encouragement from God's Word

Luke 18:9-17 Disciples Receive Like Children

Our culture values high-achievers. We all love to hear stories of success driven by sheer hard work, determination, and grit. So much emphasis is placed on achievement that we tend to find our self-worth and identity in what we accomplish. Life becomes a series of goals to accomplish. And if I have a laundry list of successes, then I will be worthy. Then I will be admired and loved. We often apply this way of thinking to our relationship with God as well. We convince ourselves that the Christian life is about achievement.

Scripture Plan: Read

Mon, Tues, Wed.:

Deut. 6:1-15 Each Night

Thurs., Fri., Sat.:

1 Timothy 4:6-5:8 Each Night

Devo Plan

1. Mon.--Read and Pray Together
2. Tues.--Read, Pray, Ask Questions, and Discuss
3. Wed.--Read, Pray, and Think about how to Apply
4. Thurs.-Sat.--Repeat steps 1-3 with New Passage
5. Sunday--Pray and Reflect on What was Learned in Worship and Class

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Discussion Questions

Deuteronomy 6:1-15

Discussion Question #1: What does this passage teach us about God? What is he teaching about the responsibility each of us have to the next generation?

Discussion #2: In what ways were the Israelites commanded to teach their children? How were they to remind them about God? What ways can we do the same in our day and age?

Discussion #3: What distracts us from thinking about God and His Word? Why is it so important for us to keep His Word as a constant priority in our lives?

1 Timothy 4:6-5:8

Discussion #1: From this passage, how should older people view younger people in the Church? How can the young be a Christ-like example to the old?

Discussion #2 :How should younger Christians treat and care for the older in the Church? How does this reflect God's character and love for us?

Discussion #3: How does this passage relate to Titus 2:1-10 and this Sunday's sermon on "intergenerational relationships?" Why is it so important for disciples of all ages to interact and encourage each other?

Apply and Obey

To obey what God says, this upcoming week I will...

I will share what I learned with...

Prayer Points

- Lord, Thank You--Being a loving Father who wants to guide and teach us
- Lord, We Praise You--that you have provided everything we need as the Church to accomplish your mission
- Lord, Help Us--to love one another deeply, even the people in the Church who are not like us or are a different age

The more things I do and accomplish for God, the more worthy I will be. The more I accomplish, the more people I baptize, the more prayers I pray, the more money I give, the more God will be willing to love and accept me. I must prove myself to demonstrate that I am deserving. We fall prey to the notion that we need to muster up strong faith, good works, and obedience in order to be approved.

Surely, the Christian life requires effort. Indeed, hard work and perseverance are noble values. But even so, the way of a disciple is not mainly about achieving. It is about receiving. It is not about accomplishment and willpower. It is about wholehearted surrender and dependence. Consider the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 18:9-17:

“He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

The parable that Jesus tells in Luke 18:9-14 offers a vivid picture of the principle that he teaches in the following verses about receiving the kingdom like a child. The disciples were turning away the young children being brought to Jesus. In their view and in the common conception of society, children were not valued as highly until they were able to work and provide. In this case, they are seen as a distraction and nuisance. Jesus, however, flips this understanding on its head. The kingdom does not belong to those who do and produce and achieve by their own merit and strength. The kingdom belongs to those, who like children, are wholly and fully dependent on the Father for mercy and strength.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This idea is illustrated powerfully in the preceding parable. One man, a Pharisee, prays to God and boasts of his accomplishment because he trusts in himself. He avoids certain despicable sins, he performs all his religious duties, he gives back a tenth of everything to God. Yet, his achievements earn him nothing in the eyes of God. In contrast, the one in the story who is justified is the one who is the despised tax collector. This man is not boasting about what he gives for God. He is humble and desperate to receive from God. He recognizes his total dependence and need before a holy and loving Father. God does not desire us to approach him with a list of accomplishments in our hand. His desire is for us to come to him empty-handed, like a child, ready to receive his good gifts. Why? He gets the glory when we are dependent. He is honored in humility and trusting weakness. He is more admired by our receiving his grace than by our doing. Maturity in Christ is learning our own weakness and walking in His strength, power, and wisdom, reliant in every moment on his mercy.

So then, is it unimportant to give? Should we not work in the kingdom? Must we always be receivers and takers rather than providers? Certainly not. But our giving and our working must be fundamentally rooted in a humble disposition of receiving. We will have nothing valuable to offer the world unless we have first recognized our dependence before God and received his grace. The way of discipleship renounces human ingenuity, cleverness, and grit as a way of working up to God. The way of the disciple is to lay down our achievements and trust only in the finished work of Christ. So then, my forgiveness of others is founded upon Christ's forgiveness, not my own. My generosity is not my way of convincing or persuading God that I am worthy. It is the natural overflow of a heart and life that understands God's abundant and never-ending generosity for his beloved children. My avoidance of sin is not from a prideful desire to be better than others, and it is not rooted in legalistic moralism. It comes from receiving the freedom and peace of Jesus that moves me toward repentance because I love the Savior that I follow.

Christianity takes effort, but it also takes knowing that apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. The walk of discipleship is not a begrudging striving as much it is a joyful receiving and giving. To be these kinds of disciples, we must know who God is, and we must know who we are. We must see Jesus in all of his powerful, glorious humility, and we must see ourselves as needy sinners desperate for help. Our value is not in our doing nor our achieving but in the love that the Father has for us as His children. Let us then walk in trust and humility and receive with meekness the good gifts the Father is so eager to give.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the *doorposts* of your house and on your gates." --Deuteronomy 6:4-9