

Closer to God: The Real Reason for Lent

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of Feb 28th

FEB 28TH SERMON SUMMARY

CLOSER TO GOD: PRIDE (LUKE 18:9-14)

Pride is the belief in our own ability to produce value for ourselves, i.e., *I am good/worthy because of what I do*. It is dangerous because we easily see it in others, but rarely in ourselves.

How does pride separate us from God? Pride cuts at the foundational truth that we need God. We don't really want God because we think we don't need him. (v. 9-12, Pharisee)

How can we turn from pride and draw near to God? God has to change us. What we can do:

- **Identify pride in our lives.** Pride twists good pursuits into things we squeeze value out of to make us feel worthy. We can see it in how we relate to others: anger, hostility, selfishness with time and resources, jealousy, envy, gossip, mean-spirited talk, how we view our kids.
- **Expose the emptiness of our prideful pursuits.** We just need God.
- **Turn to God in humility.** God responds, gives the humble what is asked for (v. 13-14)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION: Other than Kanye West, are there any other famous people you can think of that are examples of pride?

II. THINK AND REFLECT.

As you read Luke 19:2-9 (below) about another tax collector, think about pride and humility.

2 And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. **3** Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. **4** So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. **5** When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." **6** And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. **7** When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." **9** And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- 1a. In v. 2-7, what do you notice about Zaccheus?
 - b. What do you think gave Zaccheus a sense of value or worth before he met Jesus? How do you think he believed in his own ability to produce value for himself?
 - c. Why do you think he was so determined to see Jesus?
 - d. How are people today like Zaccheus? How are they different?
 - e. Brandon said: "Pride often goes hand-in-hand with self-doubt and low self-esteem". Agree or disagree? Consider how this might be true of Zaccheus.

- 2a. In v. 5-10, how did Jesus give him value or worth? Talk about the impact Jesus had on him.
 - b. What radical decision did Zaccheus make in v. 8? Why do you think he did it?
 - c. Imagine the thought process behind Zaccheus' decision, and relate it to Sunday's message. How do you think he might have:
 - *identified pride?*
 - *exposed the futility of his prideful pursuits?*
 - *turned to God in humility?*

- 3a. What do you think Jesus meant in v. 9-10? Why did he commend Zaccheus?
 - b. How did Zaccheus receive what he was seeking from Jesus?

III. PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

4. How do you relate to Zaccheus and the other tax collector? Consider:

- How do you want to be more like them?
- How have you seen your need for getting your value and worth from God?
- What decisions or changes have you made because you need God?

There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which everyone loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people ever imagine that they are guilty themselves. The essential vice, the utmost evil is pride. (C.S. Lewis)

5. How do you see pride in your life? Spend some time thinking about these questions. Share as much as you are comfortable sharing about the following:

- What do you pursue that gives you value? (It may be a good pursuit, twisted into something that makes you feel worthy, instead of needing God.)
- How does this pride show in your relationships or in how you view others?
- How are you beginning to recognize the futility of trying to get value from these things?
- How can you turn to God in humility?

6. How is God speaking to you through this discussion or Sunday's message?

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