
“The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector”

Sunday School Lesson from Luke 18:9-14



What is Humility? Sunday School Lesson on The Pharisee and Tax Collector

Young children may not yet be familiar with worrying about public prayer, but they have certainly encountered boasting and bragging. This lesson looks at the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector to discuss the meaning and importance of humility, and reminds students that our prayers and our lives should be focused on God.

Lesson focus: When we brag about how great we think we are, it places all of the attention on our own power, and neglects the importance of God’s work in our lives. We should in humility focus on Christ first and foremost, and remember that our strength comes from Him.

Passage: Luke 18:9-14; James 4:10; Matthew 6:7-13; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (See notes for specific age modifications)

Materials Needed: Construction paper; envelopes; stickers; glue; tape; scissors; decorative supplies; balloons; blocks; cups; Bibles

Bonus Ideas:

- See our [children’s sermon on Luke 18:9-14](#)
- [Prayer Coloring Pages](#) and [P is for Prayer](#) from our Bible Alphabet Series
- [Prayer Hands activity for kids](#)
- See our entire series and free coloring book [The Lord’s Prayer for Kids](#)



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Lesson Introduction: Activity Games for Kids

Lesson Opening: Use one of the following games or visuals to illustrate for kids the dangers of boasting:

- (Younger students) Balloon blast...talk about how pride can puff us up, sort of like a balloon. Demonstrate this live! Explain that when a balloon gets too full of air, one of two things is likely to happen: Either you let go and it flies recklessly away (with a funny pffft sound), or it....POPS!
- What's inside counts...show students two mugs or cups, making sure they only see the outer part at first. One of them should be nice and clean on the outside, but have dirt or grime inside. The other mug should be older or a bit dirty on the outside, but clean within. Which would they rather drink out of? It might be surprising to see that the pretty and "clean" one was actually too nasty to drink out of safely. Explain that the topic today involves how our heart's inner intent is more important than what the outer words or deeds proclaim. (This illustration works for multiple age groups).
- (Older students, or younger if simpler blocks are used) Use Jenga blocks to explain how bragging can lead to a fall. As you have students list things that someone might boast about, stack the blocks higher and higher, until the tower falls over. Describe how trusting our own power rather than setting foundations on the Lord can lead to collapse.

What is bragging? What does it mean to be humble? Explain to students that today they will be talking about *humility*. This means putting others first, especially putting God first, and not thinking too highly of your own abilities. God cares most about our hearts, and He knows our hearts. Sometimes we might get excited about an achievement and want to tell someone, which is fine. But we shouldn't do so at the expense of someone else's worth or feelings. We want to make sure we keep our eyes on Christ.



“Pharisee and Tax Collector” Sunday

School Lesson from Luke 18:9-14

Ask students if they pay attention when things happen in church...who remembers what the pastor’s sermon was about? What songs did the choir sing? Was there a prayer given? (Older students may be better at this than young ones.)

Then ask students what they think about such things...what should be our purpose when we come to church, or pray, or talk to people? Sometimes church can feel a little “showy.” Sometimes when people pray out loud, they worry over what others will think, and maybe use fancy language.

This was a problem in the days of Jesus, as a matter of fact. He told a story about two men who were praying, but for different reasons:

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^[a] thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ -Luke 18:9-12

Ask students: How does this man’s attitude sound? Sure, he is telling God “thank you,” but he’s also bragging about how much better he is than other people. How will that make them feel? And is anyone more or less important to God?

No! He loves all of His created children. So who do you think this Pharisee was really trying to get to listen?? Other people, probably...

Well, the parable had another character:



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!' ¹⁴ 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."

So Jesus is saying that this prayer was more precious and meaningful to God. Why? Remember that the tax collectors were not too popular in Jewish society. Here is this “bad guy” begging God for mercy. But he is talking to be heard by GOD. No one else is around. He isn't bragging or boasting. His mindset is one of genuine humility. He knows that he is nothing without God.

What does this mean for us? It means that what matters most is our purpose, our true heart's aim. If we want others to see us doing good deeds, we are probably still working for our own credit and gain. We want to brag only about Jesus. If we are working for what other people think, we will never be satisfied, and always be worried! We need only concern ourselves with what GOD thinks of us.

Additionally, let's not forget that when we pray, it's for an audience of one. God is the most important one to share with. And Jesus gave us a great example of how to pray:

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.*

*¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,*

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

¹² and forgive us our debts,



*as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. -Matthew 6:7-13*

This does not mean that we have to pray these exact words each time we approach God. However, it does make for a great model for our prayers, and an example of how and what we should say when we talk to the Lord.

We can also rest assured that when we approach God with honest humility, great things can result! Access the following verses as closing reminders for students, and discuss what they might mean...

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. -James 4:10

*And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."
-1 Corinthians 1:30-31*

Close the lesson with prayer and thank God for loving us and being present in our lives. Ask for help in being humble and letting the intent of our hearts be focused on the Lord.



Sunday School Crafts: Prayer Pocket Envelopes

- Construction paper or note cards
- Scissors
- Felt or fabric (optional)
- Tape
- String or ribbon
- Markers/decorative materials
- Envelopes (letter sized)
- Stickers (optional)

Procedure:

1. Choose envelope or felt/fabric. If choosing fabric, use glue or pins to secure in a “pocket”
2. If using the envelope, cut the top flap off and tape the sides.
3. Add stickers or decorative flair, if desired.
4. Decorate the note card with prayer reminders or prayer requests.
5. Place the card into the envelope. Encourage students to carry around or hang in a prominent spot. Pray daily!

Extra [Bible craft ideas](#).... If you have more material, time, or crafting ability in your group, it might be fun to make another special “prayer prepared” item, such as a prayer pillow or a kneeling pad. Use cloth, cotton filler, and more to make and decorate.



“Walk Humbly with Your God”

Bible Craft Activities on The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Walk Humbly with God...and Don't forget to Pray! [Craft Ideas for Sunday School](#)

Sure, you could do a flip-able puppet or coloring page for the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector...but if your students are learning the importance of prayer and focusing on God first, why not concentrate on the prayer aspect?

This craft will serve as a special reminder for students to pray at all times and without ceasing. It can be used as a literal “pocket prayer” or a decorative hanging prayer encouragement.

See our related [children's sermon on Luke 18:9-14](#) and [craft directions video](#) for these ideas.

Verses or captions to consider:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. -Philippians 2:3

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. -Luke 18:14

JOY: Jesus / Others / Yourself

ACTS Formula for prayer:

- Adoration (praise God)
- Confession (Confess wrongs)
- Thanksgiving (Give thanks)
- Supplication (Ask for things last)



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Craft one: “Prayer Pocket” Envelope

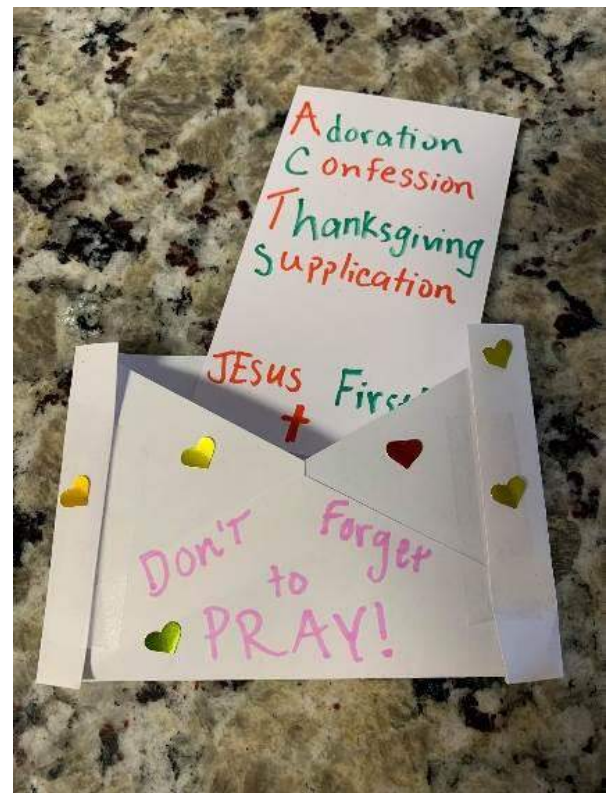
You will need:

- Stickers (optional)
- Construction paper or note cards
- Scissors
- Felt or fabric (optional)
- Tape
- String or ribbon
- Markers/decorative materials
- Envelopes (letter sized)



Procedure:

1. Choose envelope or felt/fabric. If choosing fabric, use glue or pins to secure in a “pocket”
2. If using the envelope, cut the top flap off and tape the sides.
3. Add stickers or decorative flair, if desired.
4. Decorate the note card with prayer reminders or prayer requests.
5. Place the card into the envelope.
Encourage students to carry around or hang in a prominent spot. Pray daily!



Craft Two: Prayer Balloons

You will need:

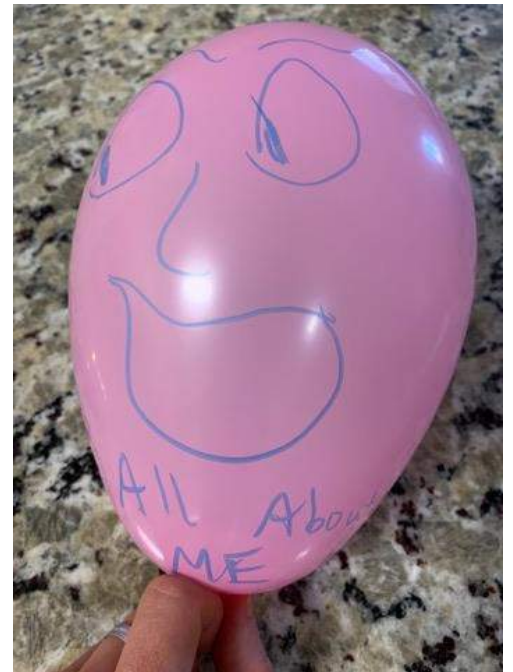
- Balloons
- Permanent markers
- Ribbon/string (optional)
- Scissors (optional)

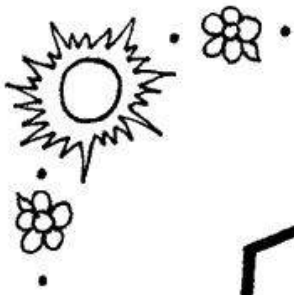


Procedure:

Note: This is a fun illustration or optional activity to do during your lesson. If you prefer to make it a craft, feel free to get more elaborate and have fun with it!

1. Blow up a balloon or two. Discuss how pride can “puff us up” and make us feel more important than God.
2. Option one: let the balloon go and explain how we “let go” of God when we are too arrogant, and it can send us blowing away!
3. Option two: tie off the balloon and help kids draw a face on it and give it a name.
4. For extra emphasis: use scissors or a pin to pop the balloon. Don’t brag!





IS FOR

PRAYER



Time to Pray



Sinner's Prayer (5 simple examples) for Kids

 ministry-to-children.com/sinners-prayer

Tony Kummer

July 29,
2017

Imagine a child is ready to accept Christ but they can't find the words.

That's when a simple example prayer asking for salvation (aka "The Sinner's Prayer") is helpful. Asking God to forgive your sins is not complicated and the words alone are not magic. Jesus looks at the heart of repentance and anyone praying to Him in faith can be saved. I've read about the debate about this practice, but still believe a model prayer is important for kids who want to give their life to Jesus.

Here are some great examples to get you started.

Variations of the Sinner's Prayer

Biblical Salvation Prayer (from Jesus)

Luke 18:13 contains the prayer of the tax collector, as told by Jesus. This parable shows that heart felt repentance is much more important than the particular formula of words.

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!'

Classic Prayer to Be Forgiven

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. I know my sin deserves to be punished. I believe Christ died for me and rose from you grave. I trust Jesus alone as my Savior. Thank you for the forgiveness and everlasting life I now have. In Jesus' name, amen. [[source](#)]

Simple Sinner's Prayer for Younger Children

Jesus – I know that you made me and want me to obey you with all my heart. I know I have disobeyed and wanted to be my own boss. I have thought and done things against your directions. I am sorry. I know that you gave up his life to save me from these sins and make me your child again. I accept your promises and ask you to please save me now and forever. Amen.

's Version of the Sinner's Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name. Amen.^[19]

Campus Crusade for Christ Salvation Prayer

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.^[20]

Theologically, such prayers should express two concepts – repentance for sins and faith in salvation offer found in Jesus. No child should be compelled or misled into such a prayer (that would have not effect and only breed confusion).

I'd love to hear your thoughts. What model prayer do you use when inviting a child to give their life to Jesus? Leave a comment below and share your experience.

We hope you enjoy this free resource.

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I'm Tony Kummer - I started this website in 2007, but God is using it beyond my imagination. The mission is simple.

Help you tell kids about Jesus!

Our team is honored that you choose our material. Thank you for ...

- serving where God has placed you.
- telling children about Jesus.
- allowing us to be a part of your mission.

We don't ask for money, but we do need your help.

Please consider the following:

1. Comment on the website to encourage our authors.
2. Link to us from your blog or church website.
3. Share our posts on Pinterest or Facebook.
4. Tell a friend to google "Ministry to Children."
5. Add me (and our team) to your personal prayer list.

I'd love to hear your feedback on this download. Tony@ministry-to-children.com

May God bless you and continue to bless your ministry!



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