

WORDS OF JESUS

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Despised Faith

SPEAKER: Russell Joyce

DATE: June 7, 2026

TEXT(S): Luke 18:9-14, with 1 Sam 16:7
and 1 Cor 1:28-29

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: This resource is designed to help you, and your group, step through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message.

Our goal is to help you and your group better understand and apply B4's teaching.

MESSAGE SUMMARY + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

In the parable about the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Jesus overturns assumptions about who God welcomes and how. The Pharisee appears righteous, yet he trusts in himself and despises others. The sinful tax collector comes with nothing but a plea for mercy, and Jesus declares him justified before God. This message explores how pride, like that of the Pharisee, subtly shapes our judgments. It shows how God sees beyond outward appearances deep into the human heart, and how His grace is abundant among the self-confessing, those who are weak, broken, and overlooked. The self-confident find it hard to make their way into God's kingdom. But the humble and repentant? The ones dependent on His loving kindness? They find a wide-open welcome.

LEAN IN: These are icebreakers and warm-ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5 minutes.

1. Describe a time when you misjudged a person after first meeting them.
2. Share about something in your life that appeared insignificant to you at first (a chance meeting, a trip, or some other experience) but later turned out to be deeply meaningful.
3. What is one stereotype people often accept that turns out to be inaccurate?
4. If you could instantly remove one common misconception people have about you, what would it be?
5. Share about someone in your life who taught you an important lesson through weakness and vulnerability.

LOOK DOWN: These are questions about the Bible passage(s) from the teaching. Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. What specific clues in Luke 18:9-14 reveal the Pharisee's true heart condition?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose a Pharisee and a tax collector as the two characters in this parable?
3. What does the tax collector's posture communicate before he even speaks?
4. How does the phrase "trusted in himself and looked down on others" summarize the Pharisee's problem?
5. How does 1 Samuel 16:7 help us understand God's evaluation of the two men?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.*
Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. Where do you see modern cultures encourage self-righteousness or superiority over others?
2. In what ways does your culture reward self-promotion while overlooking repentance?
3. What are some modern equivalents of saying, "Thank God I'm not like those people"?
4. Why do success, competence, and image often receive more attention than humility and dependence?
5. Who are the "despised" people in our communities today, and what do we miss by ignoring them?

LOOK IN: *These questions help you consider how to engage the teaching for yourself.*
Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. Which character in the parable do you most identify with, and why?
2. What areas of life are you most tempted to trust in yourself rather than in God, and why?
3. What weaknesses, failures, or areas of need do you most want to hide from others, and why?
4. How might God be inviting you to encounter His grace through an area of vulnerability?
5. What would it look like this week to approach God with the humility of the tax collector?

LIVE IT OUT: *These prayer practices can help you integrate this message into day-to-day life.*
Choose one prompt and discuss how you will embrace it this week (5 minutes):

1. Pray a "Tax Collector's Prayer" each day this week. Begin by slowly praying, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Afterwards, spend some time allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where you need God's grace. Resist explaining, defending, or minimizing. Simply receive His mercy with thankfulness.
2. Practice a daily "heart check" this week. At the end of each day, ask questions like, "Where did I trust in myself instead of God today? Where did I judge others or look down on them? Where did I notice God's grace to me or others?" Do a bit of a deep dive on your day and confess honestly anything that the Spirit surfaces. Thank God for His loving acceptance through Jesus rather than your performance.

You can find B4's [Series Resources here](#).

