




- 1 **Jesus told the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow “the effect that [his disciples] ought always to pray and not lose heart.”** (Luke 18:1) Think about the last month. When have you been tempted to pray less or not pray altogether? What has caused you to lose heart and want to give up?

 *The context for Jesus' parable is the teaching of His kingdom. It had already been inaugurated in His coming to earth, but it had not yet come in its fullness. (Luke 17:21, 25-30). When you think about the brokenness and difficulty of the world around you, what do you long for most about God's kingdom coming in greater measure?*


- 2 **Often times, when we read the parables, we look for meaning by trying to figure out what each of the characters or elements represents, and we often try to find ourselves or God within the story.** But in this parable, Jesus is not to comparing the unjust judge and the persistent widow to God and His people. He is contrasting them. Reading the story through that lens is very encouraging.

 *How are you tempted to treat God like the unjust judge? How are you tempted to see yourself in the hopeless state of the widow?*

 *In what ways is God different from the unjust judge in this parable (Luke 11:9-13, 12:32)? In what ways are God's chosen ones different than the persistent widow? (Matthew 15:22-28, Romans 8:31-33)?*

 *What situations in your life do you need to remember God's goodness and your status as a loved child?*


- 3 **Think about the connection between prayer and not losing heart.** Read Luke 18:1, 8. How have you seen persistent prayer to be fuel for a wavering faith? See also Hebrews 12:12-13, Isaiah 35:3-4.


 Discuss the following: "Prayer and faith stand and fall together. If we lose heart and drift away from prayer, then the Son of man will not find faith in us when he comes. Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. If you lose heart and lay down the shovel, the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard." John Piper


 How is this a better motivator to persistently pray than the false motivators of guilt or convincing God to give us what we want?

4 **How should Christians think about unanswered prayer?** What are some of the things it could mean? What can it not mean? (Eph 3:20, 2 Peter 3:8-9, 2 Cor. 12:7-10, Rom. 8:26-28, Hebrews 7:25)

5 **Choose 2 of the following prayers and read them aloud:** Ephesians 1:17-19, 3:14-19 Colossians 1:9-12, Matthew 6:9-13, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13.

 What do you notice about these prayers? What does each passage teach about how to pray with God's purposes at the center of your thinking? What do these prayers teach about God--both about His character and about the prayers He wants His people to pray?

 Compare the content of your prayers from the last week to the prayers in these passages. What is encouraging to you about your prayers? What can you learn from these prayers?

 Take time to pray together using the concepts you discussed.

Prayer Points

- > Thank God that He is a just, loving, and wise God who hears and responds to prayer
- > Confess your tendency to hurry or shorten your prayers. Confess both your carelessness in prayer, but also the reasons why you don't pray.
- > Bring your needs in desperation to the Lord
- > Thank God for the undeserved privilege of being called His elect
- > Pray that God would bring justice for His elect
- > Pray for greater persistence in prayer
- > Submit to God's perfect wisdom and timing