

The Pharisee and the Publican Pray

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Scene Summary

The Pharisee and the Publican pray presents a story Jesus told about two men: one proud, the other humble. Scenes include: Jesus teaches a group of men by telling a story...a proud Pharisee gives money at the Temple...he hives animals and vegetables from his farm, too...he stands in the marketplace so people will see that he goes without food two days a week...he wears his phylactery all day – not just when he goes to the Temple to pray...a publican collects taxes...he follows the Pharisee into the Temple...the Pharisee prays proudly...the publican is sorry for his wrong-doing...Jesus tells the men to be humble like the publican.

Scripture

(Luke 18:9-14 NIV) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: {10} "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. {11} The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. {12} I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' {13} "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' {14} "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Pharisee** – Should be played by a person acting proud and somewhat arrogant.

- **Tax Collector** – A rich person, well dressed. The character is one of humility.
- **Person 1, 2, 3** – These people are having to pay taxes, so they are generally angry.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.

Script – The Pharisee and the Publican Pray

Narrator: Jesus often taught His disciples about God and God’s ways. One day Jesus wanted to teach them that they should not think that they are better than others, and He wanted them to know that He wanted them to pray sincerely. Jesus told them a story about two men. One was called a Pharisee.

[Pharisee takes center stage]

Pharisee: I obey all of God’s laws and I give one tenth of all my money to the temple. When people see how much money I give, they know how important I am. I give even more than the law asks me to, not just money, but vegetables and fruits grown on my land and my cattle too. When people see how much I give, they know how good and generous I really am.

Narrator: Years before, Moses had given the people God’s rules that told the people to go without eating on one special day of the year, to show that they were sorry for their sins.

Pharisee: [very proud] I go without food two days every week.

Narrator: Often, on the days he did not eat, the Pharisee would go to the market place.

Pharisee: [to himself] If I look sad, the people will think I am very good for going without food all day. They will know that I keep all of the temple laws.

Narrator: Pharisee’s sometimes wore small boxes, tied to their arms or foreheads that contained tiny scrolls containing scripture. These were called a phylactery and reminded people that God’s word should be in their mind and near to their heart. [pause] The Pharisee also wore a special blue prayer apron or shawl, showing their constant devotion to prayer. When the Pharisee went through the market place towards the temple to pray, people would move aside, giving honor and respect.

[Pharisee moves downstage, and the tax collector takes center stage]

Narrator: The other man Jesus told about was a tax collector, called a Publican. Many tax collectors cheated the people.

Person 1: [pointing to the tax collector, accusingly] He charges too much.

Person 2: [angry] He keeps some of the money for himself.

Person 3: [sneer] He does not charge a fair amount.

Narrator: When the tax collector walked through the streets, people gave him mean looks or turned their heads away.

Person 1: [scowling] He lies and cheats us.

Narrator: The tax collector didn't have many friends.

[scene change to the Pharisee and Tax Collector together, going to the temple]

Narrator: One day, the Pharisee went to the temple at prayer time. He thought about all the things he would tell God. Behind him, the tax collector walked up the steps to God's house; he was going to pray too.

Pharisee: [standing looking up, loudly] God, I carefully obey all of the laws. I even go without eating two days a week, instead of just one day a year. I give to the temple one tenth of everything I own. Oh God, I thank you that I am not bad like other men who cheat and steal and lie. I thank you that I am not bad, like that tax collector over there.

Narrator: The Pharisee walked out proudly, thinking how good he was. [pause] Off in a corner, where he thought no one would notice him, the tax collector bowed his head and quietly prayed.

Tax collector: [bowed in prayer, beating hand against his chest] Oh God, I've done wrong, please forgive me.

Narrator: Not even looking up, the tax collector beat his chest to show how sorry he was for the wrong things he had done.

Tax collector: I don't deserve anything God does for me, and I'm so thankful for His help and forgiveness.

Narrator: Jesus said God heard the tax collectors prayer because he was sincere and admitted that he had done wrong.

The End

Supplemental information

Jesus told the people many things about His Heavenly Father. He told them about God's laws too. To help them understand God's law or what God wanted them to do, Jesus would use an illustration or tell them a story. Jesus told this story about two men because He wanted to teach the people that they should not trust in themselves or think that they were better than others.

The first man was a Pharisee. This person tried to keep all of God's laws and laws made to keep from breaking God's laws. Some of these laws were very good rules, but some seemed very foolish. There were so many rules, that most people didn't even try to keep them all. The Pharisee was very proud because he did try to keep all of the rules. He gave one tenth of everything that he had to the temple. The Pharisee would not even go into anyone's house that did not keep these laws. The Pharisee wanted everyone to know that they were very good. They did things to show off to the people how good they were. They were proud that they did even more than the law required. God had given a law that said the people must fast on one special day each year. This was to show that they were sorry for the wrong things that they had done. The Pharisee often fasted one or two days each week. They wanted people to know that they were fasting, showing how good they were. The Pharisee told God how good he was, that he was better than other men, better than the tax collector.

The tax collector worked for the Roman government. He was allowed to tax the people more than what was required and keep the rest for his salary. Most tax collectors were very rich because they cheated the people. There were two kinds of tax collectors: one collected property and toll taxes and the other was a customhouse official, collecting taxes on everything that was imported and exported, everything that was bought and sold. Virtually anything could be taxed. Poor people paid so many taxes that they had very little left over for food or clothes. Almost everyone hated the tax collector, because he did not charge fair amounts.

In the story that Jesus told, the Pharisee was very proud because he thought he was better than other people. The Pharisee did wrong things, but would not admit that he did. When he prayed, he bragged about himself. The tax collector was really sorry for his wrongdoings. He did not brag about himself or want people to think that he was anyone important. He prayed to God sincerely, out of his heart that was sorry for the wrongs that he had done. Jesus said "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:14

More Information

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for many years. They had to work hard and their Egyptian masters were cruel and often beat them. Finally, God helped the people get away.

He told Moses to tell the people to remember that day always and gave plans for the Passover Feast which the people should celebrate each year.

To remind them of how God had helped them to escape, the people thought God wanted them to wear the story on their foreheads and on their arms. Ex 13: 9,16 Deut 6:8, 11:18

On four thin pieces of leather, each man wrote out the story as given in Ex 13:1-21 and Deut 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. The four pieces of leather were placed in the tiny leather box and tied to the forehead with leather straps.

The same story was written on three pieces of leather and place in another small leather box and tied to the left arm. These leather boxes were called phylacteries. For thousands of years Jewish men have worn phylacteries. In Jesus' day, many Jews wore them when they said their morning prayers at home or in the synagogue.

In those days, phylacteries for the forehead were cubes. Some were very small, with each side just one-half inch square. Others were larger, about 1 ½ inches square. The boxes and their leather straps were black.