

Read: Luke 18:9-14

Don't balance grapes on your nose!

Luke 18:14

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Joey sat in the back of the classroom with his head bent low and his eraser working furiously over his paper. It seemed like no matter how many times he tried; he just could not get his uppercase 'S' to look like it was supposed to! His loops were too loopy, and his down stroke went too far down! Meanwhile, in the front of the classroom, Jeremiah was given the important job of passing back his classmates' papers so that they could continue their handwriting work on lowercase 'S.' With each paper he delivered, Jeremiah would loudly offer some feedback. "Slow down next time Megan." "Pretty good job, Sydney, but your uppercase letters need to be bigger than your lowercase." "Yikes, Logan! Did you do this paper with your eyes closed?" Finally, he got to a paper with an unreadable name scribbled across the top. "Whose name is this?!" he exclaimed, holding the paper up for all to see. "It looks like a bunch of chicken scratches." The teacher smiled and whispered, "Jeremiah, your desk is the only one without a paper on it."

It is so easy to puff ourselves up while putting others down. It's almost like we are balancing a grape on our nose looking down on those around us. "I go to church every Sunday, not just on holidays." "I brush my teeth four times a day, even after snacks!" "My teacher told us to write four paragraphs, but I wrote five!" None of those things by themselves are bad! But when we begin to put the focus on ourselves and what we do, we take the focus off Jesus and what he did!

In our reading for today, Jesus—the master teacher—addressed that very problem by telling a story about the Pharisee and tax collector. (Read Luke 18:9-14.) Jeremiah, confidently passing out papers, exalted himself over his classmates until he was humbled and red cheeked when it was revealed that the messy paper belonged to him. Thankfully, God forgives us for the times we do exalt ourselves and through his Word encourages us to work humbly and then promises to exalt us for Jesus' sake.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Try (or pretend to) balance a grape on your nose. How do other people around you look when their nose is in the air?
- We can be so thankful that God does not look down on us but loves us! Think of a way you can show love to someone without looking down on them.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- It can be easy to sound like a Pharisee at recess during some playground games. In the following sentences tell whether the child sounds more like a bragging Pharisee or humble tax collector. If the answer is “Pharisee” try to flip it to sound like the tax collector.
 - “Did you see that amazing kick I had? It went so far into the outfield.”
 - “I could not have hit it so far had it not been for the perfect pitch the pitcher threw me. It was right in the zone.”
 - “I tagged everyone out in freeze tag! I’m the fastest kid on the planet.”
 - “Hannah has such a nice way of setting the volleyball! She puts it right where I need it to be in order to hit it over the net.”
- Thank God for the talents and gifts he has given you. The next time you do something well, try to be humble about it! Share a real-life example of that with your family.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- It can be easy to sound like a Pharisee as you enter the years of more competitive athletics and academics. In the following sentences tell whether the child sounds more like a bragging Pharisee or humble tax collector. If the answer is “Pharisee” try to flip it to sound like the tax collector.
 - “I had so many great steals in the game, too bad the referees kept calling them as fouls.”
 - “I had over 347 rushing yards. I was unstoppable out there.”
 - “My group received an ‘A’ on our history project. I am so thankful for all the collaboration we did!”
 - “Jodie got the lead in the musical! We practiced so hard together and thanks to her help, I made the chorus!”
- Thank God for the talents and gifts He has given you! The next time you encounter an opportunity to exalt yourself, remember Luke 18. Then share your real-life example at home with your family!

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, help us fight against our urge to be like the Pharisee balancing a grape on our nose and pray humbly with the tax collector, “God have mercy on me, a sinner!” Amen.