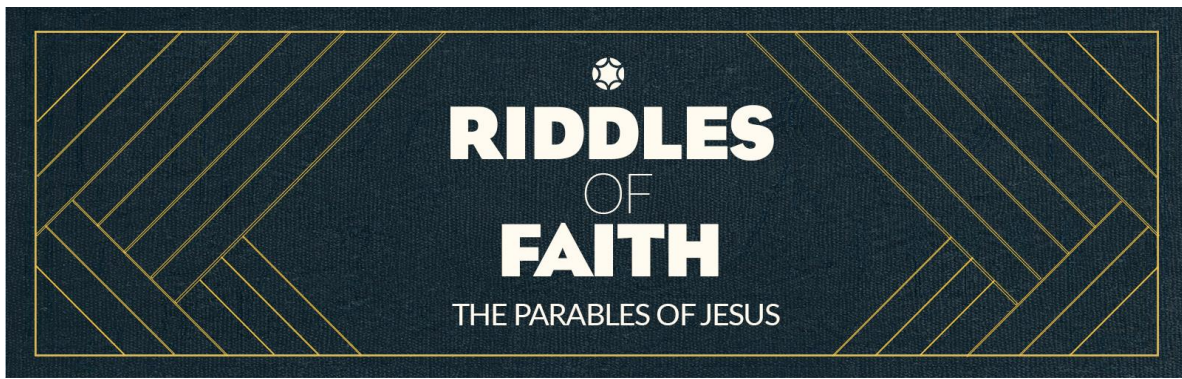




***Group Guide***  
***Week Five // Who's 'da Man!***

**Scripture Focus**

Luke 18:9–14

**Big Idea**

God is not impressed by our spiritual accomplishments or comparisons with others. Jesus shows us that the way to God is not through proving our goodness, but through honestly recognizing our need for his mercy.

**Read Together**

Read Luke 18:9–14 aloud. As you read, pay attention to how each man approaches God, what each man says about himself, and what Jesus says about them at the end of the story.

**Setting the Scene**

Luke tells us exactly why Jesus teaches this parable: it is directed toward people who were “confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else.” Jesus introduces two people who would have occupied very different places in the minds of his listeners. The Pharisee represents someone known for religious devotion and careful obedience to the law. The tax collector, on the other hand, represents a group widely despised because of their association with Rome and reputation for dishonesty and exploitation. Both men go to the temple to pray, and from outward appearances, it might seem obvious which man is closer to God. But Jesus' parables often challenge our assumptions, and this story quickly becomes less about how these two men appear and more about the condition of their hearts.

## **Digging Deeper**

The Pharisee begins his prayer by thanking God, but his attention quickly turns toward himself. He lists the sins he has avoided and the religious practices he has performed. His religious accomplishments have become evidence of his own superiority. His prayer even includes a comparison with the tax collector standing nearby: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people.”

The tax collector approaches God very differently. He stands at a distance, refuses even to look toward heaven, and beats his chest in sorrow. His prayer contains no accomplishments, excuses, or comparisons: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

The Pharisee measures his spiritual life by comparing himself with people he considers worse than himself. The tax collector has nothing to point toward except his need for God's mercy. Jesus ends the parable with a principle that appears repeatedly throughout his teaching: “For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” Humility is seeing ourselves truthfully before God and recognizing both the good work God is doing within us and our continuing dependence upon his grace.

## **Group Discussion**

### **Getting Started**

- What stood out most to you from the sermon?
- Why do you think comparing ourselves with other people comes so naturally?

### **Digging Into Scripture**

- Why do you think Jesus' conclusion in verse 14 would have surprised some of his original listeners?
- What differences do you notice between the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector?

### **Personal Reflection**

- Where are you most tempted to measure your spiritual life by comparing yourself with others?
- How can religious practices or accomplishments unintentionally become sources of pride?

## **Looking Forward**

- What would approaching God with greater honesty and humility look like for you this week?
- Is there a person or group of people you have been tempted to look down upon? How might remembering your own need for grace change the way you see them?

## **Individual Application**

This week, pay attention to moments when you find yourself comparing your life, faith, accomplishments, or failures with someone else. When you notice comparison creeping in, return to the tax collector's simple prayer: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Ask yourself:

- Am I trying to prove myself or honestly approaching God?
- Where has pride begun to influence the way I see myself?
- Is there someone I have been looking down upon?

Take time to thank God for the good things he is doing in your life without using them as a measuring stick against someone else.

Consider memorizing:

Luke 18:14

*"For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

## **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you that we do not have to prove ourselves or earn our place before you. Forgive us when pride causes us to compare ourselves with others or look down on those around us. Give us the humility to see ourselves honestly and the courage to admit how much we need your mercy. Help us recognize your grace at work in our lives and extend that same grace to others. May our confidence rest not in our own goodness, but in your love and mercy. In Jesus' name, amen.