



## Day 6

# Love

**Silence (2 minutes)** Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

**Scripture** *"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 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.' 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.'"* Luke 18:9-14

**Discussion** Jesus tells this parable to emphasize our need to humble ourselves before God, fully acknowledge our sin, and ask for God's mercy. Earlier in Luke, Jesus tells a Pharisee the parable of two people who were forgiven their debt, one of them had a massive debt and the other a much smaller one. Jesus asks, *"Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.'* *'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said.*" (Lk. 7:42-43) Sometimes when we have been Christians for a long time, it can be tempting to forget how desperate our need for salvation was, and is. It can be tempting to regard ourselves as a good sinner who looks and acts in socially acceptable ways and commits minor socially acceptable sins; not what we regard as the really bad ones. We have daily devotions, go to church and a Bible study. We tithe and maybe even fast. We have Christian friends. We can be tempted to be critical of another believer who looks and acts differently, who has done the bad sins, which everyone knows about. It is true that some sins are more damaging than others, but if our focus is on who has the better or worse sin, we've been distracted from what's important. If we forget the seriousness of our own sin before a holy God, and our deep need for forgiveness, maybe our gratitude and love based on that forgiveness has cooled. It is good for us to remember how we felt and thought, how desperate we were before we gave our lives to Christ. Whatever our sins were, we were living independently of God. It is also good for us to examine ourselves closely now, asking God to reveal any thoughts (including a critical attitude toward others), motives, and behaviors that are not pleasing to Him. We have *"all sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Rom. 3:23) How might God want to use us to welcome and strengthen that believer with the bad sins? How might God use that person to teach us more deeply about God's power, mercy, and love?

**Application** Take a few moments to consider just how much the Lord has done in your life, the sins He saved you from, the love He shows you, and the maturity the Holy Spirit is aiding you to grow into. Often times we compare our own sins to those of another because we have lost sight of God and just how much he has done for us. Commit today to remember your own standing before God when you feel tempted to compare yourself to others.

**Prayer** Father, I praise You that You see and know me as I am and I thank You that You love me. Please forgive my own critical attitude of others. Please forgive my justifying myself and being oblivious to my own sin. Please help me keep my focus on Your holiness and mercy, and my need for You. Thank You, Father. I love You. Amen.

**Silence (2 minutes)** Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

**Scripture memory** for the week: *"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:29-31

