

# Encountering God Series Bible Study 2 – Humble Yourself!

## Background and Introduction:

Jesus' words to the woman who he met at the well in a town called Sychar (John 4:23-24) were that *"the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth"*

- a. 'True' worshippers means 'real' or 'genuine' worshippers
- b. Worship 'in spirit' is to do with God. Worship inspired by God.
- c. Worship 'in truth' is to do with us. Our understanding, our attitude, being of the right mind.

If we can get Points b & c right then we will fulfil Point a!

This study is particularly to address some of Point c. What might be 'blocking' encountering with God in our worship? By 'blocking' think of a stone, or a fallen branch that interrupts, slows and hinders the flow of water in a stream rather than a dam that stops the flow completely.

## Luke 18:10-14

*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.*

Some discussion questions:

### Consider the Pharisee ...

1. Name THREE positive things about the Pharisee from vv 11-12.
2. Why do these not help the Pharisee? What is wrong?

### Consider yourself ...

3. List some 'blockers' that we can identify in ourselves from the Pharisee?

### Some discussion questions – me, myself and I (and me again!):

1. Me: Self-righteousness, self-justification
  - a. What rights do you have into God's presence?
  - b. How did you get the 'pass' that allowed you in?
2. Myself: Superiority
  - a. Are there people at church who annoy you? People you resent by the way they pray? People who make your heart sink when they speak or share?
  - b. Are there any people who you feel superior to, when they pray or share, in the sense of being an older or more mature Christian?

### 3. I: Glorifying God or glorifying myself

- a. Who is the subject of my worship? Is it me, or is it God?
- b. When I speak in church – either praying or sharing – am I glorifying God, or am I, in fact, ‘glorifying’ myself?

### 4. Me again: Hypocrite!

Hypocrisy: *“a pretence of having a virtuous character that one does not really possess”*

- a. In what ways is the Pharisee a hypocrite?
- b. In what ways was the woman at the well at Sychar a hypocrite? [John 4:19-26]
- c. In what ways might I be a hypocrite?

### Conclusion

We long to truly encounter God in our meetings together.

We long to be lost in wonder, love and praise.

We long to honour Jesus Christ and stand for him.

We long to experience that well of water springing up into eternal life both personally and collectively.

We long to see lives healed and made whole as God ministers to us.

We long to freely receive what is freely given.

Humble yourselves! Get Me, Myself, I and Me again out of the way.

## Notes

### Consider the Pharisee ...

1. 3 positive things about the Pharisee:
  - a. He is grateful to God for who he is and what he has become
  - b. He tithes
  - c. He fasts
2. Why do these not help the Pharisee? What is wrong?  
Quite a list:
  - a. Pride
  - b. Lack of understanding of God (not worshipping in truth)
  - c. Arrogance
  - d. Self-justified
  - e. ....

### Consider yourself ...

1. Me: Self-righteousness, self-justification
  - a. What rights do you have into God's presence?

*The simple answer is 'None'! My concern is that we can lose the sense of awe and Godly fear as we come to worship God. We can, and should, come 'boldly to the throne of grace' but in the full understanding that we have no right to be there other than by what Jesus has done and given to us. This alone is a reason to worship and give thanks as we enjoy what should be closed to us because of our sin. In our prayers of petition, we cannot demand.*

- b. How did you get the 'pass' that allowed you in?

*This is based on my illustration of the free pass I was given to the Hungarian Grand Prix a few years ago. A pass that allowed me to go absolutely anywhere on the circuit for the three days of the event. It was a F1 fan's dream ticket! A paddock pass with more limitations than my pass would have cost over £4000.*

*We have a 'free pass' into God's presence courtesy of Jesus Christ, who gave it to us. Enjoy it to the full, but never forget that it was paid for by someone else, you have no right to it!*

2. Myself: Superiority

*If, for example, you are seeking to come into God's presence on a Sunday morning or in your House Group, but are looking around and despising your brother or sister in some way, then you will be blocked. This would be your problem, not the other person's!  
Issues here may be too personal for open discussion and need to be dealt with prayerfully. Jesus will help you here. Maybe start by praying for the person or persons that are causing you the problem.*

3. I: Glorifying God or glorifying myself

- a. Who is the subject of my worship? Is it me, or is it God?

*The point here is that the Pharisee's prayer was all about himself. "Lord, I ....." The tax-collector's prayer had nothing of himself.*

*The point is that in our worship, we are out of the picture. We are extolling God, lost is worship, love and praise.*

*Some of the worship songs that we sing are rather 'self-centred' rather than 'God-centred'. We will not be carried into God's presence in our worship if we sing songs about ourselves.*

- b. When I speak in church – either praying or sharing – am I glorifying God, or am I, in fact, 'glorifying' myself?

*Very sensitive, but important, point. When you feel prompted to pray in church, or to share or testify of something that has happened, check this out before opening your mouth. If the prompting is by the Holy Spirit and is from God, then it will bring glory to Him. Jesus said, speaking of the Spirit, "He will testify of me." If there is any sense, however slight, that what you are prompted to pray, or share, will enhance you in the eyes of others in church, then either don't say it or edit it accordingly.*

4. Me again: Hypocrite!

a. In what ways is the Pharisee a hypocrite?

- *Outwardly – fasting, tithing, prayer, thanksgiving.*
- *Inwardly – self-justifying, superior, full of himself.*

b. In what ways was the woman at the well at Sychar a hypocrite? [John 4:19-26]

- *Outwardly – happy to discuss religious matters, worship, prophets.*
- *Inwardly – adultery, broken marriages, ignorance of truth.*

c. In what ways might I be a hypocrite?

*We all can fall into this one. Coming to church on a Sunday morning, singing the songs, saying the right thing, whilst covering up something.....*

- *A personal response to self-examination. Maybe this is another item for a private conversation between you and Jesus. David wrote "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." [Ps 51]*