

The Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)
Teacher Notes

Video Abstract (Author: Max7.org): This 2 minute animation re-tells the parable of the persistent widow from Luke 18, in a contemporary setting. This parable reminds us to keep on praying and never give up. It is most suitable for teens and older children.

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8, NKJV)

1. Read Luke 18:1-8 and watch the video. What does Jesus' subtle comparison of God to the unjust judge achieve?

Help the student recognize the literary device of contrast. Jesus' use of contrast places an emphasis on the difference in the motivation of the judges (unjust vs just) in response to persistent prayer.

If persistent prayers of the widow convinced the unjust judge to do the just thing, how would a just Judge respond to persistent prayer? While the unjust judge responds selfishly to rid the pesky bother of the widow with no consideration of justice. The parable presents a contrast to heighten the character of God - the just Judge responds to the injustice brought to His attention by the petitioner.

2. What can you do to understand the context of this parable?

Question and remind the student to read before and after a passage to understand what is being said. Just before, in Luke 17:20-37, Jesus responds to the Pharisees' question about when the Kingdom of God will arrive; but, to the disciples, Jesus speaks enigmatically about that time as sudden, violent, and when people mysteriously disappear.

It is in this context that the Parable of the Persistent Widow is presented.

3. The parable speaks of God avenging "His own elect" when the "when the Son of Man comes." Who are the elect? When does the Son of Man come?

One of the many challenges in Bible study is understanding terms and locating their definition within the Bible. When possible, try to find God's definition of terms – this removes human bias. In this instance, God defines what elect means in Exodus 19:3-6:

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then **you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people**; for all the earth is Mine. And **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Ex 19:3-6, NKJV)

Help the student understand that the "elect" is in reference to those with a genuine faith. It might be necessary to go over the objective meaning of faith ("you have seen what I did to the Egyptians" - belief in the real existence of God / "if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant" – placing a trust in His word).

When speaking of the coming Kingdom of God and “when the Son of Man comes,” Jesus is referring to a period of time at the end of human history. It may be helpful to keep in mind that sometimes when Jesus speaks of parable referring to the Kingdom of God, He might be speaking in a literal sense. If one examines the apostle John account of the opening of the fifth seal in Revelation, it provides a literal view of Jesus’ comments about the Parable of the Persistent Widow:

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “**How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev 6:9-11, NKJV)

This account explains why God would “avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him.” These Believers were martyrs - those who were murdered “for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.”

Studying Revelation helps us understand the importance of prayer – persistent prayer:

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and **golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.** (Rev 5:8, NKJV)

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the **smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God** from the angel’s hand. (Rev 8:3-4, NKJV)

In review of the Parable of the Persistent Widow, there are at least 2 things one can learn:

1. If something is of great concern, pray persistently.
2. God is just and will render justice.

As a conclusion, Jesus posits a rhetorical question: If all those who were murdered for their knowledge of God’s word and testified of Jesus Christ, would He find anyone of faith when He returns?