

# FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message

Luke 18:1-8, The Parable of the Persistent Widow.

October 15, 2006

## Introduction

1. Read Luke 18:1-8.
2. In her book *Holy the Firm*, Annie Dillard writes of attending a small church with some 20 people: “The minister is a Congregationalist and wears a white shirt. The man knows God. Once, in the middle of the long pastoral prayer of intercession for the whole world—for the gift of wisdom to its leaders, for hope and mercy to the grieving and pained, succor to the oppressed, and God's grace to all—in the middle of this he stopped and burst out, ‘Lord, we bring you these same petitions every week.’ After a shocked pause, he continued reading the prayer. Because of this, I like him very much.” *Annie Dillard, Holy the Firm (HarperCollins, 1999)*  
Why exactly do you think Dillard liked the minister so much?
3. When have you wanted something so much you asked for it over and over? Did you get it?

## Getting Inside the Parable

1. What do you think it was like to be a widow at the time of Jesus? Look up the following passages on taking care of widows: Psalm 68:4-5; Acts 6:1ff; James 1:27.
2. What's to like about the widow in Jesus' story? What's not admirable about the judge? What do you think it means to say that the judge “neither feared God nor cared about men” (vs. 2)?
3. Put into your own words the widow's strategy with the judge.
4. Look closely at vss. 4-5. State the judge's motivation for bringing justice to the woman.



## Digging Deeper

1. Look closely at vs. 1. According to Luke, why did Jesus tell this parable?
2. “Not give up” in vs. 1 can also mean “not lose heart.” How can we lose heart in prayer?
3. This parable is often described as a lesser-to-greater story so that we are expected to step up a level from what's presented in the parable. In what way do our prayers need to be different from and better than the nagging requests of the widow? Also, how is our God bigger and better than the judge in Jesus' story?
4. Read vss. 6-8 carefully. Then discuss this quote from Bill Hybels who writes on the meaning of the parable: “You see, Jesus is giving the meaning to this story right here at the end of the story itself. He's saying it's not an allegory. It is a study in opposites, in contrasts. Jesus is saying, ‘People, you are not like the widow. In fact, you are totally opposite. The widow was poor, powerless, forgotten, abandoned, and has no relationship with the judge. She's just a face; she's a problem.’” Jesus is saying, “Children, you are totally unlike that widow. You're my heirs. You're not abandoned; you're adopted. It's not hopeless for you. I don't forget about you. You're a priority because you are related to me. You are related to me because you are my sons and daughters.”
5. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:17. In what ways can our prayers become more continual?
6. When we stop praying, what is often behind it?
7. Clearly in vs. 1, the parable is meant to encourage more persistent prayer. The motivation, though, is not to coax and harass God to agree with us. Rather we pray persistently, staying open to how God will change us along the way and get us in tune with His will.
8. Describe the practical difference in your life if you became more persistent in prayer.
9. Close with prayer.