**House Groups questions (Luke 18:9-14):**

When we come before God in prayer or at any other time, we bring with us all our ups, downs, stresses, joys and everything else that makes us who we are. Often, we can find it hard to let go of whatever might be the highest priority thing that is occupying us at the time.

While the parable is not specifically about prayer, the point it raises does affect how we come before God and prayer is a key part of that.

(Rom 3:23)  for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God …

**Question:** When you pray, do you take time to “clear the deck” of your mind, laying down the things that occupy you, perhaps asking God’s forgiveness for and giving forgiveness where you need to, as a starting point?

**Question:** Do you think that it would make a difference to your prayer life and your life in general to do this?

Jesus is making the point to his listeners that our attitude when we come before God is important. If we are honest all of us have prejudices that inform how we can sometimes see others. Like the Pharisee, we can pray for people with needs but with something of his attitude.

**To Do:** In a moment of quiet, ask God, through his Holy Spirit to make you aware of any such thoughts that inform your prayer or views of others.

Jesus makes it clear that the focus of attention of the two examples he gives are very different. While he uses the temple prayer time as a scene, he is speaking of much more than our attitudes in prayer.

**To Do:** Discuss the difference between the two characters and what difference it makes to their prayer.

**Question:** On whom or what would we be best to focus on as we pray and in our daily lives?

The main point that Jesus leads us to is that all of us need God’s mercy and that comes from a humble recognition of our state before God. We should all reflect upon our need for this and our inability to earn it.

In the Mary and Martha story (Luke 10:38-42) we see an example of one person working had and feeling that she should be supported in that while the other listens to Jesus, perhaps knowing her need of what he was teaching and bringing.

**Question:** Who are you more like, Mary or Martha?

Humility is a big part of Jesus’ teaching on the attitudes a disciple should have. Some examples can be found in: Luke 14:11; Matt 19:13.

**Question:** Which of the two in Jesus’ parable do you think is most likely to change and why?

**Question:** Have you found that prayer changes you, can you share an example?

Richard Foster in his book, “Celebration of Discipline” says “To pray is to change.
Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, if we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives”.

**To Do:** Spend a few moments reflecting on - Has studying this passage or hearing the sermon shown any need for change in how you approach prayer or life in general?