Preschool–Grade 6

The Persistent Widow

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Prayer is not a last resort or a one-time try. Keep coming to God and don't lose heart, because He is good and He hears His own.
Bible passage: Luke 18:1–8 and Luke 11:5–10. Students read them out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" *Luke 18:1 (KJV)* and "Pray without ceasing." *1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Luke 18:1–8 and Luke 11:5–10. Write both memory verses on the board. Draw two columns: "The judge" and "God."

1. Opening game: How Long Would You Keep Going? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students hold up fingers for how many times they would keep trying before they quit: 1 (once) to 5 (I'd never quit). 1) You ask a busy friend to help with homework. 2) You practice a hard song for a piano recital. 3) You call a store about a broken order. 4) You learn to ride a bike and keep falling. 5) You pray for a sick grandparent. Ask: *What makes you keep going, and what makes you quit?* Say: "Jesus told a story to answer one question: should we keep praying when the answer doesn't come right away?"

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Luke 18:1–8. Students take turns, a verse or two each. Old words in this passage:

- **spake a parable unto them to this end** (18:1): told a teaching story for this reason; **faint**: lose heart, give up
- **feared not God, neither regarded man** (18:2): did not honor God and did not care about people
- **avenge me of mine adversary** (18:3): do what is right for me against the one who is against me
- **troubleth** (18:5): bothers; **continual coming**: coming again and again; **weary me**: wear me out
- **unjust** (18:6): unfair, not right
- **elect** (18:7): God's own people, the ones He has chosen; **bear long with them**: is patient with them
- **speedily** (18:8): quickly

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Talk it through. Luke tells us the point before the story starts (18:1). Jesus is not saying God is like the judge. He is comparing them: the judge was unjust, cared about no one, and said he would help only so the widow would stop wearing him out (18:4–5). God is just, and these are "his own elect, which cry day and night unto him" (18:7). If an unjust judge gave in, how much more will God hear His own! Fill in both columns on the board as you go.

Read out loud: Luke 11:5–10. Another story like it: a man knocked at midnight to ask a friend for three loaves. Old words: **importunity** (11:8) means not giving up, asking again and again. Jesus ends with "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (11:9).

The last question. Jesus ends Luke 18:8 with a question: "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" **Son of man** is what Jesus called Himself. Just before this, He had been teaching about "the day when the Son of man is revealed" (17:30). Praying and not fainting is what faith looks like while we wait for Him.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Luke 18:1 gives the point before the story. Why do you think Jesus wanted His listeners to know the point first?
2. List what the judge was like (18:2, 18:4–5, 18:6) and what God is like (18:7–8). Why does the contrast matter?
3. The widow kept coming to a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man (18:2–5). What does it say that Jesus picked her as the example of how to pray?
4. God "bear long with them" (18:7), yet "will avenge them speedily" (18:8). How can both be true when we are waiting?
5. What makes you "faint," give up, in prayer? What could help you keep going?
6. Jesus asked if He will find faith on the earth (18:8). What would it look like for Him to find faith in you?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **spake** means spoke; **to this end** means for this reason; **ought** means should; **faint** means lose heart; **without ceasing** means without stopping, never giving up. Luke 18:1 tells why Jesus told the story; 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says the same thing in three words.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Luke 18:1 this week; keep working on 1 Thessalonians 5:17 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus wants to find faith in us when He comes. Faith starts with obeying the gospel. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What have I stopped praying about because the answer didn't come fast?
2. What is one thing I will pray about every morning and every night this week?
3. Write a short prayer telling God you trust Him while you wait.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: pray about one thing every morning and every night. Write the date each time you pray, and see how many times you keep coming.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are good, and You hear us day and night. Forgive us for giving up so easily. Help us keep coming to You, and let Jesus find faith in us when He comes. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student says, "I prayed and nothing happened": listen first. Read Luke 18:7 together: God is patient with His own and hears them day and night. He answers in His way and His time, and Jesus' word is to keep praying and not faint (18:1). Offer to pray with the student about it.

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