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~ **The Widow Who Would Not Be Silenced** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 18:1-8.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Luke 18:1-8 NASB	Luke 18:1-8 NLT
Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge ⁷ said; ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”	Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, ² saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. ³ There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ ⁴ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge ⁷ said; ⁷ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

These insights are from *Through Peasant Eyes* by Kenneth Bailey

- In the Old Testament, King Jehoshaphat appointed judges to carry out the justice of God. But they could easily corrupt themselves. Amos spoke of corrupt judges in 2:6-7 and 5:10-13.
- Bailey quotes from Alfred Edersheim, “judges in Jerusalem were called robber-judges rather than Prohibition Judges. In Aramaic or Hebrew this was a play upon words. The former being Dayyaney Gezeloth and the latter Dayyaney Gezeroth.” This change in one letter turned the meaning from a just judge to a corrupt judge.
- The Talmud speaks of village judges who were willing to pervert justice for a dish of meat.

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- When the text says that the judge lacks respect for God and man, it means that he has no sense of shame or honor that that culture lived by. Jeremiah speaks of prophets and priests who did not know how to blush (Jeremiah 8:12).
- The Old Testament has many verses on the importance on caring for widows and ensuring justice for them – Exodus 22:22-23; Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17; 27:19; Job 22:9; 24:3, 21; Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 10:2; 1:17, 23.
- A widow would have no male protector in a male-dominated society. She would be extremely vulnerable. She would not have the physical strength to force her position upon others and she would likely not have the money to buy justice.
- When the judge said the woman was wearing him out, this was a boxing term that meant to blacken the eye. The woman was bringing a blow to his head, not literally, but giving the man a headache. The judge is exaggerating, but he is clearly irritated with her behavior.
- Continually coming – in the Greek it is *eis telos* – unto the end. The judge realizes that the women will never stop unless he does something.

These insights are from *A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* by Malina and Rohrbaugh.

- In addition to the term “wearing me out” meaning to blacken one’s eye, it also had a common figurative meaning, “to blacken one’s face” which had the idea of bringing shame to someone in public. The irony is that the judge who prided himself on feeling no shame toward God or man now feels threatened by this woman who will bring him public shame by her actions.
- Jesus uses a common form of reasoning – from the lesser to the greater. If a widow can appeal and get justice from an insensitive, unjust judge, how much more will God’s people get justice from a just and loving God.
- H.B. Tristram, a pastor, Bible scholar, and traveler observed this incident in a court in Nisibis in Mesopotamia in the 19th century.

“Opposite the entrance sat the Cadi, half buried in cushions, and surrounded by secretaries. The front of the hall was crowded with people, each demanding that his case should be heard first. The wise ones whispered to the secretaries and slipped over bribes, and had their business quickly dispatched. In the meanwhile, a poor woman broke through the orderly proceedings with loud cries for justice. She was sternly bidden to be quiet, and reproachfully told that she came every day. “And so I will do,” she loudly exclaimed, “until the Cadi hears my case.” At length, at the end of the session, the Cadi impatiently asked, “What does the woman want?” Her story was soon told. The tax collector was demanding payment from her, although her only son was on military service. The case was quickly decided and her patience was rewarded. If she had had money to pay a clerk she would have obtained justice much sooner.”

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3. Answer these reflective questions.

Jesus told the story to encourage the disciples. Evidently, they were starting to become fearful and lose heart. Is there any fear that you have in your life? Are you in need of encouragement in any way? Describe what it is.

Describe some of the ways the widow would have been vulnerable. Do you believe you are vulnerable in any way?

In what ways is God different from the unjust judge?

What requests can you continually bring before God?

Jesus asked if he would find faith when he returns. Does he find faith in your heart right now?
