

How do we persist in obedience to God – personally and professionally?

Jesus' parables are short, simple stories he shared to teach and illuminate how we as Christians can go through the day in our work environment seeking to walk with Christ and let the Holy Spirit guide our work decisions amidst the pressures and challenges faced in the work environment.

How do we persist in obedience to God – personally and professionally – and what can it look like, even facing an “internal judge” or “internal widow” within?



The 2023 BELIEVES season, focused on “Living Our Faith According to Jesus’s Parables,” continued on Tuesday, April 11th with a focus on [Parable of the Persistent Widow \(Luke 18:1-8\)](#) to explore this question with Marguerite Doctor, Providence Women’s Healthcare OB/GYN and Pastor at Mt. Pleasant AME Church.

“What’s interesting is this parable in Luke 18:1-8 is positioned right after when God talks about the Kingdom,” said Doctor to open, “and then right after Luke 18:1-8, it’s about the Pharisees. This is all about where we are to be positioned.”

Then Doctor added, “We can approach this in a few ways, but I will approach how it affects my life as I’ve been asked.”

To do so, Doctor decided to frame things around the central characters in the parable.

“The judge – he is stern and uncompromising throughout,” she said. “In the Psalms and scripture, we’re told to take care of widows, but here the judge does the opposite. He believes he does things as if he is the ultimate authority of power.”

Next, she focused on the widow.

“The widow has no authority or power,” Doctor stated. “When she was little, she depended on her father. Then when she was married, she depended on her husband. She’s in a perpetual state of dependence.”

Then, Doctor remarked about who else is in the parable.

“God. He’s also here and is the ultimate authority and power,” she pointed out. “We need to stay connected to Him – we do so in prayer.”

With God brought into the light, Doctor spoke of how the widow trusted God, and how she’s motivated by God to persist.

How can we respond to God’s sovereignty?

According to Doctor, there are four ways: participate, pride, paralyzed, and passive.

“We can be a participant, but pride can get in the way,” she indicated. “We can become paralyzed, or we can also become passive. I realized these were the stages of my walk with God.”

Doctor, who accepted Christ as a teenager, shared that after doing so, she was paralyzed by God’s authority to stop doing things she shouldn’t have been doing.

“I didn’t know what to do, or who to confess to. Then I realized I could confess to God.”

She continued by saying, “Then I became passive. I was not sure what to do, so I would be a bit passive and follow those pursuing God. Then by college, I really connected with the Holy Spirit, and I followed and spoke about what the Holy Spirit was doing in my life. All this brought me forward as an active prayer warrior. I participated.”

After that, she recalled that sometimes pride would get in the way, such as once she experienced the laying on of hands to heal others.

“I would have to see that it was God – not me – doing it.”

Turning back to the parable, Doctor emphasized that the widow was an active participant in God’s story, and that we have to participate in our own miracles.

“She was participating in her own miracle,” she said. “God was able to use the stern judge to get His will done.”

To illustrate, Doctor spoke of her early years in life growing up in the inner-city in Cleveland.

“My dad was a cop, and my mom worked in the welfare department,” she recalled. “My family couldn’t afford for me to go to college, so I got great grades, got scholarships to Kenyon College and then medical school. I had to participate in my own miracle.”

Later when she was in the military, she faced a situation where she had to give a blood transfusion to a woman in the military who was a Jehovah’s Witness.

“The procedure she was having was a vaginal hysterectomy, but it turned into an abdominal surgery,” Doctor said. “She needed a blood transfusion to survive, but no one would do it because she was a Jehovah’s Witness. I had to go do all the blood transfusion procedure myself. We did all the other things needed to respect her beliefs as a Jehovah’s Witness.”

As soon as the procedure was done and Doctor was walking out, she was confronted by leadership.

“I put my hand up in his face and said, ‘You will not talk to me first. I’m talking to her husband.’ He was thankful I’d saved his wife’s life.”

Then, Doctor brought to everyone’s attention something that’s rarely, if ever brought up related to the parable.

“What we don’t see are the witnesses who witness the widow.”

In her situation as a doctor in the military where she chose to give a blood transfusion to the woman who was a Jehovah’s Witness, she told everyone that afterwards, various officials investigating the matter tried to find everything to get her in trouble. Throughout the ordeal, she wound up having a desk job for two years.

“After two years, on the last day, a lady came to me and said, ‘They’ve been trying to crucify you for two years, how did you stay joyous?’ I responded, “It’s the joy of the Lord.”

Opening everyone’s sight up to another element that may often not be mentioned, Doctor spoke of “miniature messengers” in such situations.

“The miniature messengers at the cross are tears,” she explained. “Peter had tears. Jesus had tears. Others had tears. They spoke volumes. Those tears are messengers waiting to happen. God showed me every time along the way my miniature witnesses.”

Doctor then turned back to another part of the parable – the judge.

“There are times in my life when I’ve felt like the judge,” she mentioned. “Not that I feel powerful, but I can tell my position gives people the sense of power.”

As an example, Doctor said that as a doctor, sometimes her patients ask her questions that she is not confident to answer.

“But the patients give me faith to keep coming back, to say, ‘I don’t know,’ and to keep coming back,” Doctor said. “I have the authority or power and don’t recognize it.”

Other times, she said she has the authority or power and doesn’t want to exercise it.

“It’s an awkward place to be,” Doctor revealed transparently. “I have to have no disregard and go with God’s Word over people.”

To illustrate this last point, she told everyone, “That’s why I work only at offices that accept all patients. I have to be stern and firm like the judge – but it’s for Jesus. Even in the church, where we can get stuck on the rules – and Jesus can be forgotten – I have to be stern to bring all to Jesus.”

Finally, to close, Doctor said she’s saving the obvious for last.

“God wants us to persist in prayer. He wants us to come to Him with anything and everything. It’s the process that’s important – the journey.”

She added, “If we get focused on the future, we can get frozen and paralyzed by it (the future). I’m really focused on the now. I have no problem with ambiguity. I don’t care because whatever happens next is from God. Until I hear from the Holy Spirit, I don’t do it. As Stormie Omartian says in one of her books, ‘Lord, just light the step I’m on.’”