

Inward Focus

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 **Lesson 7**
Focus:

God looks at the inside,
not simply the outside.

ECHOES: Prayer
involves sincere
confession of sins to
God.

Lesson 7
Bible Basis:

Luke 18:9-14

Lesson 7
Memory Verse:

The LORD does not look at the things people
look at. People look at the outward
appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
—1 Samuel 16:7b

ECHOES: “And forgive us our debts as we
also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us
not into temptation, but deliver us from the
evil one.” —Matthew 6:12-13

Students will be motivated to look at the inside of others and see them as God does.

Materials:

- ☐ Internet access
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pens/pencils

Prior to group time, set a table or desk with index cards and pens/pencils. (If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring those items with them to class.) As students join your group, invite them to take an index card and a pencil or pen and write down (without others seeing) something unique about themselves that others might not know. This can be anything from “I was born prematurely and stayed in the hospital the first month of my life” to “I have a really great voice (and I’m going to sing you a chorus from _____ to prove it).” The sky is the limit here, but mention that these things will be shared with the large group. Students can provide a small detail or something bigger, it is entirely up to them! Prepare your own card to share.

When all students have arrived, form a circle and invite students to use their index cards to share something with the group that is unique about themselves and that the group likely doesn’t know.

State that what we see on the outside isn’t always what is seen on the inside. **We all have part of ourselves that we keep to ourselves.**

On the outside, Kodi Lee is blind. Because he is also autistic, his facial expressions and vocal tones are slightly different than what some people might expect. However, as you watch this clip you’ll see that who Kodi is on the outside does not define who he is on the inside...and he’s got a talent that makes him one of a kind.

Show the following video clip to your students [4:57; stop at 3:05]:
Kodi Lee Full Golden Buzzer Performance Semi Final | Week 1 AGT Fantasy League 2024
S01E05

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZDLEMw5NkA>

➤ **When Kodi started performing, were you surprised at his level of talent and expertise? What surprised you the most?** (Most students will note their surprise at Kodi's abilities; some may mention the level of maturity in his voice/presentation or his ability to play the piano.)

➤ **Why is this a good example of how what a person is on the inside isn't always seen on the outside?** (Invite students to share their initial reactions in comparison to their feelings now about Kodi's abilities.)

➤ **Are there ever times when the outside of a person looks better than the inside? Why is it hard to tell sometimes?** (Students may refer to times when someone is trying to lie about something or act innocent when they aren't. Some people are practiced liars or hide behind social media to reinvent what they look like from the outside.)

Although we are usually quick to form an opinion about people based on our initial observations of what we see on the outside, there is Someone who never does this. Let's take a deeper look.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

Lesson 7 / July 13, 2025

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STEP 4 **Lesson 7
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Materials:

- ☐ Sticky notes
- ☐ Markers

You may remember **Zacchaeus**, the tax collector, who was a man of small stature. Today’s unnamed tax collector is also a man whom Jesus desired to honor. Jesus tells a story about how the humble tax collector prayed in the right manner in his heart, acknowledging his sinfulness and asking for God’s forgiveness. In contrast, the proud Pharisee wanted people to see him praying so he would look spiritual on the outside even though he wasn’t that way on the inside. Jesus told this parable because He wants people to know that God looks at the inside, not simply the outside.

Invite students to think about their prayer life. Are they praying in front of people at church to be noticed, praised, or sympathized with? Are they glossing over things that need to be confessed? **God sees what is really going on in our hearts. It is good to pray together and care for each other by sharing requests and petitions before God, but it is important to be careful of our motivation and spiritual condition. God sees our heart condition as it truly is.**

Earlier, we watched a video about **Kodi**. Many people, ourselves included, might make negative and misleading assumptions or judgments about Kodi because he appeared different. He needed a cane to get around because of his blindness and was often misread because of his autism. But, inside he had great potential and talent. God knew this about Kodi whether he was a contestant on a game show or not. God also knows everything about us. He sees the inside and the outside of us just like the parable teaches.

Have students get together in groups of two, three, or four (depending on class size) and discuss how they think others see them and how they think God sees them. (If your class is meeting online, you can use the breakout room feature of your video chat software.) This is a great way for students to encourage each other.

Have each student remind another person in their group that God sees them on the inside and totally gets them even if others sometimes don't! Also remind them that trying to hide something from God just doesn't work; clearing the lines of communication through confession is the best way. Have groups take a few minutes to pray sentence prayers for each person in the group asking for strength to see themselves as God sees them on the inside, not simply the outside.

If possible, have these students share contact information so they can be in touch this week. Invite each one to take time this week to text or call or hang out with one of these group members and see them for who they really are and how God sees them this week. Knowing that we are seen and understood deeply because of our bond in Jesus Christ is huge. Reminding each other that God sees us that way always is also vital.

Remind students of how God looks at the inside, not simply the outside. Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home) and have students write themselves a note as a reminder of that truth. Encourage students when they go home to put it on their mirror.

Close in prayer thanking God for truly seeing how we are on the inside. Praise Him for creating us exactly how we are and ask for wisdom and insight to see others as God sees them.

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