

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 16

Jesus confronts the rich young ruler

Matthew 19:16–26



DAY 1

Deny your own goodness • Matthew 19:16–20

READ

Matthew 19:16–26

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:16–20

How good do you have to be to be saved? This young man was a good man. He was rich, powerful, moral, and highly respected (Matt 19:22; Luke 18:18). Still, as good as he was, he didn't understand that he fell far short of God's definition of "good." Jesus explained that it is God, not man, who defines what is good. Since God's law reflects God's character, Jesus quoted the 5th through the 9th commandments (Exod 20:12–16), plus the 2nd greatest commandment that sums them up (Matt 22:39; Lev 19:18). Jesus chose these commands that deal with human relationships because the way we treat people reveals what we think about God (1 John 4:20). Unfortunately, the young man thought that these laws covered only outward behavior. He did not see that God's law also concerns the heart (Ps 51:6), that anger is the same as murder and lust the same as adultery (Matt 5:22, 28). Blinded by pride, he thought he actually loved his neighbor as himself. This man did not have eternal life, for he depended on his own goodness and not on Jesus.

ASK

1. Who came to Jesus with a question?
HA rich young ruler, someone who was well-respected by people.
2. What did the rich young ruler want?
Eternal life.
3. How did he think he could get eternal life?
By doing something good.
4. Why did Jesus tell the man to keep the commandments?
To see if the man would confess that he was not good enough.

DISCUSS

1. Do you obey God's law better than others? Are you (or is anyone) good enough in God's sight (Rom 3:23)?
2. Is the law more like a ladder or a mirror? What is one the main purposes of the law (Rom 3:19–20)?

DAY 2

Devote yourself to Jesus • Matthew 19:21-22

READ

Matthew 19:16-26

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:21-22

If no one can do enough good to be saved, why did Jesus tell the man to sell everything he owned and give to the poor? Jesus was not teaching salvation by works. He was exposing the young man's heart, showing what this man really loved and trusted: possessions. Wealth is an idol both of the rich and the poor. We all want more. We love money because it gets us what we want. We trust money because it gives us security. So Jesus was warning the man that it was impossible to serve two masters (Matt 6:24). To live in Christ's kingdom, we must serve Christ alone. Unfortunately, this man was controlled by his wealth, not by Jesus, so he went away grieving (19:22). He wanted eternal life, but he did not want Jesus. He wanted to be good, but he did not want to admit he needed Christ's goodness on his behalf. He wanted Jesus to teach him, but he would not let Christ control Him. He was seeking eternal life out of love for himself, not out of love for Jesus.

ASK

1. What did Jesus tell the man to do with his wealth?
He told him to sell all his possessions and give to the poor.
2. Why did Jesus tell him to sell everything?
To reveal what the man loved and trusted most—himself or Jesus. To get rid of the wealth that was keeping the man from loving and trusting Jesus alone.
3. What did Jesus tell him to do last?
"Follow Me." Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Only those who love and serve Jesus alone receive eternal life.
4. How did the man respond?
He went away grieving.

DISCUSS

1. How do you respond when you can't have something you want? What does your reaction show about what you love and trust most?
2. Is money itself evil (1 Tim 6:10; Deut 8:18)?

DAY 3

God reconciled Joseph's broken family • Matthew 19:23-26

READ

Matthew 19:16-26

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 19:23-26

Can a camel go through the eye of a needle? Of course not! It is the largest animal in Palestine! In the same way, it is impossible for the rich to enter heaven. But why single out the rich? In those days, wealth was seen as a sign of God's blessing. The Jews thought the rich were the most likely to be saved. So if it's impossible for the rich to be saved, as Jesus said, then no one can be saved.

Jesus made it clear: with men, salvation isn't just hard—it's impossible (Rom 3:20). Even our best behavior is like dirty, nasty clothes (Isa 64:6). We cannot even repent unless God intervenes (2 Tim 2:25). We cannot come to Jesus unless the Father draws us (John 6:44). We are blind unless He opens our eyes (2 Cor 4:4-6). We are spiritually dead—not just sick or weak—unable to do anything to come back to life (Eph 2:1). Our only hope is to depend entirely on God alone. We can have great hope in God, for "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (Ps 3:8; Jonah 2:9).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How hard is it for a rich person to get into heaven?
It is impossible without God, like a camel going through the eye of a needle.
2. Who is the only one who can save us?
God.
3. Since only God can give eternal life, what should you do?
Depend on God, not on yourself or your own personal achievements or behavior.

DISCUSS 

1. Are you “basically good”? Why or why not (Eph 2:1–3)?
2. How can you tell if you are trusting in your own goodness or in God alone to be saved? Do you do good things out of love for God or out of fear of punishment?

DAY 4*Like a child • Matthew 18:1–4; 19:13–15***READ** 

Matthew 18:1–4; 19:13–15

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 19:13–15**

When the rich young ruler came, the disciples let him interrupt Jesus. But right before that, the disciples had tried to turn the children away. Why? They gave preference to the rich and respectable. They were acting like salvation depends on human achievement. In response, Jesus declared that the kingdom of heaven is reserved for those who are completely dependent, just like little children. Children are unable to provide for even their most basic needs, and are completely dependent on others to care for them. They are weak and needy. They have no credentials and no accomplishments. They are exactly the opposite of the rich young ruler. Salvation is not for those like the rich man, who think they can get salvation by their own strength or resources (Matt 19:16). Rather, salvation is for the weak and dependent. Jesus welcomed the children to show the disciples that salvation is for people who, like “infants” (cf. Luke 18:15), depend wholly on the Father.

ASK 

1. Who rebuked the people for bringing children to Jesus?
The disciples.
2. What did Jesus say?
“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
3. What are little children like?
Helpless, dependent, weak, needy, poor.
4. Why does the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like little children?
Because we must depend wholly on God to save us, like a baby depending on a parent.

DISCUSS 

1. What are babies or little children like? What can they do? What do their parents have to do for them?
2. Why is it silly to brag about being a Christian (1 Cor 1:18–2:5)?

DAY 5

Eternal life • John 3:15–16

READ

John 3:1–16

EXPLAIN

The truth of John 3:15–16

The rich young ruler wanted eternal life, but what is eternal life? First, it is “eternal” because it begins in this life and never ends. It is everlasting, unending life. It is life that continues, even after the believer has experienced physical death (2 Cor 5:8). Second, it is “life.” Just as a body with physical life responds to its physical environment, so also a person with eternal life is responsive to spiritual life, knowing God truly and personally (John 17:3). So eternal life refers to more than just eternal quantity of life—it also refers to divine quality of life. Believers participate in the eternal life of their Savior, Jesus Christ. While the full enjoyment of this life is not experienced until the believer is resurrected and glorified, dwelling with Jesus in heaven, it begins now, in this life, as the Spirit of God takes up residence in the life of the believer (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19–20). Who has this life? Whoever believes in the Son, whom God gave because of His great love for the world.

ASK

1. What is eternal life?
It is life that lasts forever, and it is life in a right relationship with God, knowing Him truly and personally.
2. Who has eternal life?
Whoever trusts in God’s Son, Jesus.
3. Why did God send His Son?
Because of His great love for the world.

DISCUSS

1. How old is the oldest person you know? How does their age compare to eternity?
2. What are you most excited about: living forever, or living in a close personal relationship with God?

NEXT WEEK

Jesus teaches the parable of the equal wages

Matthew 19:27–20:16

