

## Life is about Christ!

**Big Idea:** We don't live for ourselves, our comfort, our possessions, or our purposes. We live for God and for his glory.

**Read the Bible:**

Mark 10:17-31

### **STUDY**

\*\*\* Before interacting with this guide, all leaders should study the referenced texts using the HEAR Method. It's also important to encourage your group members to read the text using the HEAR Method. \*\*\*

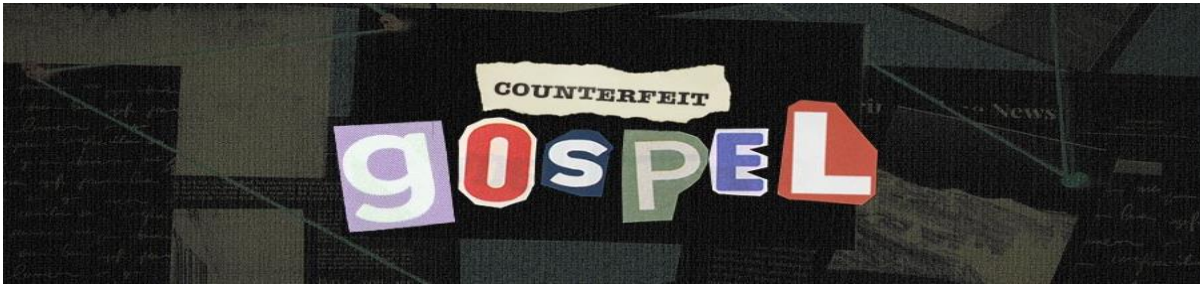
H: Highlight, or take note of, things in the passage that stick out to you as you read.

E: Explain what the passage means by asking simple questions of the text:

- **Why was this written?**
- **To whom was it originally written?**
- **How does it fit with the verses before and after it?**
- **Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?**
- **What is He intending to communicate through this text?**

A: Apply the text to your life. What does God want you to learn from this text?

R: Respond to God in prayer.



## Summary

Mark 10:17-31 tells us about one of the most famous stories from the gospels. The story of the Rich Young Ruler, also found in Matthew 19 and Luke 18, tells us about one man's encounter and ultimate denial of Jesus because of a greater love.

The encounter starts off good enough. The young man comes with good intentions and appropriate respect. The ruler calls Jesus "good" and asks him a well-intentioned question: what must I do to inherit eternal life. Now, let's be honest, there are worse things he could've asked. This is a pretty good question.

The problem lies in a massive, misplaced assumption. This man thinks there is something that he can do to earn eternal life. Jesus, out to prove a point, plays along. He tells him that he must adhere to the law that he knows. One would think that this expectation would humble him. Surely, he knows that he hasn't been perfectly obedient to the law. It doesn't humble him. He thinks he is on the right path.

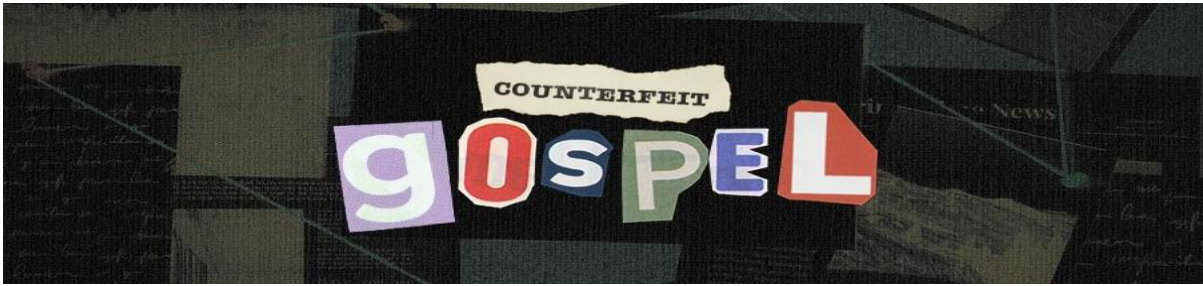
At this point, Jesus begins to play hard ball. To make it to heaven, there was still one thing he lacked. "Go and sell all that you own and give it to the poor. Then come and follow me." Boom. Hammer dropped. Jesus says, "You want to make it to heaven, give it all up and follow me."

What's going on here? Is it that money is sinful and evil, and he must forsake it? No. Jesus is out to prove a point. In order to make it to heaven one must realize their level of inability and begin to identify with Jesus. This ruler doesn't think he needs anything. He thinks he is on the right track. Moreover, He most certainly doesn't identify with Jesus. He identifies with his money.

Jesus is saying if you want to be a Christian then the most dominant thing about you must become me.

Here is where we begin to see the lie that this man believed. He believed that life was about him, his comfort, his desire, his possessions.

Jesus is trying to show him that life is about Jesus. If he wants to make it to heaven, he will have to give up everything that keeps him from realizing that life is about Jesus.



What is his response? The man goes away sad. He is unwilling to give up what he has in order to get what he actually needs.

We have a decision to make now. Will we live as if life is about us, or will we see that life is about Jesus?



## **Leading Your Group**

### **Community Time**

Start group by asking for Prayer requests and checking in on everyone.

### **Bible Study**

\*\*\*Have everyone in your group read assigned scripture before meeting. \*\*\*

Start Group by Reading Mark 10:17-31

### **Major Points**

These are the points for your lesson.

#### **Point No. 1: Salvation is found in surrender, not obedience.**

The Rich Young Ruler makes a critical mistake in his approach to Christ. He believes that he can earn his way into heaven. Thus, the question: what must I do to inherit eternal life?

The young man believes that if he does enough, or is a good enough person, then when he dies all will be squared and he will get into heaven.

Though we may not like to admit it, we often live with this understanding. We think that what gets us into heaven is the fact that we are good people, we go to church, we give what we can, and we try to serve. Surely, that's enough to get us into heaven.

The trouble is that this mindset goes against the gospel. We can never do enough to earn our way into heaven. We don't get there by our works. We get there by Jesus' works.

So, obedience is not the path to salvation. What is? Surrender! We must give ourselves to God and follow him and he will provide us with what we need for eternal life. His righteousness.



Discuss: How do you keep the gospel central in your life to remember that it's about what Jesus has done not about what you do?

**Point No. 2: Christ must be the main thing in our life.**

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones once said, "When a man becomes a Christian it becomes the dominant thing about him."

Jones meant that Christ must become the most important thing in our life. The thing that we identify with above everything else. Our money, jobs, families, or hobbies cannot be more central than Jesus.

If anything is more dominant in our lives than Jesus, we can rest assured, that is what Jesus will come for.

That's what happens in this text, the money is the most dominant thing in this man's life. That's where Jesus sets his sights!

Discuss: How do we make Jesus the main thing in life?

**Point No. 3: We give up other stuff to gain God.**

The sad part of this story is that the man refuses to give up what he has in order to get what he needs.

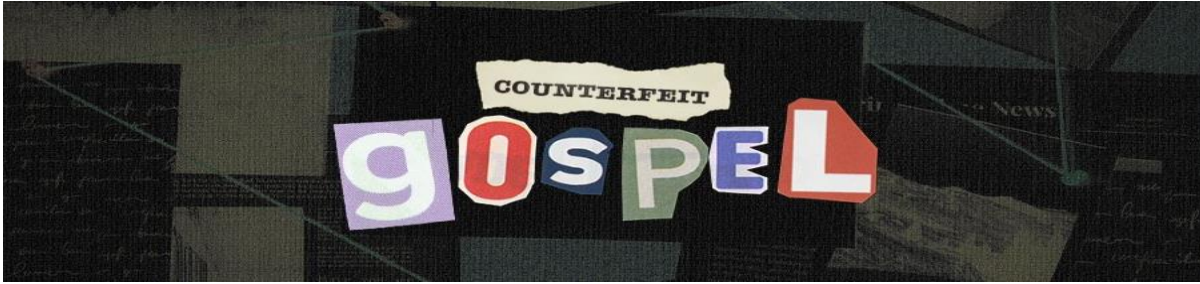
The young man sees all that he has and cannot possibly entertain giving that up. However, in refusing to give that up, he missed out on getting God.

Peter helps us out here. He tells Jesus that they have given up everything to follow him. Jesus' response is to make sure Peter knows that they haven't given up anything, they've gained God.

The same is true for us. When we give up all that stands in the way of us and God we lose a lot of earthly things, but we gain the ultimate reward, God himself.

Discuss: Has there ever been a time where you gave up something that you could have so that you could have more of God?





## Resources

### Expositor's Bible Commentary

#### L. *Riches and the Kingdom of God* (10:17–31)

This section is made up of three parts. The most satisfactory division is (1) vv. 17–22, which describe Jesus' encounter with a rich man; (2) vv. 23–27, a logion on the difficulty of a rich man's entering the kingdom of God; and (3) vv. 28–31, Peter's statement about leaving all to follow Jesus and Jesus' reply to it. It is possible that the three sections were historically connected. In view of the repetition of the amazement of the disciples (cf. vv. 24, 26) and Jesus' statement about the difficulty of a rich man's entering the kingdom (cf. vv. 23–24), it seems best to regard the three sections as separate sayings brought together by Mark because of their common theme.

The position of this section (vv. 17–31) in Mark's overall outline is significant. It follows Jesus' teaching about the importance of childlikeness—viz., a recognition of the necessity of weakness and dependence for entrance into the kingdom (vv. 13–16)—and it precedes Jesus' third prediction of his passion. The impossibility of wealth as a means to gain the kingdom (v. 27) looks back to the lesson from the children (v. 15), and the call to commitment (vv. 29–31) looks forward to the passion statement (vv. 33–34).

**17** This incident, unlike those in vv. 2–12 and 13–17, is connected with the journey mentioned in 10:1 by the phrase "As Jesus started on his way." The man who ran up to Jesus is not identified by Mark (Luke calls him a ruler [Lk 18:18], meaning he was probably a member of some official council or court). Matthew says he was "young" (Mt 19:20). He fell on his knees before Jesus and addressed him by the revered title of "good teacher," thus expressing his high regard for Jesus. Nineham (p. 270) comments: "The stranger was altogether too obsequious and effusive in his approach." His question—"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"—indicates that he was thinking in terms of Jewish works of righteousness. He wanted to do something to merit eternal life, whereas Jesus taught that eternal life (the kingdom of God) is a gift to be received (cf. Mk 10:15).



**18** Jesus' reply seems unnecessarily abrupt. But we must remember that he was calling attention to the man's unthinking use of language. "Jesus calls him to sober reflection. What does the epithet 'good' mean? It belongs to God who is good; and it should not be used unthinkingly or as a flippant gesture of praise" (Martin, *Mark*, p. 124). Or as Calvin (2:393) understands Jesus' reply, it is "as if he had said, 'Thou falsely calleth me a good Master, unless thou acknowledgest that I have come from God.'" In other words, Jesus is saying, "Before you address me with such a title, you had better think soberly about what the implications are, and especially what they are for you."

**19–20** Jesus answered by giving the man a condensed summary of the second table of the law (v. 19; cf. Exod 20:12–17). The prohibition of fraud is found only in Mark and seems to be a substitute for the commandment against coveting, fraud being a manifestation of coveting. It was a firm Jewish belief, based on OT teaching, that the man who kept the law would live (Deut 30:15–16). So Jesus began there.

The young man answered confidently. From boyhood he had kept all the commandments Jesus cited (v. 20). This probably refers to the age of thirteen, when every Jewish boy became *bar mišwāh* ("son of the commandment"; cf. Luke 2:42). At that point in a Jewish boy's life he became responsible to live by God's commands. The man spoke sincerely because to him keeping the law was a matter of external conformity. (Paul thought the same thing in his pre-Christian days [cf. Philippians 3:6].) That the law required an inner obedience, which no man could comply with apparently escaped him.

**21** Recognizing the young man's sincerity, Jesus responded in love. Some commentators suggest that the words "loved him" mean that Jesus touched or hugged him. That may be, but nothing in the text indicates it.

The one thing that prevented this young man from having eternal life was the security of his wealth. Jesus put his finger on the sensitive place by commanding him to go, sell all he had, and give. These commands led up to the final and conclusive one: "Come, follow me." For this man there could be no following of Jesus before he went, sold everything he had, and gave. His wealth and all it meant to him of position, status, comfort, and security prevented him from entering into eternal life. "The only way to 'life' is through the narrow gate of full surrender, and through that gate we may take, not what we want, but only what God allows. For this man his wealth was the hindrance" (Mitton, *Gospel of Mark*, p. 80). It must be emphasized, however, that there is no indication that in this incident Jesus' prescription for the young man was meant to be binding on all Christians. What Jesus does tell us is that we must not be attached to material things. Jesus' promise "you will have treasure in heaven" refers to eternal



life; and since that is a gift of God and cannot be earned, no saying merit must be attached to the action of giving all to the poor.

**22** Notice the intimate eyewitness details. When he heard the word of Jesus, the young man's "face fell." As Plummer (pp. 240–41) says, "He was gloomy and sullen with a double disappointment; no perilous exploit was required of him, but he was asked to part with what he valued most." To obey Jesus was too great a risk for him to take. So the security of wealth kept him out of the kingdom of God. He went away "with a heavy heart, for he was a man of great wealth" (NEB). Obedience to God brings joy; disobedience, sorrow.

**23–26** The failure of the rich man to respond to the challenge led to one of Jesus' most striking pronouncements. He addressed it to the disciples, and it underscores the difficulty of a rich man's entering the kingdom of God (v. 23).

The amazement of the disciples (v. 24) at Jesus' words reflects their Jewish background, which placed great emphasis on the privileged position of the rich. To be wealthy was sure evidence of having the blessing of God. But with his penetrating spiritual insight, Jesus saw how wealth could hinder one from putting his trust and dependence in God.

The second half of v. 24 may begin a new section, the last section ending with the amazement of the disciples. NIV considers it (along with vv. 25–27) a part of the incident that begins with v. 23. The fact that the disciples "were even more amazed" (v. 26) looks back to their initial amazement in v. 24 and supports the translators' decision.

Jesus supports his statement in v. 23 by an amazing proverb. Moule paraphrases it thus: "It is easier to thread a needle with a great big camel than to get into the kingdom of God when you are bursting with riches" (*Gospel of Mark*, p. 80). Attempts have been made to play down the meaning of this proverb. A notable one identifies the "eye of the needle" with a gate leading into the city of Jerusalem before which camels had to kneel in order to get through. But the existence of any such gate is doubtful. As Rawlinson (p. 141) says, it has "no authority more trustworthy than the imaginative conjectures of modern guides to Jerusalem." Furthermore, this interpretation fails to recognize the picturesqueness of Jesus' speech or to grasp the full force of what he is saying—viz., that "for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" is indeed "impossible." The proverb was not lost on the disciples. As their question "Who then can be saved?" shows, they completely understood it.

**27** Now Jesus points to the solution. His answer makes clear that salvation is totally the work of God. Apart from the grace of God, it is impossible for any man especially a rich man—to enter God's kingdom. Humanly speaking, no one can be saved by his own efforts; but what we can never do for ourselves, God does for us. For he is the great Doer of the impossible. Was the rich





man still within hearing and were these words meant for him, too'? Mark does not say. Notice that "eternal life," "salvation," and "entrance into the kingdom" are all used synonymously here.

**28** Mark makes no attempt to link vv. 28–31 with vv. 17–27. He does not even use a conjunction to connect the incidents. This seems to suggest that, though vv. 17–22 and vv. 23–27 go together historically, vv. 25–31 are separate. Mark places them here because they fit the theme. Peter's response relates to what Mark had just reported: the failure of the rich man to give up what he had and to follow Jesus. By contrast they, i.e., the disciples, had given up everything to follow him. Matthew in the parallel passage reports Peter's additional words: "What then will there be for us?" (Mt 19:27). The disciples (Peter is their spokesman) were still thinking in terms of material rather than spiritual values.

**29–30** Instead of rebuking Peter, Jesus makes a threefold promise introduced by the solemn "I tell you the truth" (v. 29; cf. 10:15). No one who forsakes home, loved ones, or lands for Jesus' sake and the gospel's will fail (1) to receive back in his life a hundredfold what he has lost; (2) to suffer persecutions (only Mark includes this); and (3) to have eternal life in the age to come. The hundredfold return in this life (v. 30) is to be understood in the context of the new community into which the believer in Jesus comes. There he finds a multiplication of relationships, often closer and more spiritually meaningful than blood ties. "God takes nothing away from a man without restoring it to him in a new and glorious form" (Lane, p. 372).

Jesus is also realistic about the Christian life. There will be persecutions. Again the relevance of this statement for the situation of the Roman church is obvious. It is through trials and persecutions that the new relationships as members of the Christian community develop and flourish. The promise is for a full, though admittedly difficult, life here and now, but not only here and now. Jesus promises eternal life in "the age to come." Everything that happens in the present is an earnest of that far richer and complete fulfillment in the future when there will no longer be any persecutions.

**31** This saying of Jesus also appears in other contexts (cf. Matt 20:16; Luke 13:30). Jesus probably said it more than once; it lends itself to more than one application. Here it refers to the future when God will evaluate the lives of men and when human values will be reversed. At that time those who have rank and position now will not have them, and those who do not have them now will have them. This may be a kind of summary of Jesus' teaching in Mk 10:17–31. In eternity the rich and the powerful will have the tables turned on them. Or perhaps it is a warning to the disciples in view of what they said, "we have left everything to follow you" (v. 28). They must not conceive of their discipleship in terms of rewards. Discipleship entails



suffering and service; it must be entered on in terms of love and commitment to Jesus, not because of what one hopes to get out of it either in this life or in the life to come. In his Gospel Matthew inserts the parable of the laborers in the vineyard here to illustrate the point (Matt 20:1–16).

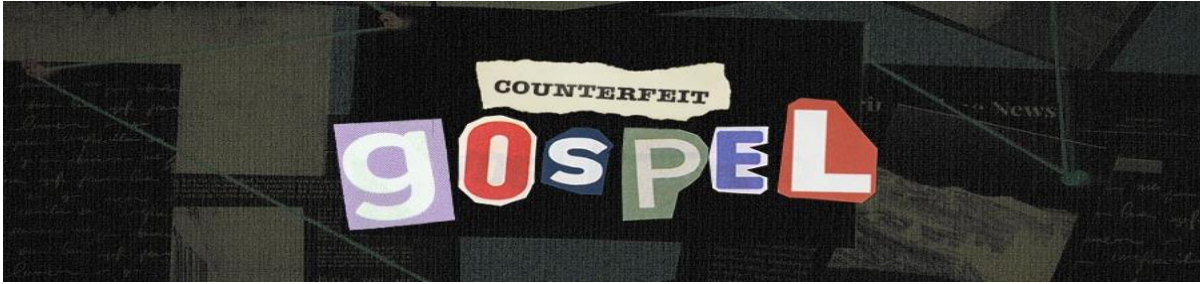
## THE BIBLE PANORAMA

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### CHAPTER TEN

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**V 1–12: PRIORITY OF MARRIAGE** Two things emerge as most important. First, marriage is intended to be permanent, and thus the first response to a marriage difficulty must be to try to save the marriage. This is so, even though divorce is permitted because of the hardness of people’s hearts. Second, to divorce wrongly and to marry after such a wrong ‘divorce’ is to commit adultery. (The context of the New Testament, as Matthew 19:19, obviously refers here to a divorce on non-biblical grounds.) **V 13–16: PRINCIPLE OF MEEKNESS** In willingly accepting and blessing children, despite His disciples’ reluctance, Jesus teaches that grown-up people must come to God as little children in order to be accepted by Him. **V 17–31: PERIL OF MONEY** Jesus’ dealings with the rich young man reveal that coveting possessions and money can be a great hindrance to a willingness to repent and surrender daily to Christ. Thus having great possessions can be a real barrier to entering the kingdom of God. But everything is possible with God, and those who have sacrificed for Christ are the final winners. **V 32–34: PREDICTION OF MASTER** Jesus again underlines to His disciples the facts of His coming betrayal, condemnation, suffering, death, and resurrection. **V 35–45: POSITIONS OF MIGHT** Jesus rebukes James and John for wanting positions of authority for selfish reasons, and points out to them the cost of discipleship and to the other ten critical disciples the requirement of being servants. He again underlines that He Himself has come as a servant to ‘give His life as a ransom for many’. **V 46–52: PROVISION OF MERCY** Jesus gives sight to blind Bartimaeus in answer to



his plea for mercy. He cries to Jesus, despite being told by some to be quiet. Having received his sight, he follows Jesus along the road.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gerard Crispin, [\*The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide\*](#) (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 422.