

THE RICH YOUNG RULER WHO COULD NOT SAY "YES"



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE SERIES



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Christ to the World Ministries is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to sharing the gospel of Christ with the world through radio dramas and printed and oral studies based on Scripture. The printed lessons can be studied by one person or by a group.

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Dear Friend,

I am glad that you are interested in studying the Bible. It is God's Word to us and in it, we find the way of salvation and guidance for daily living. The main theme of the Bible is God's love for us and how he expressed that love by Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. Jesus arose from the grave and today He will save every person who puts his or her faith and trust in Him.

This study guide will help you gain a better understanding of the Bible. Open your heart to what God has for you through the study. I have prayed that your study will be life changing.

May God bless you richly,

*Larry Alston
Christ to the World Ministries*



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a study about a rich ruler who could not say “yes” to Jesus and eternal life.

This Bible study gives direction to the place money should have in your life. It reveals that eternal life is a gift from God and that man cannot save himself.

This study guide asks you to write in it. Don’t keep it clean and unmarked! When the guide asks you to make a response, don’t simply think of your response. Take time to write it down. Doing so helps internalize and reinforce your learning. Write from your heart. Only you will see what you write. As writer, I will work along with you as you complete your study. I will share with you my own responses to most of the questions and activities. This does not mean that my responses are any more correct than yours; it simply means that you will have the benefit of a fellow traveler walking beside you as you move through the study.

Keep your Bible before you as you complete the study. When you are asked to read a Scripture reference, take time to read it.

Ready? Then let’s get started.

Begin your study with prayer. Make the following prayer your very own.

Dear God, please open your Word to me as I study. Speak to my heart. Help me obey your will for my life. Help me do what you want me to do. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

THE SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:18-30, NIV

18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

21 “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with men is possible with God.”

28 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

29 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”

THE BACKGROUND AND SETTING

The true treasure in life is not money but being a part of the kingdom of God. Luke recorded Jesus' teaching of this truth in Luke 18:18-30. Jesus talked with a man who had put riches first in his life.

Let's explore the background of this story. In the spring of 30 A.D. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem where he knew he would die. The people in Perea, east of the Jordan River, followed him to hear his teaching. They watched him heal the sick, open blind eyes, and perform other miracles. Jesus blessed little children and said to his disciples, "*I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it*" (Luke 18:17). Jesus would teach the same thing to the rich young man.



Our Bible passage, Luke 18:18-30 tells of a man who approached Jesus with a question. The passage doesn't tell us much about the man, but we can learn a little about him from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The people considered the man rich, young, and influential as a ruler.

THE MAN WHO APPROACHED JESUS

Read Matthew 19:20-22, Luke 18:23 and 18, and Mark 10:22.

These verses tell us that the man was young, rich, and the people called him a ruler.

Which of these verses call the man young? _____

Which verse(s) call the man rich? _____

Which verse(s) call the man a ruler? _____

Now we know why we call the man The Rich Young Ruler. Matthew 19:20 and 22 call the man young; Matthew 19:22, Mark 10:22 and Luke 18:23 call him "a man of *great wealth*"—rich; Luke 18:18 call him a ruler. You can see why people call him The Rich Young Ruler.

The Rich Young Ruler. What a sight to behold! His robe stands for honor. He wears a prayer shawl, called a talith. His ring shows authority. His shoes mean freedom. We know he is a very religious man because on his forehead he wears a little box containing portions of scripture, called a phylactery. Perhaps he leads in synagogue worship. He belongs to the Jewish ruling council. He surely prays three times daily—at nine o'clock in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock in the afternoon as required by the legalists of his day. He strives to keep the Law of Moses and the Jewish interpretations and teachings.

The man is a ruler but we do not know the nature of his business. His position no doubt means he had respect and power.

However, the rich young ruler feels something is missing from his life. When he hears of Jesus' teachings and miracles, he wants to meet this miracle worker.



Study the picture of the rich young ruler. Find his prayer shawl, the talith, and his robe which stands for honor.

In spite of his riches, the young ruler knew that he had missed something in his life. So one day the rich but troubled young man walked right up to Jesus and boldly asked him a question. He asked, “*Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” To answer the man’s question, Jesus refers to the Ten Commandments. He knows that the man knows the commandments. So Jesus said to him, “You know the commandments” (Luke 18:20). He knew that the man kept many of the commandments but had not kept the others. Then Jesus reminded the man of the commandments which relate to man’s relationship to others. He quoted to the man five commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Honor your father and mother.

THE RULER MEETS JESUS

LUKE 18:18

To whom do these five commandments relate? Check one.

To God

To other people

The man responds, “Oh, I’ve kept all of those since I was a boy!” And so he had. But Jesus knew that the man had not kept the first four of the commandments: You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, . . . Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

To whom do the first four commandments relate? Check one.

To God

To other people

The first four commandments deal with man’s relationship to God; the others relate to man’s relationship to others. The rich young man had kept the five Jesus mentioned but had not kept the first four. Jesus taught that to become part of the kingdom of God and to have eternal life, one must keep the first four commandments. The young man had not done that.

The man's riches stood in his way. Jesus asked the man to get rid of this stumbling block. He said, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Luke 18:22).

An early Christian writing amplifies Jesus' statement. "It is written in the Law. You must love your neighbor as yourself. There are many brothers of yours, sons of Abraham, who are dying of hunger, and your house is full of many good things, and not one single thing goes out of it to them." (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*), Edinburgh St. Andrews Press, 1953, p. 237.)

Why does Jesus tell the ruler to sell his possessions? Check the best answer.

- The ruler doesn't need them.
- The man's possessions can stand in the way to eternal life.
- The poor need them.
- Selling possessions would show unselfishness.

One of the answers stands out above the others in importance: The man's possessions stand in the way to eternal life. The others are also true but the second one answers best.

Matthew 6:21 says some more about love of possessions: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Assume that you are the rich young ruler. You want to have eternal life, but Jesus seems to tell you that it's almost impossible for you to have it and become a member of the kingdom of God. But you have watched Jesus do his work. You have seen other people become believers. What question would you ask? Write it here.

Question: _____

Those who heard Jesus say how hard it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God, asked, "Who then can be saved" (Luke 8:26). You would probably ask the same question.

Jesus answered their question this way: "What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Peter reminded Jesus that the disciples had done what the rich young ruler had refused to do. "We have left all we had to follow you," he said. Jesus says, "Follow me; trust me; believe I am the Christ, the Son of the living God; and joy in this life and in eternal life will be yours."

What does Jesus say to you about following him? Place a check mark beside each of the following responses which describe your thoughts.

- Following Jesus will cost me everything.
- Following Jesus will be easy.
- Following Jesus must be my priority.
- Following Jesus will be hard.

**JESUS SPEAKS
TO YOU**

We asked for your thoughts. But you probably did not check the second thought—Following Jesus will be easy. But all persons should make following Christ their priority.

Think about your own life. Write here some things you should give up.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

On a scale of 1 to 10, where do you place your need for possessions? (10 represents the greatest need) Circle the number which represents your need for possessions.

(little need) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (great need)

THE RICH YOUNG

After Jesus told the man, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor" (Luke 18:22) the man felt like many others would feel. "When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth" (Luke 18:23). Mark 10:22 says that "the man's face fell" and "he went away sad."



Which of the following words express sadness?

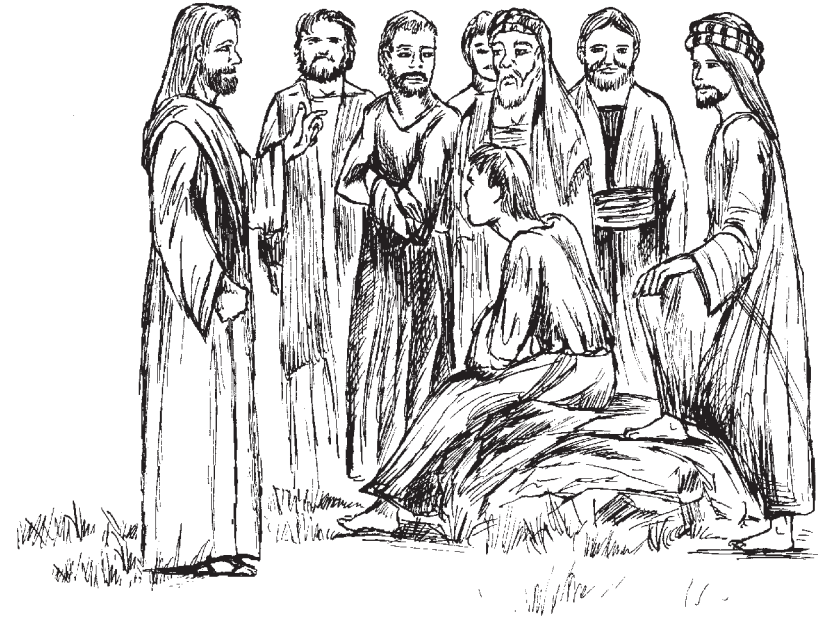
- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> grieved | <input type="checkbox"/> sorrowful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> downcast | <input type="checkbox"/> dejected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> melancholy |

No doubt the young man felt grieved, downcast, depressed, sorrowful, dejected, and melancholy—all at the same time.

THE LISTENERS UNDERSTAND

Then Jesus gave an example of how hard it is for a rich person to put the kingdom of God ahead of the love for riches. He said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The camel was the largest animal in Israel and the eye of a sewing needle was one of the smallest items a person could hold in his hand. Jesus used the absurdity of a camel trying to get through the eye of a needle to show the impossibility of a rich man being saved and achieving eternal life apart from God's intervention.



Find the scripture passage for this lesson. Underline the verse about the camel and the needle. (Luke 18:25)

Writers have given different interpretations of what Jesus said. Some have said that there was a very small gate into Jerusalem called “the needle’s eye.” We do not know that such a gate existed. Others have said that Jesus used the word *rope* rather than the word *camel*. In the Greek language the word for *rope* is very similar to the word for *camel*. But these interpretations compromise the force of Jesus’ teaching.

Read Luke 12:15. What does Jesus say about possessions? Complete the verse.

“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s _____ does not consist in the abundance of his _____.”

APPLICATION

Describe your response to the story of the rich young ruler.

Check each response that describes your thoughts.

____ Oh, my goodness!

____ I’ve got a long way to go.

____ I’m on my way.

____ I’m ready, Lord Jesus.

Look again at the four drawings in this lesson. Write beside each drawing a sentence that describes the situation pictured.

The young ruler was very wealthy. Yet he knew something was missing from his life.

Think about your own life. What may be missing? Write your response below.

The rich young ruler asked Jesus a question about eternal life. Jesus knew the young man had a “heart problem”—money. Jesus told him to give it away.

Think about the following questions. (No written response is necessary.)

1. What links money to the heart?
2. How does a person’s treasure affect his attitude toward life?
3. Is money evil in itself?
4. How can money be used to glorify God?

The ruler could not say “yes” to Jesus, so he sadly walked away. He walked away to his money and to an eternity without God. Jesus told the camel and needle illustration to say it is easy to love money above everything—even eternal life.

Read 1 Timothy 6:10. Complete the verse.

“For the _____ of money is a root of all kinds of _____.”

Complete the following sentence:

I can guard against the love of money and a possession-centered life by _____.

Happy is the person who shares wealth to bring comfort and help to others.

Jesus told Peter and the others that it is God who makes the impossible possible! Salvation and eternal life are his to give. The gift is ready for all who follow Christ Jesus. By God’s grace through faith we are saved.

Have you received eternal life? Check your response.

____ Yes

____ No

____ I’m not sure.

If you checked “No” or “I’m not sure,” you can receive God’s gift of eternal life today.

Which of the following do you believe? Check each statement you believe.

- God loves me and sent his Son to earth.
- Jesus is God's Son.
- Jesus died on a cross for my sins.
- He arose from the dead.
- He ascended back into heaven.
- He will come to earth again one day.

The Bible says all of the above statements are true. They are the heart of the gospel.

Memorize this Bible verse:

“What is impossible with men is possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

Summarize in a sentence or two the main thing God has taught you in your study.

You can lead your family or a group of friends and neighbors or perhaps a church group in this study of the rich young ruler. Doing so will

strengthen your own life, and God will use you

to be a blessing to others. The following suggestions will help you lead a small group study. Each person in the group has contributions to make. Each person should take part in the discussion. No one should dominate the time together.

Begin the study with prayer.

Read the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-30.

GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY

Tell the story in your own words. Use the drawings as visual aids. Take your time and show the drawings to the group as you tell the story. Answer any questions group members may have.

Use with the group the questions and activities under “Application”. Lead each group member to respond.

Lead the group in memorizing Luke 18:27. Ask volunteers to explain the verse in their own words.

Read the section “Responding to God” to the group. Pray the prayer for yourself and help each person to pray it for himself or herself.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Now that you have studied God's Word, he wants you to respond.

The Bible teaches that you are a sinner. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23). *“There is no one righteous, not even one”* (Rom. 3:10).

But God loves you and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sin. *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:8).

You receive Christ as your Savior by turning from your sin and placing your faith and trust in him. *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out”* (Acts 3:19). *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”* (Rom. 10:13).

Pray this prayer:

“Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In your name I pray. Amen.”

Notes:

Welcome into God’s family!

Share with others that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism by immersion in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.