



Kingdom Preparation

Entering the Kingdom: Humble Faith, Not Boastful Works

Matthew 19:13-26

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/jesus-and-children>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/kingdom-greatness>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/man-who-loved-riches>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-to-get-a-camel-through-a-needles-eye>

Matthew 19:13-26

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

15 After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

The Rich Young Ruler

16 And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

18 Then he said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You

shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness;

19 Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?"

21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24 Again I say to you, 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."

25 When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 19:13-26.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. Have you ever struggled to believe something? What got in the way?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

2. Read Matthew 19:13-22. How does the rich young ruler compare to the children brought before Jesus? (*wealthy vs. poor, well regarded vs. viewed as a distraction, authoritative vs. dependent, seeking to achieve blessing vs. seeking to receive blessing, etc...*)

3. Read Matthew 18:4. How are children humble? Do they have any accolades to boast about? How are children inherently trusting of their parents? Have you struggled to be as humble or trusting as a child as you have gotten older? Why?

4. How do children tend to be more "teachable" than adults? Read Mark 10:13-16. What additional point does Jesus make in Mark 10:15 to his disciples about children coming to Him with nothing to receive a blessing? (*Christ's message is to be received with child-like humility and dependence, simply taking Christ at His Word without objection.*)

5. Read Matthew 19:17-22. The rich young ruler asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. How was the rich young ruler trying to inherit eternal life? On his own merit?

6. Read Deuteronomy 6:5, John 14:15, and James 2:10. What does Matthew 19:22 reveal about whether the rich young ruler truly loved the Lord with all his heart and, thus, truly kept all the commandments of God? How did his failure to obey Jesus reveal his lack of love for Jesus? Did the rich young ruler have child-like faith?

7. Read Matthew 19:23-24. How does the acquisition of wealth and knowledge as we grow older make it harder for us to have child-like faith in Christ and simply take Him at His word without question?

8. Read Romans 3:10-12 and Matthew 19:25. Is it ever possible for us to succeed in earning our way into heaven by doing good, as the rich young ruler sought to do? Does anyone truly do good all the time? [recall Matthew 19:17 "There is only one who is good."]

9. Read Matthew 19:26. How did Jesus make it possible for the rich man to inherit eternal life? *(obeying the law perfectly, dying on the cross to pay for our sins, rising from the dead, defeating sin and death, and giving us child-like faith to believe in Him [Eph. 2:8-9])*

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 19:13 lay his hands on them. A traditional manner of blessing children in Israel, especially when passing on a blessing from one generation to the next (cf. Gen. 48:14; Num. 27:18).

Matt. 19:14 to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. See notes on 18:2–4; 18:5–6. Children serve as a metaphor of the humility necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 19:16 a man came up to him. Verses 16–22 have been called the story of the “rich young ruler” since he is rich (v. 22), young (v. 20), and a ruler (cf. Luke 18:18). He may have been a religious lay leader, quite possibly a Pharisee (because of the diligence he displays in following the law). After addressing Jesus as Teacher, a title of respect, he asks what good deed he must do to have eternal life. “Eternal life” is virtually synonymous with expressions such as “entering the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20) and being “saved” (19:25–26); it is the first occurrence of this expression in Matthew (cf. v. 29; 25:46). In the parallel accounts (Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23), the wording of the question and answer differs somewhat, but there is no contradiction, and it seems to be a case of different Gospels reporting different parts of the same conversation.

Matt. 19:17 There is only one who is good. Only in understanding God as infinitely good can the young man discover that human good deeds cannot earn eternal life. keep the commandments. Jesus is not teaching that good works can earn eternal life, for in vv. 21–22 he will show the man how far short he falls of keeping the first commandment (cf. Ex. 20:3) and the first of the two greatest commandments (cf. Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36–40). But obedience to the law is also an expression of belief in the truly good God who is the source of all good, including eternal life. Scripture elsewhere clearly affirms that salvation is a gift of God’s grace received through faith, and not by works (see notes on Eph. 2:8; 2:9–10).

Matt. 19:18–19 Which ones? Jesus gives a representative list of laws, including five commandments from the second half of the Decalogue (cf. Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 5:7–21), and the second of the two greatest commandments (Lev. 19:18; cf. Matt. 22:36–40).

Matt. 19:20 All these I have kept. The man implies he has kept not only these, but the entire law, which they represent. He views his obedience to the law as complete, but he still senses that something is lacking.

Matt. 19:21 If you would be perfect. Jesus knows the man’s wealth has become his means to personal identity, power, and a sense of meaning in life—that it has become the idolatrous god of his life (cf. note on v. 17). Jesus’ strategy is to turn this man from focusing on external conformity to



Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

the law to examining his heart, revealing his ruling god. give to the poor. The man had no doubt given some money to the poor, as the giving of alms was considered a pious duty, especially among the Pharisees. But Jesus calls him to give everything away, exchanging the god of wealth for the eternal treasure found in following Jesus as the one true God. Jesus' ultimate answer to the question posed in v. 16 ("What . . . must I do to have eternal life?") is to follow him.

Matt. 19:22 went away sorrowful. Even though he wants "eternal life" (v. 16), the young man cannot bring himself to cease worshiping the ruling force in his life, his great possessions.

Matt. 19:23 only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Wealth is both deceptive and intoxicating: it fools a person into thinking that he or she is self-sufficient apart from God; and the rich person wants desperately to hold on to that supposed self-sufficiency. The general attributes of the "rich" are the opposite of those of a "child" (cf. 18:1–5; 19:13–15).

Matt. 19:24 camel. The largest land animal in Palestine. the eye of a needle. The smallest opening found in the home. Jesus paints a picture of something impossible in order to illustrate that even the seemingly impossible is possible with God. There is no evidence for the popular interpretation that there was a gate in Jerusalem called "the eye of the needle," which camels had to stoop to their knees to enter. Such an interpretation would miss the point: it is not merely difficult for the wealthy to be saved; without God's grace it is impossible (cf. v. 26).

Matt. 19:25 astonished. Wealth was often equated with God's favor and blessing (cf. Deut. 28:1–14).

Matt. 19:26 For the wealthy to shift their primary allegiance to God is humanly impossible, but with God all things are possible, as evidenced by the conversions of rich men like Joseph of Arimathea (27:57) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:9–10).