

# Simple Faith

## Teaching Tips

March 13, 2016

## Bible Study Guide 2

### Words You Should Know

**A. Good** ([Mark 10:17](#)) *agathos* (Gk.)—Helpful, beneficial; well-meaning, kind.



**B. Inherit** (v. 17) *kleronomeo* (Gk.)—To obtain or come into possession of something.

### Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—A Generous Life. Good people can find it difficult to be willing to give up all their possessions to help others. What can persuade someone to forfeit his or her possessions for others? Jesus said that faith in God makes it possible for people to sacrifice all they have for the benefit of others.

**A.** Pray for clarity and application, for you and your students.

**B.** Study the companion lesson thoroughly.

### O—Open the Lesson

**A.** Begin by having students identify people, famous or not, who have made significant sacrifices for great causes. Discuss any characteristics known about them.

**B.** Introduce today's lesson title and Aim for Change. Pray for students to develop hearts of service and sacrifice.

**C.** Have students read the Keep in Mind verse and In Focus story.

### P—Present the Scriptures

**A.** Give students a few minutes to silently read The People, Places, and Times and Background.

**B.** Have students read the Focal Verses (aloud or silently), encouraging them to keep in mind the information they just read.

**C.** Use the In Depth content and Search the Scriptures to facilitate discussion on the Focal Verses.

### E—Explore the Meaning

**A.** Have the class discuss Discuss the Meaning.

**B.** Read Lesson in Our Society and have students make observations.

### N—Next Steps for Application

- A. Briefly review the lesson, highlighting the Keep in Mind verse.
- B. Read Make It Happen and re-read the Aim for Change aloud.
- C. Pray with students that they will trust God enough to make the sacrifices that He requires of them.

## Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Simple Faith

Song: "I Give Myself Away"

Devotional Reading: [Galatians 5:1–13](#)



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**Bible Background** • [MARK 10:17–31](#)



**Printed Text** • [MARK 10:17–31](#) | **Devotional Reading** • [GALATIANS 5:1–13](#)



## Aim for Change



By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** the facts of the rich young man's encounter with Jesus; **CELEBRATE** the direct link between making sacrifices and receiving God's salvation; and **COMMIT** to making greater sacrifices for others in the name of Jesus Christ.

## In Focus

Anthony and Sara had always had a heart for the inner city. Both grew up there, went on to very successful careers, and moved away. However, they continued to serve in the community. Wherever Anthony and Sara moved, they intentionally sought out an area where they could serve. The time came when they both sensed God was telling them it was time to actually move into the community where they served. This would not be an easy decision.

Sara was definitely not excited; she loved going to visit the neighborhood to serve people, but did not feel comfortable living there. Over the years, they had acquired a number of beautiful, expensive possessions. What if they were stolen? What about the children? Where would they attend school? She had finally finished remodeling and decorating their home in a way that she loved. They had worked hard to get where they are. Now they had to move? Anthony continued to assure his wife that God would provide. Yes, the move would cost them something—some costs could be counted before the move, while some would not become evident until later—but they could be sure there would be blessings in their obedience.

*Discipleship costs. In this lesson, we will learn about one young man's struggle with sacrifice. What have you had to sacrifice in order to live your life as a follower of Christ?*


## Keep in Mind

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" ([Mark 10:21](#)).



## Focal Verses

KJV

**Mark 10:17** And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 

**18** And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

**19** Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

**20** And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

**21** Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

**22** And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

**23** And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

**24** And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

**25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

**26** And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

**27** And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.


**28** Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

**29** And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

**30** But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

**31** But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

NLT

**Mark 10:17** As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 

**18** "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good.

**19** But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'"

**20** "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."

**21** Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

**22** At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

**23** Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!"

**24** This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God.

**25** In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

**26** The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked.

**27** Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

**28** Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said.

**29** "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News,

**30** will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.

**31** But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.

## The People, Places, and Times

**The rich young man.** What little is known about this man is gathered from three different Gospels ([Matthew 19:16–30](#); [Mark 10:17–31](#); [Luke 18:18–30](#)). All indicate that he was rich. Matthew reveals that he is young ([Matthew 19:20](#)). [Luke 18:18](#) says that he was a "ruler," possibly a member of a Jewish council or court. Since he respectfully and genuinely asked a religious question, he presumably is not a scribe or teacher of the Law, as their questions were intended to trap Jesus. He was probably raised in a devoted Jewish home, as Jewish boys were taught they would assume personal responsibility for their own religious lives (following commandments, laws, etc.) at age 13, becoming a "son of the Law/Commandment" (Bar Mitzvah). His belief system is a reflection of the common thought of the day regarding eternal life—self-centered and merit-based.

**Eternal life.** The terms "eternal life," "saved," and "kingdom of God" are used interchangeably in this passage. In Scripture, "eternal life" is distinguished from a simple continual existence. All will experience endless existence somewhere after their lives on earth cease. Eternal life connotes a life spent in union and fellowship with God in heaven, His kingdom. The opposite existence is eternal death separated from Him in hell ([Mark 9:43–47](#)). Those who have trusted in Christ in their natural lives are eternally "saved" or freed from this plight.

## Background

Immediately preceding all three Gospel (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) accounts of this story is a brief interaction Christ has with children. The disciples were attempting to prevent it, but Christ rebuked them, and told them to bring the children to Him. In [Mark 10:15](#), He says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it" (NLT). He then blesses the children. Then comes the rich young ruler.

These two scenes are such a contrast. Christ just taught that people who enter the kingdom of God do so because spiritually they come like children—needy, trusting, full of faith, and dependent upon those with more power or authority. While honoring Christ by running to Him, kneeling, and asking questions, the man presented a child-like external stance. However, his allegiance to his riches and refusal to sacrifice them to help the poor betrayed the true stance of his heart.

A recurring theme throughout the Gospels is service and sacrifice. “Take up your cross ... follow me ... count the cost.” In [Mark 10:45](#), Christ says, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many” (NLT). As for many today, as well as in antiquity, wealth was directly connected to piety. Being rich meant one had God’s favor because He rewarded the faithful with material goods, which could then be used for serving others. However, this often did not occur, so in Judaism as well as the rest of the Greco-Roman world, there were groups that believed that piety was not linked to worldly wealth, or even that renouncing worldly wealth was pious.. And as Christ taught, “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” ([Matthew 6:24, NLT](#)).

## At-A-Glance

1. Rich Ruler’s Questions ([Mark 10:17–22](#))
2. Disciples’ Question (vv. 23–26)
3. Christ’s Promises (vv. 27–31)

## In Depth

### 1. Rich Ruler’s Questions ([Mark 10:17–22](#))

When this young man approaches Christ with his question, he is thinking that salvation and righteousness come by works, not grace or gift. He calls Jesus “good,” and asks what “good” he must do. No one but God can claim goodness or righteousness. Goodness is not an achievement to merit a reward, it is who God is, and “all good things” and deeds originate with Him. By answering the question, and ending with, “Follow me,” Christ claims His deity.

The commandments that Christ quotes pertain to the treatment of other people—external actions that are somewhat measurable. The man’s response could also be translated as “in all these things I have been careful since my youth.” The man sincerely, but blindly, believes that he had observed all of these commandments since his childhood, and that his actions were good. He still fails to realize that eternal life is based on a heart turned toward God, not following rules. Christ lovingly sees the man’s desire, and what prevented his devotion to God—his wealth. So, He tells him to go, sell everything he has, and give to the poor. Then, choose a life of faith in God, “take up the cross” (10:21, KJV), which means to prepare to endure suffering for His sake, and follow Christ. Tragically, the man walks away, dejected. His wealth was his god. He chose to put confidence in it over God.

### 2. Disciples’ Question (vv. 23–26)

Christ twice tells His disciples that it is hard for the rich to get into heaven. His truth surprised them because it disputed the popular “prosperity” teachings of the day. The second time He says it (see [Mark 10:24, KJV](#)), He specifically says those who “trust in riches,” and to further illustrate the impossibility He used the analogy of a large camel trying to squeeze through the eye of a tiny needle. Those who trust in riches (or anything else), problematically, do not trust God. Realizing the impossibility, and revealing their amazement that the rich and highly favored could not enter the kingdom of God, the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?”


### 3. Christ’s Promises (vv. 27–31)

Christ then further teaches the truth about salvation—it is based upon God. It is impossible for men and women to save themselves; God does it—all things are possible with Him.

Many of Christ’s disciples left their homes and means of living, including fishermen and a tax collector, and they had families. Contrasting the young man’s actions, Peter points out that he and the other disciples left those lives behind. In response, Christ promises the disciples that rewards await those who sacrifice for Him and the Gospel. The

rewards would be abundant (a hundred-fold), with familial relationships and material provisions. They would be enjoyed in the present (temporal) and future (eternal). Only Mark's account includes "with persecution," perhaps to encourage his original readers (Roman Christians facing persecution). However, it also counteracts the tendency to associate discipleship with temporal rewards, bringing back into focus the truth that a disciple of Christ must "take up your cross." Following Christ has blessings and struggles.


## Search the Scriptures

1. What does Christ say the young man lacks in his quest for eternal life ([Mark 10:21](#))? 
2. What is the blessing of doing what the young man would not do (vv. 29–31)?



## Discuss the Meaning

Keeping a list of "spiritual" things to check off—go to church, read a verse a day, say grace—is easier than actually taking up our cross and following Jesus. Following Him requires sacrificing our time, material possessions, and ourselves. Christ set the example, making the ultimate sacrifice—His life. What can keep us from moving beyond fulfilling "religious duties" to truly following Christ? What can be the blessings and challenges of following Him?

## Lesson in Our Society

Like many of antiquity, we can fall in the trap of following a "prosperity theology" without knowing it. It is subtle, coming in the form of telling people who serve Christ that God will "bless" them, typically meaning financial, material blessings. It shows up in how we expect God to answer our prayers if we are serving Him. It can also come by way of who we tend to elevate. Think of well-known Christian leaders. Now identify people who are known for their sacrifices and service to others. Do these lists overlap? If not, this is not to say that those leaders do not serve or sacrifice, but it perhaps reflects what our culture values and exalts. Those who serve are not looked on highly. This is not Christ-like thinking. Christ says, "But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant" ([Luke 22:26, NLT](#)). 

## Make It Happen

This lesson causes us to examine where our allegiance rests. Needs that require sacrifice surround us. Every "cross" is different for each person. Christ challenged the young man who made wealth his god. For some it is their careers or education; for others, it may be ease, security, and comfort. For Paul, it was his status "...of tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee..." These things he said he "counted as dung, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness ... but that which is through faith in Christ" ([Philippians 3:5, 8](#)). What things do you need to "count as dung" that you may gain Christ? What sacrifices have God placed on your heart to make? Who does He want you to serve? How does He want you to serve? Pray. When something comes to mind, pray that God will give you courage and wisdom to obey. Write it down so you will remember and can remind yourself. Then, do it.   


## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do.

## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

## More Light on the Text

## Mark 10:17–31

**17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.**

We are not told the young man's name, but his purpose in coming to Jesus is clear: he wants to know what to do to inherit eternal life.

His financial situation is quite secure, but he is uncertain about his eternal state. He comes to Jesus expressing what many commentators see as genuine respect for Him: he falls to his knees and addresses Jesus as the "Good Master." Yet his question reveals a problem with his theology. His phrase, "what must I do" (NIV), indicates that the man believes it is within his power to earn his way into the kingdom of God, something that Jesus' previous statement in 10:15 denies.

Jesus' response, though probably not intending to douse the young man's enthusiasm, challenges his ideas about goodness. The young man did not know that Jesus was God, and therefore he was centering his ideas about goodness not on God but on human achievement.

**19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.**

Jesus pointed the young man to what he knew or understood about the Law of God, as expressed in the Ten Commandments. The Scripture quotes the second half of the Decalogue here ([Exodus 20:12–16](#)), emphasizing that our response to our neighbors and loved ones demonstrates our reverence for God. Believers are warned against giving false testimony, and told not to "defraud" (Gk. *apostereo*, **ah-po-steh-REH-oh**), meaning not to cheat others, or take advantage of them or their property. The command not to defraud is not in the Decalogue and some scholars believe Jesus added it as an addition to the commands which forbid lying or stealing. It was especially applicable to the rich, who were notorious in first-century Palestine for gaining their wealth through unsavory means. If the young man could keep God's commandments, he would live. Any rabbi of the day would have told him this. Obedience to the Law of God would mean eternal life.

The man's response indicated how superficial his understanding of God's Law really was. The word "observed" in the Greek (*phulasso*, **foo-LAS-so**) means "to keep careful watch or protect." In other words, the young man told Jesus that he vigilantly kept all the commandments from his childhood.

But had he really? We don't know, but nevertheless, the young man was self-assured of his obedience to the Law, which Jesus would lovingly uncover as superficial when He challenged the man to a deeper level of obedience.

**21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.**

Jesus' care for this young man's best interests is evident in the first part of this verse, which notes that He looked on this young man with love. The word "beholding" in the Greek (*emblepo*, **em-BLEH-poh**) means "to look at with the mind, to consider." Jesus really wanted to help this young man understand clearly what obtaining eternal life entailed. He responds by calling the man to the one thing that he lacks: a single-minded devotion to God.

What the young man has not done yet is to surrender himself to God, to cast himself fully upon God in child-like dependence. Jesus calls him to discipleship by surrendering himself to God and following Jesus. The King James includes a specific call for the young man to take up his cross and follow Jesus, while the New Living Translation and most twentieth century translations simply tell the man to follow Jesus. The newer translations reflect the oldest manuscripts of Mark, much older than the manuscript available to the King James translators. Probably what

happened was that the command that Jesus gave to take up your cross and follow Him was very familiar to the scribes of the later manuscripts, and they included as a basic part of Jesus' exhortation to those who would know God. For the young man, it meant giving all he had to the poor, not as a means of getting in, but as an expression that his surrender was full and true. The point here is not that everyone must sell their goods and give the proceeds to the poor in order to become Christians. Rather, our commitment involves surrendering ourselves to God in childlike dependence on Him and following Him.

**22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.**

The man tragically chooses his great wealth over the eternal life that he had been so anxious at first to obtain. For him, the cost was too great, so he opted out and went away grieved (Gk. *lupeo*, **loo-PEH-oh**), which means "deep mental or emotional suffering; painful, sharp regret." In other words, he went away mentally and emotionally disturbed because material riches were more important to him than the wealth of eternal life.

**23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!**

The man's response gave Jesus an opportunity to speak to His followers about trust in riches and the kingdom of God. The phrase "kingdom of God" used throughout Mark means the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah. His kingdom will reign forever and ever. The text indicates that Jesus saw riches as a problem for His followers. He knew that many like this rich man put their trust in their material wealth and therefore found it difficult, if not impossible, to surrender themselves fully to God. Riches aren't evil in and of themselves, but Jesus knew that people were prone to put their trust in their possessions.

**24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!**

The disciples' amazement is not surprising considering the prevailing teachings of the day: that riches were the reward for piety and demonstrated God's favor toward the wealthy. ([Job 1:10](#); [42:10](#); [Psalm 128:1-2](#); [Isaiah 3:10](#)). If this is the case, then the disciples would certainly be surprised by Jesus' teaching, which He reiterates at the end of [Mark 10:24](#).

**25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?**

Some scholars would like to make Jesus' words here a little easier to swallow by suggesting that "the eye of a needle" referred instead to a small gate in Jerusalem which camels could go through only with great difficulty. This would imply that joining the kingdom of God was difficult but not impossible. This gate is not what Jesus refers to, as it was built during medieval times, not in the first century. Here Jesus uses hyperbole as He describes the impossibility of a camel going through the literal eye of a needle.

The word "astonished" (Gk. *ekplesso*, **ek-PLACE-so**) means "they were struck with amazement." The disciples' response clearly suggests that they have misunderstood Jesus' statement. If not even the rich can enter the kingdom, then who can? The disciples are evidently baffled and need clarification.

**27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. 28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.**



Jesus' point is this: Salvation is not a matter of human achievement. A person cannot enter God's kingdom via human achievements. The Gospel that Jesus preached declared that salvation is a work of God; only God can provide salvation and open the way to eternal life. This is why we are called to wholehearted surrender to God. Only trust in His power alone will grant us entrance into His kingdom.

Peter understood the invitation Jesus gave to the rich man and noted that he and the others had done what the rich man had not ("we have left all," v. 28). Peter's question, though seemingly problematic since it focuses on rewards, is not rebuked but answered. Yes, Jesus tells him and the other disciples, those who surrender themselves in full reliance upon God are rewarded. And, as Jesus emphasizes, a surrender to God shows itself in our willingness to be last, to be servants.

## Say It Correctly

Bar Mitzvah. **BAR MITS**-va.

Temporal. **TEM**-por-al.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Faith in Riches?

([Psalm 49:1–6](#), [16–19](#))



### TUESDAY

Practical Faith

([Proverbs 22:1–4](#), [23:3–5](#))



### WEDNESDAY

Abundant Faith

([Isaiah 55:1–6a](#))



### THURSDAY

Authoritative Faith

([Matthew 7:24–29](#))



### FRIDAY

Faith and Freedom

([Galatians 5:1–13](#))



### SATURDAY

Priorities of Faith

([Luke 16:10–14](#))



### SUNDAY

Simple Faith

([Mark 10:17–31](#))

