

Matthew: What Do I Still Lack

Discussion Guide for June 27 and 28, 2026

Summary

In Matthew 19:13–26, Jesus contrasts the self-reliant rich young ruler with small children who depend entirely on others. Through this comparison, Jesus reveals that salvation is impossible through human effort alone. The rich young ruler had kept the commandments, but when Jesus exposed the idol in his heart — his wealth and self-sufficiency — the man walked away grieving. Jesus uses the exchange to teach that true faith is not about what we do, but about who we follow. Salvation is a gift from God, not a result of our own works, and God calls His people to a life of radical dependence on Him in every area of life.

Ice Breaker

Think of something you've worked hard to achieve or build on your own — a career milestone, a financial goal, a personal accomplishment. In what ways has that experience of self-reliance shaped how you relate to God?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 19:13-26
2. Proverbs 3:5–6
3. Ezekiel 14:3
4. Isaiah 26:4
5. Ephesians 2:8–9

Discussion Questions

1. The sermon opened with the idiom "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" and noted that self-reliance is deeply embedded in our culture — but runs counter to our faith. Where in your own life do you find it hardest to depend on God rather than relying on your own abilities, resources, or plans?
2. Jesus used little children as an object lesson, pointing to their total dependence as a kingdom virtue. The sermon described what whole dependence on God looks like practically — in big decisions, finances, and crises. Which of those areas feels most challenging for you to actually live out, and why?
3. The rich young ruler believed he had kept all the commandments — and yet he still felt something was missing. Have you ever been in a season where you were doing all the "right" Christian things but still felt a gap in your faith? What did that reveal about what you were depending on?

4. The message notes that the default posture of the human heart is works-based religion. What does that phrase mean? And where in your life have you been tempted to see faith as works-based?
5. The sermon defines an idol as anything that competes with God in our heart as our highest priority. Jesus asked the rich young ruler to give up the specific thing his heart was clinging to. If God were to ask you the question "What would you have a really difficult time giving up for me?" – what comes to mind?
6. Jesus told the disciples "with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" – and the sermon clarified that in context, this is specifically about salvation being impossible through self-effort. How does that truth challenge or reframe the way you think about your own spiritual progress and growth?

Life Application

This week, ask God to reveal the places in your life where you are still pulling on your own bootstraps – trusting your own plan, your own resources, or your own goodness rather than depending wholly on Him. It might look like praying over a decision you've already made up your mind about, confessing something you've been managing on your own, or acknowledging that your peace doesn't have to depend on your circumstances. Whatever form it takes, practice depending on God like a child depends on a parent – not as weakness, but as the truest acknowledgment of who He is and who you are.

Key Takeaways

1. God calls His people to childlike dependence – not self-reliance. Just as children depend entirely on their parents, we are called to depend entirely on God for all things: our decisions, our resources, our peace, and our future.
2. The default posture of the human heart is works-based religion – the belief that heaven is something we earn. But Scripture is clear: salvation is a gift from God, received by faith, and not the result of anything we do.
3. Every person has an idol – something that competes with God as our heart's highest priority. Jesus calls us to identify what that is for us and surrender it to Him.
4. Perfect faith is not about what we do – it's about who we follow. Obedience matters, but it is no substitute for a life wholly submitted to Jesus as King.
5. Salvation is impossible by human effort – but nothing is impossible with God. We cannot save ourselves, and we don't have to. Jesus has already done what we could never do on our own.