

Group Study Questions – Matthew 19:16–30 (NKJV)

This passage is not just about wealth—it’s about **what we trust, what we cling to, and what we are unwilling to surrender.**

The rich young ruler didn’t reject Jesus outright—he simply couldn’t let go of what he valued most.

Parallel Passages:

- **Mark 10:17–31** – Closest parallel, includes Jesus’ love for the rich young ruler
- **Luke 18:18–30** – Similar account of the rich ruler and teaching on riches
- No direct parallel in John
- Supporting themes: **Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 6:19–24; Philippians 3:7–8; Hebrews 4:12**

Study Questions and Responses

1. What does the rich young ruler’s question reveal about how people try to control their spiritual standing? (*Matthew 19:16*)

By asking, “What good thing shall I do...?” the man is attempting to define the terms of eternal life in a manageable way—something measurable and achievable. This reflects a desire for control rather than surrender.

Scripture reminds us that the heart can be self-deceptive (Jeremiah 17:9), often preferring systems we can manage over relationships that require trust.

Everyday Application: We often prefer clear rules over deep dependence. It’s easier to ask, “What do I need to do?” than “What do I need to surrender?” This passage challenges us to examine whether we are trying to manage our faith instead of truly yielding to God.

2. Why does Jesus redirect the conversation from “good things” to God’s goodness? (*Matthew 19:17*)

Jesus shifts the focus from human action to God’s nature: “No one is good but One, that is, God.” This exposes a foundational issue—the man’s standard of goodness is too low.

If only God is truly good (Psalm 145:17), then human effort cannot reach that level. This reframes the entire conversation about salvation.

Everyday Application: We often compare ourselves to others to feel “good enough.” But comparing ourselves to God’s standard reveals our need for grace. This leads to humility rather than self-confidence.

3. How does Jesus use the commandments to expose more than just behavior? (*Matthew 19:17–19*)

Jesus lists relational commandments, which outwardly measure behavior. But the law ultimately exposes the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The man sees obedience as external compliance, while Jesus is leading him toward internal reality—love for God and neighbor (Romans 13:10).

Everyday Application: We may avoid obvious wrongdoing but still struggle with pride, envy, or lack of love. God’s Word invites us to look beyond actions and examine what is driving them.

4. Why does the man feel something is still lacking even after claiming obedience? (Matthew 19:20)

He asks, “What do I still lack?”—revealing an internal awareness that something is missing. Outward morality has not produced inner completeness.

This reflects the truth that external “obedience” cannot satisfy the deeper need of the soul (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Everyday Application: Success, discipline, and moral living do not always lead to peace. That lingering sense of “something missing” can be a signal pointing us toward deeper dependence on God.

5. Why does Jesus go directly to the man’s wealth instead of correcting his theology further? (Matthew 19:21)

Jesus identifies the man’s functional god—what he truly trusts. Wealth represented security, identity, and control.

Jesus’ call to “follow Me” is not just about giving something up, but about transferring trust (Matthew 6:21, 24).

Everyday Application: Our greatest obstacle is often not what we don’t know, but what we won’t release. God may point to specific areas—not to harm us, but to free us from misplaced trust.

6. What does the man’s sorrow reveal about divided desires? (Matthew 19:22)

He is sorrowful because he wants both—eternal life and his possessions. This reveals internal conflict.

James describes this as being “double-minded” (James 1:8). The man is not indifferent—he is torn.

Everyday Application: Spiritual struggle often isn’t about choosing between good and bad, but between good and ultimate. We may want God, but not at the cost of something we deeply value.

7. Why are the disciples shocked by Jesus’ teaching about wealth? (Matthew 19:23–25)

In their culture, wealth was often seen as a sign of God’s blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1–5). If a wealthy, moral person struggles to enter the kingdom, it challenges their assumptions about how God works.

Jesus exposes that external blessing does not equal internal readiness.

Everyday Application: We often assume that visible success reflects spiritual health. This passage reminds us that outward stability does not guarantee inward surrender.

8. What is the deeper meaning behind “the first will be last, and the last first”? (Matthew 19:30)

Jesus overturns human systems of value. Those who appear “first” (successful, secure, self-sufficient) may actually be far from dependence on God.

Paul reflects this reversal: “What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:7–8)

Everyday Application: What we prioritize—achievement, comfort, recognition—may not align with God’s priorities. This challenges us to evaluate success through an eternal lens rather than a temporary one.