

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

August 7th

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. What would you do if you won a million dollars? What big ticket item would you buy?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 19:16-30
 - What do you notice in this conversation? What is Jesus teaching? How is his values different then the popular values of that time?
2. The man has the assumption that he could earn eternal life by doing some great act. Has there ever been a time in your life in which you tried to impress God by doing something? Is there anyway that you have seen this mindset unintentionally taught in the church?
3. In his book, *Irristable Revolution*, Shaine Claiborne writes “*We do need to be born again, since Jesus said that to a guy named Nicodemus. But if you tell me I have to be born again to enter the Kingdom of God, I can tell you that you have to sell everything you have and give it to the poor, because Jesus said that to one guy, too. But I guess that's why God invented highlighters, so we can highlight the parts we like and ignore the rest.*” How would you respond to this statement? Agree or disagree? How should Christians navigate wealth and poverty?
4. Pastor Michael said that this is an isolated command that reflects a universal problem. Good things can easily become obstacles to us following Jesus. What are some of the good things that you see commonly being obstacles to following Jesus today?
5. What things in your life do you find it hardest to submit to the Lordship of Jesus?
6. What should we be doing to make sure that wealth doesn't become an idol in our life?

- 7.
8. Jesus said that “with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” How does this free us from being discouraged about the high bar set to follow Jesus?

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Over the past 2000 years ago, Christians have debated how they should handle Jesus' challenge in Matthew 19:21 for a young man to sell all of his possessions and give to the poor. Many of suggested that we should just have caution about the lure of wealth. Others have taken it to be a command for Christians to embrace poverty. In reality, the story is about Jesus directly challenging many of the values of the times and the good things that we allow to compromise our walk with God.

I. Cultural Assumptions

- **Wealth signifies God's blessing:** Jews would look back on Godly men such as Abraham, Jacob, or Job who had been blessed with wealth. While they did recognize that some abused wealth, they viewed wealth as being a sign of God's blessing and approval over their lives.
- **One must achieve something great to earn God's approval:** In verse 16, the young man asks Jesus about what great thing he must do to get eternal life. His assumption is that if he can accomplish something great, then he will gain God's approval. This is an assumption that governs much of today. We view approval as something earned and not given. We reinforce it when we tell our kids to "go and do great things for God". The idea is that we can impress him with our faithful acts.

II. Jesus' Kingdom Values

Note: This is the only place in the Bible where Jesus commands someone to sell all that he has and give to the poor. There are other examples of God blessing people with wealth and not giving them this command. This should lead us to conclude that the specific command is an isolated incident and that Jesus does not require poverty from his followers.

- **The greatest act is to follow Jesus:** In verse 21, Jesus tells him to sell all he has and then he would have treasure in heaven. He then tells him to "follow him". Later in verse 28, Jesus talks about rewards for those who "follow him". This was where it was all pointing to. The one act that gain eternal life was that of following Jesus.
- **Good things from God can be obstacles to following Jesus:** Jesus doesn't tell him to give away his wealth because it is bad, but because it is an obstacle to his ability to follow God. It had become an idol in his life that he was unable to submit to Jesus. Jesus later says that it is very difficult for a rich man to come into the kingdom of God because wealth is such a powerful idol.
- **A blessed life is one who submits to the Lordship of Jesus:** In the end, Jesus turns the cultural assumptions upside down. Wealth and

prosperity doesn't signal a blessed life. A blessed life is one in relationship with Jesus. That is where true life and fulfillment is found.

Conclusion

The disciples would have viewed this man as the perfect candidate for a follower of Jesus. Yet he doesn't make the cut. They wonder if it is possible for anyone to meet the high standard of following Jesus. He responds in verse 26 that "*with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*" As for us, we live in a wealthy culture full of obstacles. For some of us, living in complete submission to God seems impossible. But through his spirit, we are given strength. It is available for the asking.