

Small Group Discussion Guide

Mark 10:17-27

“(Im)Possible”

Based on Sunday's
Sermon 9/13/26

Background

“In Matthew’s Gospel, this man is called young (Matt. 19:20), and Luke’s Gospel identifies him as a ruler (Luke 18:18). Note that this young ruler ran to Jesus and fell at his feet. In the Middle East, it was undignified for men to run. This man with his youthful passion was throwing his respectability at Jesus’ feet.

The term **good** in this context is also unusual. It was not a common practice to call anyone good, leaving the appellation for God alone. Brooks notes further, “The question is also unusual because most Jews would have no doubts about what to do: observe the law. Probably the man had heard about Jesus’ teaching that mere obedience to the law was not enough” (Brooks, *Mark*, p. 162). This section follows the previous section naturally, since the man asked what he could do to earn eternal life. Jesus’ teaching on the children emphasized that there is nothing one can do to earn it. It is given freely and must be received freely.”¹

“To us, the Lord’s remark doesn’t seem extraordinary because we’ve had two thousand years to adjust. Much of Western culture is built upon Christendom as a foundation, so we can’t appreciate how revolutionary Jesus’ comment appeared to first-century Jews. Hebrews in His day had all but forgotten that salvation had always been by grace alone through faith alone (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3, 20–22; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23). Jesus’ statement—“How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23)—turned contemporary theology upside down. According to the religious experts of His day, the rich were virtually guaranteed a place in God’s kingdom because their wealth gave evidence of God’s blessing.”²

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

1. What’s the most valuable thing you’ve ever given up for something better?

Observation

2. What details stand out about the man who approaches Jesus (his posture, urgency, title for Jesus)?

¹ Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, vol. 2, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 167.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Mark*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Tyndale House Publishers, 2018), 272–274.

3. How does the man describe his own spiritual track record?
4. Which commandments does Jesus list, and which ones does He *not* mention?

Interpretation

5. Why does Jesus challenge the man's use of the word "**good**"? What is Jesus exposing?
6. What does the "camel through the eye of a needle" imagery communicate about human ability vs. divine ability?
7. Read John 3:1-8. What is the hindrance to each believing? What do both men need?
8. How does Jesus' statement "With man it is impossible, but not with God" reshape the disciples' assumptions about salvation?

Application

9. What possessions, comforts, or identities subtly compete with your loyalty to Christ?
10. What step of obedience feels costly right now, and how does this passage encourage you to take it?

Prayer List: