

## Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

### Luke 18:18-35

For a fuller picture of this story of the “rich, young, ruler” I highly recommend checking out Matthew’s (Matt. 19:16-30) and Mark’s (Mark 10:17-31) accounts as well. (It is by putting all 3 accounts together that we know that he was a “rich”, “young”, “ruler”.)

#### **Q. Comparing/contrasting the 3 accounts of this story, what do you notice?**

At first glance, it might seem that Jesus was being dodgy in verse 19. But we need to remember that the rich, young, ruler had specifically asked about “*eternal life*”. In order to answer his question accurately, Jesus needed to connect the dots for him. The source of eternal life is God. Jesus wanted this guy to realize that He was far more than simply a “good teacher”, but rather was the personal embodiment of what he was seeking. Or in other words (and to paraphrase), “Dude, you’ve come to the right place/person. But you need to understand I am more than you realize.”

#### **Q. In verse 19, what point was Jesus trying to make when He asked/stated, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good—except God alone.”**

Jesus had been asked the same exact question “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” in Luke chapter 10. In that instance, it was by an “expert in the law” who was trying to test Jesus. The rich, young, ruler seems far more sincere when asking the question. In both instances, however, Jesus pointed them to the law. What does the law have to do with eternal life?

In the book of Galatians the apostle Paul writes, “*know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*” (Gal. 2:16). That being the case, why would Jesus point them to the law? Paul goes on in Galatians, “*So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*” (Gal 3:24-25).

In Greek, the word “in charge” and “supervision” are the same word. The King James translates it “schoolmaster”, and can/should be understood as “tutor” or “instructor”. In its most literal sense it means a “leader of children”. The purpose of the Law, then, was to be a developmental tool to prepare people for Jesus. It was meant to take people from a less mature point to a more mature point. But it was never the end goal. So, Jesus begins with what they knew (the Law) and uses it for its designed purpose, which is to point to Himself. In both instances, with the expert in the law and with the rich, young, ruler, Jesus also helps them see how they both fell short of the law (as does everyone).

#### **Q. What are we to make of Jesus pointing to the Old Testament Law when asked about gaining eternal life?**

**Q. (possible ice breaker) Who was the best teach, mentor, or coach you ever had? What made them so good?**

**Q What practical benefit does the Old Testament Law have for us today?**

The rich, young, ruler over-estimated how well he had kept the law. It's certainly possible that he had kept the particular commandments that Jesus rattled off (commandments 5-9 of the Ten Commandments for those who are counting). But as any Jewish person of the time would understand, by mentioning those 6 commandments, all 10 were implied. And Jesus went straight to the heart of where this young man fell short...Commandment # 1. By not being willing to depart of his wealth, he demonstrated that his wealth (and presumably his position within society that came with it) was, in fact, his god.

This is where things get highly practical for us. False gods can take many forms, and all of us are susceptible to them. So how do we know if we are holding onto a false god without realizing it? We need to perform a diagnostic on ourselves, and we need to have others that we trust and who know us well, also perform a diagnostic on us.

Personally, internally, introspectively we need to ask ourselves some tough questions. At the core of these questions is "identity" (Who do we really understand ourselves to be?); "value" (What is really important to us?); "security" (What makes us feel safe? What do we look to for protection?); "purpose/meaning" (Why am I here? What is the point of it all?); "significance" (Does anyone one truly know me and love me?) These are important questions. The challenge/problem is that we don't always know the real/true answer to these questions. All of us, each and every one of us, are masters of self-deception. One of the toughest things for any of us is to be truly honest with ourselves about ourselves.

This is why the relational/communal diagnostic is so important. We are social creatures. Unless we are complete hermits, other people have a vantage point in which to view us. Such viewpoints are important in order for us to get a fuller, more accurate understanding of ourselves. We need to allow people to speak into our lives. This, obviously, implies that we create space for people to do so. Now here's where things get tricky. We are all tempted to "manage our image". Meaning, it's tempting to try to manipulate what others see, observe, and perceive of us. This also takes A LOT of energy and effort. We're so afraid of people thinking negatively of us that we either go to great lengths to manage our image (the "me" that other people see) or we go to great lengths to avoid people altogether so we don't need to expend such effort. Neither of which are how God wants us to live.

**Q. Who knows you the best? Who do you allow to speak into your life? How do you go about making sure there are people who have access into your life to be able to speak into it?**

**Q. How have you wrestled with "image-management"?**

**Q. Describe some of the blessings you have experienced by having others speak into your life? (And let's be real here—how has that been painful at times?)**

Now in case you're thinking this is all a bunch of pop-psychology mumbo-jumbo, let's look at the rich, young, ruler. He internally, inherently, intrinsically knew he was missing something, which is why he came to Jesus in the first place. He was self-aware enough to know something was lacking. But he was not able, on his own, to figure out what was wrong. He needed an outside perspective and voice to speak into his life.

Unfortunately, when presented with the truth and the necessary steps to take, he walked away. Jesus' commentary as to why that was the case is one of the most shocking things Jesus ever said, "*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*" This went against the prevailing assumption (then and now) that the rich are blessed by God. The thought was that if you were rich, surely you were in good standing with God. Jesus understands how powerful money can be, particularly as a false god.

**Q. How does your relationship with money effect things like your identity, security, purpose/meaning, significance? (Think beyond the direct correlation but the indirect correlation as well...i.e. all thing things that come with money—opportunity, status, security, etc.)**

But money is but one potential false god...many others exist. Even really good things, things that ought to be understood as gifts from God, can become false gods if we're not careful. A spouse. A job. Children. Family of origin. Nation of origin. Power. Pleasure. Even church/ministry can become idols if we are not vigilant to keep God in His proper place in our lives.

Check out verses 29-30. Notice the list of things that people might give up for the sake of the Kingdom. That is a striking and shocking list! It is also a list of potential false gods. Notice also that Jesus said that those who forsake such things "*will not fail to receive many times as much in this age...*". Here's the problem with false gods. They limit us. We become like what we worship. If we worship the limitless, infinite God, the potential of what we can become is pretty great. If we worship less than Him, we become less than we were meant to be. We settle for the gift as opposed to the Gift-Giver.

My personal experience of the promise mentioned here is that even though I am an only child (and when I was younger I really wanted a sibling), now in Christ, I have more brothers and sisters than I can count or even know!

**Q. List the various false gods you can think of. Of those, which do you struggle with the most?**

**Q. What have you forsaken for the kingdom of God? What have you received “in this age” from the kingdom of God?**