

# Eternal Life

JESUS'S GIFT OF SALVATION DEMANDS HUMILITY AND SURRENDER.

## Matthew 19:16-30

16 Just then **someone** **A** came up and asked him, “**Teacher,** **B** what good must I do to have **eternal life?**” **C**  
 17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” he said to him. “There is only one who is good. If you want to enter into life, keep **the commandments.**” **D** 18 “Which ones?” he asked him. Jesus answered: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; 19 honor your father and your mother; and **love your neighbor as yourself.** **E**  
 20 “I have kept all these,” the young man told him. “What do I still lack?” 21 “If you want to be **perfect,**” **F** Jesus said to him, “go, **sell your belongings** **G** and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” 22 When the young man heard that, he went away **grieving,** **H** because he had many possessions. 23 Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it **will be hard** **I** for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the **eye of a needle** **I** than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” 25 When the disciples heard this, they were utterly astonished and asked, “Then who can be saved?” 26 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but **with God** **K** all things are possible.” 27 Then Peter responded to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you. So what will there be for us?” 28 Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, in the **renewal of all things,** **L** when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields because of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and **the last first.**” **M**

### Exploring Key Words

- A** Matthew said he was “young” (v. 20). Luke called him a “ruler” (Luke 18:18), possibly in the synagogue. All three Synoptic Gospels note his wealth (Matt. 19:22; Mark 10:22; Luke 18:23).
- B** A term of respect. Unlike the religious leaders, this man’s questions don’t appear malicious.
- C** The only reference to “eternal life” in Matthew. Elsewhere, Jesus taught about God’s kingdom.
- D** Jesus listed five commands that focus on human relationships (Ex. 20:12-16). Jesus knew the man’s true problem was with the commands that related to honoring God.
- E** Later, Jesus quoted this as part of the great commands (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-39).
- F** “Complete” (NASB). Not without sin, but mature and spiritually whole. See Matthew 5:48.
- G** Not a universal command. This was a specific test of discipleship for this young man.
- H** “Sorrowful” (KJV; ESV); “sad” (NIV). The man’s response reveals the grip that his “many possessions” had on his heart.
- I** Jewish culture saw wealth as a sign of God’s blessing. As such, it was difficult to imagine the wealthy being left outside the kingdom.
- J** For emphasis, Jesus imagined the largest animal in the Middle East trying to get through the smallest conceivable opening.
- K** With God, the difficult is possible. He is the only hope for salvation, including for the wealthy.
- L** The final judgment, when Jesus reigns and all things are made new (Rev. 21:1).
- M** Highlighting the upside-down nature of God’s kingdom. Those who lose the stuff of earth for Jesus’s sake will gain eternal life.



NOTES

### **Unwilling** (Matt. 19:16-22)

- A rich young man asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life.
- Since the man claimed to have kept all the commandments, Jesus told him to sell everything he owned and give it to the poor. Then, he could follow Jesus.
- The young man was not willing and went away grieving. He could not give up his “many possessions.”

### **Possible** (Matt. 19:23-26)

- Jesus told His disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. The disciples were astonished at this and wondered who could be saved if not the rich.
- Jesus replied that with God all things are possible. Salvation for all is possible through Him.

### **Reward** (Matt. 19:27-30)

- Peter responded by saying the disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. He wondered if their sacrifice would be rewarded.
- Jesus promised the disciples that those who have left everything to follow Him will receive a hundred times more. In contrast to the rich young ruler, true followers of Christ also will inherit eternal life.
- He then told them that the first will be last and the last first. This illustrated the upside-down nature of God’s kingdom, where His priorities often contradict what the world finds important.

### **Summary Statements**

*Jesus’s gift of salvation demands humility and surrender.*

- We can affirm that eternal life cannot be achieved by human achievement.
- We can be encouraged knowing salvation is received as a gift from God.
- We can know that following Jesus is worth it, no matter what it costs—the greatest reward being eternal life.

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### **Memory Verse**

*Matthew 19:26*

### **Key Doctrine**

*Salvation*

There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.  
(See John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### ENGAGE

**Bonus: What makes work satisfying for you?**

- An ideology once prevalent in America is something called the “Protestant work ethic.” In its genuine expression, a strong work ethic is a logical progression from one’s relationship with God.
- It is an abuse of this tradition, however, to think that work is the means to a right relationship with God rather than an expression of it. The reasoning of some people is, the harder you work, the better chance of earning God’s favor.

**Do you agree or disagree that nothing is free and everything worth having must be worked for? Explain. (PSG, p. 63)**

### EXPLORE

**UNWILLING (MATT. 19:16-22)**

**What are some common views on how to receive eternal life? (PSG, p. 67)**

- While blessing some children (Matt. 19:13-15), a man came and knelt at Jesus’s feet (see Mark 10:17). From verses 20-22, we learn he was young and rich. Luke 18:18 states that he was a ruler, perhaps in the synagogue.
- From all indications, his question was sincere. Unlike the religious leaders who asked questions to trap Jesus, he sensed that something was missing from his life.
- Jesus urged the man to “keep the commandments.” He was not encouraging salvation by works, but He was trying to help him see his own sinfulness. The law cannot save anyone, but it reminds people of where they fall short.
- In response, the man asked Jesus to be specific. Jesus responded by listing commandments from the “second table.” These commands dealt with human relationships.
- The man confidently replied that he had kept all of these; however, Jesus saw a gaping hole in his relationship with God. The command to sell his possessions was a test that revealed how the man related to the first commands, the commandments that focused on honoring God above all else.
- The would-be disciple walked away “grieving.” He could not release his idols. As a result, he could not follow Jesus completely or find the eternal life he sought.

**Bonus: What personal idols are hindering your relationship with God—and others?**

**POSSIBLE (MATT. 19:23-26)**

**Bonus: How do you define being “rich”? Why?**

- Based on first-century Jewish beliefs, wealthy people were closer to God because of His obvious blessing on their lives. So, Jesus’s statement that it was “hard” for the wealthy to get into the kingdom was startling.

- Using hyperbole, Jesus compared it to squeezing a camel through a needle’s eye. The camel was the largest animal most Jews would ever see, while the eye of a needle was the smallest opening they could fathom.
- The disciples were astonished, but Jesus reminded them that nothing is impossible with God. Rich people who trust God find eternal life. Salvation and entrance into the kingdom is dependent on God and God alone.

**Why was Jesus so hard on rich people? (PSG, p. 68)**

**Bonus: Why would rich people struggle with matters of faith?**

**REWARD (MATT. 19:27-30)**

**Bonus: How does our culture respond to sacrifice? How does that affect the way you think about it?**

- Speaking for all the disciples, Peter wanted to know how this applied to them. They had left everything to follow Jesus and wanted assurance that their sacrifice was not in vain.
- Jesus promised that they would be rewarded, despite coming persecution and the possibility of death. In fact, He noted that anyone who followed Him would find that what they gained surpassed anything they might give up.
- Those who might seem to be in last place by the world’s standards would be first in God’s paradigm.

**What have you left behind to follow Jesus? (PSG, p. 70)**

### CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss the concept that everything worth having must be worked for.

**How might your group help others to correct their understanding of salvation by grace and not by works? (PSG, p. 71)**

Encourage individuals to write a brief paragraph outlining the things they have given up to follow Jesus.

**How do you think Jesus would evaluate that paragraph? (PSG, p. 71)**

#### FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

## BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 70)

Dig deeper into a doctrine or biblical teaching.

Compare Jesus’s teachings in Matthew 19:16-22 to Matthew 6:19-24. Identify Jesus’s statements in chapter 6 that are represented in the life of the would-be disciple in chapter 19. Reflect on the following: **How might possessions become detrimental to a believers’ commitment to follow Jesus? What are some things that God might be calling you to surrender in order to follow Him?**

Draw two columns on the board. Direct the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 70 of the PSG, with half the adults examining Matthew 19:16-22 and the other half examining Matthew 6:19-24. After a few minutes, allow volunteers from each side to share their findings. Record the responses for Matthew 19 in one column and for Matthew 6 in the other. Discuss the results. Lead adults to answer the questions included in the Bible Skill activity.

## OBJECT LESSON: UMBRELLA

Bring an umbrella to the session. Lead a brief discussion about how an umbrella can protect us from either the heat of the sun or rain and other precipitation. Explain: *While it’s not a perfect comparison, God also protects us. He covers us with the umbrella of His grace. But many choose to step outside that protection and face storms and heat alone.*

Allow the group to suggest reasons why people might want to go their own way instead of trusting in the guidance and protection Jesus provides. Encourage the group to consider why they personally struggle to trust their lives, families, finances, and futures to Jesus. Challenge adults to spend time in prayer this week, reflecting on areas where they fight to maintain control and asking God to forgive them for stepping outside the protection of His umbrella.

## THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

When Jesus encouraged the rich man to follow Him (Matt. 19:21), He wasn’t inviting him to an improved moral life. He was calling him into discipleship—a full reorientation of identity, allegiance, and purpose.

The Greek word translated “follow” literally means “come after.” It’s the call of a master to a student and involves more than mere belief. It means walking where the master walks, listening to His teaching, obeying His commands, and being with Him.

It’s not easy. Jesus’s command exposed the young man’s heart. He loved his possessions more than he loved Christ. His sorrowful departure shows that the cost was higher than he was willing to pay.

He’s not alone. In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus confronted some would-be followers who offered conditional obedience. Jesus responded with blunt clarity, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62).

In Luke 14:26-27, Jesus said that following Him means hating those closest to you. He wasn’t endorsing neglect or cruelty. Rather, He was emphasizing that He must be supreme in the lives of His people. Matthew 10:37 makes this point even more clearly:

“The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” Everything we call “ours”—comforts, jobs, families, and plans—are at His disposal.

Though the cost of following Jesus is unquestionably high, Jesus made it clear that the reward is infinitely greater. Bottom line: Jesus is worthy. Like Peter and the others, we may find ourselves tempted to ask, “What about me? Look what I’ve given up!” In those moments, Jesus graciously reminds us that nothing we leave behind for His sake is ever lost.

In Christ, we receive far more than we ever give up. Whatever we sacrifice for Jesus—comfort, status, relationships, or security—will be repaid many times over, whether in this life or (most likely) in the age to come.

## BONUS CONTENT



### The Synoptic Gospels

Learn more about how the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke offer a unified yet distinct portrait of Jesus’s life and ministry.