

## MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ seek God and his perspective (Matt. 6:33).

## SCRIPTURE

LUKE 18:18-30

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

By worldly standards, the rich ruler in this passage was “good.” The title “ruler” suggests he was part of the Sanhedrin or possibly a leader in a local synagogue. He had kept God’s commandments since he was a boy (Luke 18:20-21). Because the Jewish people only applied the word “good” to God, it was unusual to address a teacher in that way. Was the ruler acknowledging Jesus as God? Jesus pressed the young man to discover for himself what he believed about Jesus.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1064810185>

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** We’re giving you a lot of teaching material. Don’t feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.



## OPENING

### PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

*OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.*

### OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What’s the best thing that’s happened? Anything major going on?
- What is your most prized possession? Why?



## EXPLORE

### EXPLORE GOD’S WORD

3-5 minutes

Most of us want to be seen as good and doing good things. We think that if we don’t lie, murder, or cheat on a test, we can earn enough goodness to outweigh the “small bad stuff” we do. However, just like the rich ruler in Luke 18:18-30, Jesus challenges us that following the rules is not enough to inherit eternal life. Putting Jesus in the number one place in our hearts instead of our “stuff” or possessions can be challenging. However, we forget how much we gain when Jesus is the ruler of our hearts instead of anything else we want to hold onto.

## Read Luke 18:21–23 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How would you answer the question the rich ruler asks in verse 18?  
The answers may vary, and you might get a few “follow Jesus,” but push your students to be as clear as possible. Ask them to consider how they would answer this question from a friend or family member.
- Do you think following the Ten Commandments is all you need to do to be considered good?  
Unfortunately, none of us are capable of keeping all the commandments (Rom. 3:23). Point to the truth that no one is good but God alone. We are incapable of being good on our own. The only thing good about us is Jesus.
- On a scale of 0–5 (0=nothing, 5=everything), how much of your life do you think you hold back from God?  
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share your own number and how that number has changed over your faith journey.



*Say something like:* The rich ruler obviously thinks that following the law (Exodus 20:1–17) will make him good and lead to eternal life. But Jesus is more interested in our hearts.

## Read Luke 18:21–28 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- Do you think of yourself as a good person? Why or why not?  
Almost everyone likes to think of themselves as a “good” person, but our most righteous acts are like filthy rags compared to Christ (Isa. 64:6). We are all in desperate need of Jesus to save us from our sins.
- Why is it harder for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God?  
Answers will vary but may include: they can depend on wealth more than God, don’t feel like they need God because they see themselves as the ones providing for their needs, it’s easy to get wrapped up in earthly possessions, and therefore Jesus is not the center of their lives, etc.
- What would be one big thing in your life that you would struggle to give up for Jesus?  
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share your own answer to help get the conversation started.



*Say something like:* We all have something that, like the rich ruler, we will struggle to give up to Jesus because we have made it core to our identity and who we are. So, when Jesus asks us to let it go, we feel the sacrifice is too great. But Jesus is trying to get us to understand that giving up that thing is actually gaining you much, much more.

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

## Read Luke 18:29–30 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- If the rich ruler had done what Jesus asked, what do you think he would have gained?  
Eternal life and a relationship with Jesus would certainly be included. He would have gained freedom from his materialism, forgiveness of his sins, and a new purpose and master in life. Our problem is that we often focus on what we lose by following Jesus rather than what we gain.
- Why do you think we focus on what we give up to follow Jesus rather than what we gain?  
Too often, we mistakenly see Jesus as a rule-maker instead of a loving Savior. The closer we move to Jesus, the more we will see the things we hold back from God.



*Say something like:* Jesus is clear that the impossible can be made possible with him. But it requires us to let go of our possessions (or whatever is taking that number one place in our hearts) and place Jesus at the center of our lives. When we do that, we are stepping into something better than we could have ever thought or imagined.



## CONNECT & APPLY

### CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

*Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how Jesus did something that seemed impossible in your life.*

*Example:* The very first time Jesse stood up in front of a group of kids as their official Sunday school teacher, he was terrified. What in the world could he offer these kindergarten kids? He was a new Christ-follower, didn't know the Bible very well, and felt super out of place. But God had a plan for his time in that classroom. Years later, while speaking at a summer camp, a counselor approached Jesse and introduced herself. She had been in that kindergarten class and, because of Jesse's faithful teaching, had said yes to Jesus that year. Now, years later, she was leading a cabin of kids the same age. He didn't feel confident back then, but God knew what he was doing.

- What do you think Jesus could do in your life if you surrendered everything to him?

*Answers will vary. Don't rush this question; give your students time to think and challenge them to think big and bold about their answers.*



### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ seek God and his perspective (Matt. 6:33).

*Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.*

### APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Take some time this week to think about what you hold on to, and ask Jesus to help you surrender it. Consider talking about it with someone you trust and asking them to support you as you learn to let go and invite Jesus to be the number one priority in your life.

*Be specific:*

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



**FACILITATOR NOTE:** Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



**CLOSING****PRAYER**

2–3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that your students will have God's perspective and that their sacrifices are a win for them and the Kingdom of God.

*Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

**MEMORY VERSE**

*Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.*

"But he said, 'What is impossible with man is possible with God.'"

Luke 18:27 (ESV)

**NOTES**

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. May not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

