

## Small Group Guide THE GOSPEL AND THE RICH

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*Dr. David Platt*

*February 9, 2014*

*Mark 10:21-22*

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

## GETTING STARTED

### *Before Small Group*

#### *Weekly Readings for February 10-16*

<u><b>Monday</b></u>	<u><b>Tuesday</b></u>	<u><b>Wednesday</b></u>	<u><b>Thursday</b></u>	<u><b>Friday</b></u>	<u><b>Saturday</b></u>	<u><b>Sunday</b></u>
Genesis 43 Mark 13	Genesis 44 Mark 14	Genesis 45 Mark 15	Genesis 46 Mark 16	Genesis 47 Luke 1:1-38	Genesis 48 Luke 1:39-80	Genesis 49 Luke 2

#### *Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Genesis)*

As the first book of the Bible, Genesis explains that God is the all-powerful Creator who cares about His creation even when they disobey Him, and it teaches that God takes evil and transforms it for His glory (Gen. 50:20). Written by Moses when Israel was wandering in the wilderness, Genesis 12-50 specifically emphasizes the development of the nation of Israel by focusing on their founding fathers – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This week's readings focus on the life of Joseph. His story is instructional in how it emphasizes obedience to God's instructions, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, the sovereignty of God in the midst of suffering, and the ultimate blessing of the righteous. Despite persecution from family, slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment, Joseph continues to profess faith in God and acts righteously. Genesis 50:20 provides the thesis of the entire book, for from the Fall to the life of Joseph, God continually demonstrates His sovereignty. Nothing happens outside of His knowledge or control. In Genesis 45, Joseph reiterates these truths as he tells his brothers that "God sent me" (Gen. 45:5, 7, 8, 9).

In Genesis 49, Jacob blesses his sons, identifying the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 49:28). Instead of there being a tribe of Joseph, Jacob named Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh as recipients of his inheritance (Gen. 48:1-6). So Joseph received a double portion of inheritance, so his two sons would be equal to Joseph's brothers. When doing the math, this adds up to thirteen tribes, but since the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe and did not receive any inheritance of tribal land when Israel reached the Promised Land, this tribe is not typically included in the list of twelve. These prophecies from Jacob in Genesis 49 would remind his descendants of their history and their inheritance.

Included in the blessing of Genesis 49 is a prophecy regarding Judah. Although he was the fourth son of Jacob, he received his father's blessing instead of his older three brothers because Reuben had slept with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22; 49:4) and because Simeon and Levi had murdered the male villagers after the defiling of their sister Dinah (Gen. 34; 49:5-7). The prophecies regarding Judah involve a line of kings (Gen. 49:10), and Matthew 1:3 and Luke 3:33-34 inform us that Jesus descended from the line of Judah. Genesis 49:11-12 depicts a time of plenty, for a foal tethered to a vine and garments washed in wine would

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only occur in a season of abundance and blessing. These descriptions apply to a golden age of rule by the line of Judah.

#### *Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (Matthew)*

As the shortest and the earliest of the four Gospels, The Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus' identity, and Mark 1:1 introduces Him as human ("Jesus"), the Messiah ("Christ"), and the Son of God. Although Mark emphasizes Jesus' identity, he consistently records Jesus *silencing* those who state Who He is. By focusing on this question of Jesus' identity, Mark demonstrates Who Jesus is and how He fulfills the promises of the prophets.

Mark 8 presents a shift in this Gospel, for in Mark 8:31, Jesus begins teaching His followers about His purpose, death, and resurrection. Peter's confession in Mark 8:29 reaffirms this Gospel's theme – Jesus' identity as the Christ, the Promised Messiah. Mark reiterates this declaration of Jesus' identity at the climactic end of his Gospel when the centurion sees the death of Christ and proclaims, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mk. 15:39).

In Mark 13, Jesus teaches about the end of the age and foretells of His death and resurrection, and Mark 14-15 details the Passover and His betrayal, arrest, trial, and death. Mark 16:1-8 tells of Jesus' resurrection, and the remainder of the chapter (Mk. 16:9-20) is introduced by a statement saying, "some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20." How do we treat this portion of Scripture as well as another like it in John 8? Although Mark 16:9-20 expresses some content not otherwise found in Scripture, it does not alter our understanding of Jesus or contradict biblical truths. The reason for this note in our Bibles has to do with important early manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) not containing these passages, while other manuscripts do include them. Mark 16:9-20 was likely added by someone other than Mark because 16:8 presents an awkward and abrupt ending to Mark's Gospel. While no doctrine is threatened by this passage, we must read it carefully and thoughtfully.

In Luke 1: 1-4, Luke explains why he wrote this book – for his friend Theophilus (and for us) to have certainty regarding the identity of Jesus and the beliefs that Christ-followers commit themselves to. While Matthew focuses on Jesus as the Promised Messiah and Mark emphasizes that He is the Son of God, Luke depicts Jesus as Savior. Even the name that Gabriel gives to Mary in Luke 1 points to this role, for Jesus' name means "God saves." The stories of John the Baptist and of Jesus as a child set the stage for the salvation theme of this Gospel. The prophecies fulfilled by John the Baptist indicate that he would be the forerunner for the Messiah, directing people to turn to the Lord (Lk. 1:16-17) and giving knowledge of salvation to the people (Lk. 1:77). Even the story about Jesus being presented in the Temple reveals that He was recognized as God's salvation as an infant (Lk. 2:22-38).

#### *During Small Group*

**Welcome** – *Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.*

**Looking Back** – *Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?*

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*Looking Up* – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

### *Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)*

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Praise God for all the many ways He has blessed us with resources and possessions. Ask Him to guide our understanding of money and possessions in light of all He is doing in the world. Pray for God to grow our love for the poor and the needy. Ask Him to deliver and protect us from the temptation to materialism. Pray we will all find out ultimate satisfaction and pleasure in God. Ask God to transform our lives to more clearly reflect the treasure we find in Him.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for the on-going ministry led by Brook Hills men at LifeTech's parolee transition program in Thomasville, where every other Sunday a meal and a Bible study are provided to any parolees who want to participate. We are also praying for Ambassador for Christ Church and Rick Thomas, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term missionary kids Maggie, Tim, and Bobby Coe serving in Ecuador. The Coe family moved to Ecuador almost two years ago. They have been making disciples by serving at a local school, a local orphanage, and an adventure camp in the jungle. Maggie, Tim, and Bobby have had a unique opportunity to go to school and spend the last two years of their lives as teenagers sharing the gospel with their friends and serving the church in Ecuador. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in the Middle East and the Bania peoples of India. For more information and ways to pray, visit [brookhills.org/thisweek](http://brookhills.org/thisweek).

## **MAIN TRUTH**

### *Message Outline*

#### **THE GOSPEL AND THE RICH** Mark 10:21-22

#### **Ten Truths To Contemplate...**

- Jesus' call to salvation demands radical surrender.
- Jesus' call to salvation includes radical commands.
- Jesus' call to salvation involves radical love.

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- Followers of Christ prioritize sacrificial care for the poor.
- We need to understand our use of money and possessions in the context of redemptive history.
- We need to realize the dangerous, deadly nature of desire for possessions.
- Jesus does not want to take away our pleasure; He wants to satisfy us with His treasure.
- Jesus desires to free us from bondage to ourselves and bondage to our stuff.
- The cost of discipleship is great, but the cost of non-discipleship is greater.
- Our lives will count on earth only when our eyes are fixed on heaven.

#### Ten Questions To Consider...

- Have you turned from your sin and yourself and trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord?
- Are you daily surrendering to the lordship of Jesus over your lifestyle and your possessions?
- Does your way of life (and use of money) reflect a priority on sacrificial care for the poor?
- Have you set a God-glorifying, Christ-centered, self-denying cap on your standard of living that frees you up to increase your pattern of giving?
  - In what ways might you live more simply for the sake of Christ and the spread of the gospel?
  - In what ways might you give more sacrificially for the sake of Christ and the spread of the gospel?
- What specific steps might the Lord be leading you to take to abandon or use your money and possessions on earth for the sake of treasure and reward in eternity?
  - This week?
  - This month?
  - This year?

#### Message Summary

In Mark 10:17-31, Jesus identifies a blind spot in the life of the rich young ruler – materialism. Truths to contemplate as a result of this passage includes that Jesus' call to salvation involves radical surrender, radical commands, and radical love. Furthermore, followers of Christ should prioritize sacrificial care for the poor, recognize the dangerous and deadly nature of desire for possessions, and understand our use of money and possessions in the context of redemptive history. In doing so, we can know that Jesus wants to satisfy us with *His* treasure and to free us from bondage to ourselves and bondage to our stuff. As we read about the interaction between Jesus and this man, we should operate under the assumption that something needs to change in our own lives about the issue of money and possessions. Each believer should question what specific steps should be taken with regards to either abandoning or using money and possessions on earth for the sake of treasure and reward in eternity.

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### WHY IT MATTERS

#### *Digging Deeper*

For some people in the small group, this sermon may be uncomfortable to discuss because it is convicting. Begin by praying that God would convict us of sin, change our hearts, and give us the strength and the desire to obey. Others in the group may have many questions about how to live in light of the truths highlighted through this sermon. Ask if anyone has any questions regarding what they heard in the sermon and read in this passage. Gently remind the group to examine their hearts and to consider whether or not they have been blind to sin in their own lives regarding money and possessions. Ask the group to identify examples of blind spots we have in the American church and in our own lives. What actions or practices of American Christians are culturally acceptable but sinful?

Pastor David often references “urgent physical and spiritual poverty” in the world. What does this phrase mean? Ask the group for examples of urgent physical need and of spiritual poverty. In the sermon, Pastor David shared the set of statistics listed below. Ask the group if they live as though these people do not exist and if they ignore this reality about the world. Also, how should we respond to these statistics? What should we do with them? If these statistics do not jolt and compel us to action, what does that say about our spiritual state?

- 7 billion people in world, and at the most, 1/3 are Christian. That leaves...
  - Over 4.5 billion people in the world today on a road that leads to eternal hell.
  - Over 2 billion who have little to no access to the gospel.
- The Reality of Poverty and Suffering
  - The reality is that, today, over 1 billion people live (and die) in desperate poverty (less than \$1 a day).
    - 700 million in slums.
    - 500 million on the verge of starvation.
    - 200 million children exploited for labor.
  - And what these numbers mean and look like practically for people...
    - A lack of food and water.
      - Over a billion people on the planet today lack access to safe drinking water.
    - Inadequate medical care
    - Disease
      - Diseases like HIV/AIDS - 6,000 people are dying every day in Africa of HIV/AIDS.
      - You have easily curable disease and sickness. For example, millions of people in the world are dying of diarrhea, most of them kids.
    - Brain damage caused by protein deficiency.
      - Doctors say that 80% of brain development happens in the first two years of your life, and if you don't have sufficient protein then, you will pay for it with a malformed brain the rest of your life.
  - So over a billion living in desperate poverty (less than \$1 a day), and close to 2 billion others live on less than \$2 a day.
    - That's nearly half the world struggling to find food, water, shelter, and medical care for the same amount of money we spend on a coke at lunch.
    - And gets worse. According to UNICEF...
      - Over 20,000 children today will die due to either starvation or a preventable disease, diseases like diarrhea or pneumonia or malaria.
      - To put it in perspective, that 20,000 kids. If this were true of children in the Birmingham community, every child 18 years younger in our county would be dead within a few days.

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As the group leader, do not assume that everyone in the group is familiar with terms such as “prosperity gospel” and “redemptive history” that were referenced in the sermon. Take time to explain these terms, to define them as a group, and to give examples of them.

The last half of the sermon focuses on “ten questions to consider.” Challenge the group to prayerfully go through each of these questions this next week and, if married, to do so with their spouse. As a family, brainstorm what you can sell, give away, share, and sacrifice for the sake of Christ and the spread of the gospel. Emphasize the importance of considering these questions and not just moving on this week as though life were normal.

The group may have questions about how all of this tangibly plays out in their lives. An example might be whether or not Christians should put back money into savings. Also, how do we know what the cap should be on our standard of living? How do we identify what to do with the excess money that comes a result of simplifying our lives? Those in your group may also have questions about how to begin re-ordering their life and use of money in such a way as to prioritize sacrificial care for the poor. Address these and other questions that group members may have.

Identify the challenges to *daily* surrendering to the lordship of Jesus over our lifestyle and our possessions. How do we faithfully overcome these challenges? How can this small group spur each other on to obey when it comes to money and possessions? One idea includes providing time during this small group meeting to brainstorm as a group ways that their life can look different *this week* with regard to the truths expressed in this passage and sermon. Have each person in the group identify one way they can apply these truths this week, and encourage them to share that with another person, whether inside the group or outside of it. Also, challenge everyone to process how their life needs to look different next month and be willing to share that at the beginning of small group next week (this can be done either as a large group or by breaking up into smaller groups). Do the same with regards how to their lives should look different this next year, but set a date as to when the group will discuss this. Point out that how all of this plays out will be different for each person and family, so we must be wary about comparing ourselves to others. Discuss how to avoid the trap of comparison.

## **NOW WHAT DO WE DO?**

### ***Group Discussion & Application***

*Use the following questions to help review the application of God’s Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).*

- As believers, why do we rationalize our lifestyles, our possessions, and our use of money? Why is there such blindness and unclear thinking about this subject? Why should we fight against materialism?
- How do we address the sin of materialism in our lives?
- Read Mark 10:17-22. What commands does Jesus give to the rich young ruler in Mark 10:21? We must be wary of universalizing these commands (applying them to all believers) and cautious of minimizing them. Why did Jesus give *this* command to *this* specific individual? While He may not give these same five instructions to every Christ-follower, how does this passage apply to all believers?
- How is our use of money and possessions a reflection of our spiritual condition? How should our relationship with Christ affect our view and treatment of money and possessions on a daily basis? Are you doing everything God has commanded you to do with your money and possessions? Is your lifestyle more akin to the way the culture has deemed us to live or the way Christ has commanded us to live? What is driving your pocketbooks more: the comforts of our culture or the commands of Christ?

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- Read Mark 10:21 and Luke 12:32-34. Jesus' call to salvation involves radical love, and Jesus' words to the rich young ruler overflowed out of love for him. Do we view His words in Mark 10:17-31 as loving. Why or why not? Why are they evidence of His love? What truths do Luke 12:32-34 express?
- Why should followers of Christ prioritize sacrificial care for the poor (Jas. 2:14-17; Matt. 25:31-46)? What does it tangibly look like to prioritize the needs of the poor and to sacrificially care for the poor?
- "We need to understand our use of money and possessions in the context of redemptive history." What does this mean? What is "redemptive history"? How does the Old Testament view God's blessing and material possessions (see Deut. 28:1; 1 Kings 8)? How does this compare and contrast with how the New Testament portrays God's blessing and material possessions? Discuss the meaning and the application of the following statement from the sermon: "God's plan is not to display His glory through higher standards of living than the rest of the world. God's plan is to spread His glory through the radical sacrifice of our lives for the rest of the world."
- What is the prosperity gospel? What are the dangers of this belief? How is it unbiblical?
- Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. How can our desire for possessions be dangerous and deadly? How do we regulate our appetite for possessions?
- How are Jesus' words about money and possessions an invitation to joy and not a burden to bear? Do we view His commands regarding wealth and possessions this way? Why or why not?
- "The cost of discipleship is great, but the cost of non-discipleship is greater." What are the pros and cons of discipleship versus non-discipleship? How would you explain this to a nonbeliever when sharing the gospel?
- How would you live differently if you truly believed that heaven – not earth – is your final destination? How do we daily fix our eyes on things that are above instead of things that are on this earth (see Col. 3:1-5)?