

CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.
2. Why is the topic of money and wealth important to Jesus?

In Luke 18:18-30 and 19:1-10, we read about two rich men who encounter Jesus. Each man, sinful in his own way and seeking different things, responds uniquely to Jesus' engagement with him. We have much to learn from both passages and the experience of both the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus.

READ Luke 18:18-30 and 19:1-10.

DISCUSS and REFLECT**Luke 18:18-30**

A rich young ruler—likely a member of an official council or court—approaches Jesus. He asks how he can “inherit eternal life.” In the course of the conversation, it becomes evident that this young man, a good and earnest Jew, has kept the commandments. What else does he need to do? Jesus instructs him that he must sell all of his possessions, give them to the poor and follow him. The young man turns away, dejected.

- Describe the character of the rich young ruler based on what we know from the passage.
- What specific answer is the rich young ruler looking for? What do you make of this?
- Describe the new instruction that Jesus offers the ruler in verse 22. How is this instruction different from the other commandments he has kept since he was a boy?

The disciples, apparently standing nearby, were astounded. Jesus uses the familiar phrase “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.” Stumped at this, the disciples ask Jesus who then can be saved. Jesus reminds them, “what is impossible for mortals is possible for God” and that those who follow Jesus will be rewarded for their sacrifices.

- Talk about verse 25. What does Jesus mean by this metaphor? What does it tell us about God? What does it tell us about ourselves?

- What do you think of Jesus' words in verse 27? How does it relate to the young ruler's question?
- The story of the rich young ruler also appears in the gospels of Mark and Matthew. In Mark's account, Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler is slightly different: “Teacher,” he declared, “all these [commandments] I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor...” How is this different from Luke 18:22? How does this version of Jesus' reaction change your response to the passage?

Luke 19:1-10

As Jesus enters Jericho, a crowd is watching him. The story centers on the tax collector Zacchaeus, who one writer describes as a “Jew-turned Roman-lackey” who “betrayed his own people to line his pockets...he is just full of shame.” Another describes Zacchaeus as “exploiting the poor...taking double taxes from elderly couples, letting his buddies off the hook..., and wasting the hard-earned money of hard-working people so he could live in luxury.”

Very short in stature but desperate to catch a glimpse of Jesus, Zacchaeus climbs a tree for a better view. When Jesus sees him, he tells Zacchaeus he wants to stay at his house. The crowds scoff at Jesus' choice of host. Zacchaeus responds by promising to give half his possessions to the poor and to pay back all who he has defrauded by “four times as much.” As told in the Jesus Storybook Bible, Jesus then says, “My friend!...Today God has rescued you!”

- Consider the perspective of the townspeople who despise Zacchaeus. Can you identify with their point of view?
- When he meets Zacchaeus, Jesus says very few words to him. What do you make of how Jesus chooses to approach Zacchaeus?
- Zacchaeus' response is unexpected in light of his reputation and past behavior. What made Zacchaeus have a change of heart?

APPLY

1. Compare the two rich men featured in these two scripture passages – the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. In what ways are they alike? In what ways are they different? Consider their

backgrounds, reputations, their interactions with Jesus, etc.

2. Consider Jesus' response to both men. We see in Mark that Jesus looked at the young ruler and "loved him." We see him wanting to dine and stay with Zacchaes. Jesus offers grace to both men, despite their sinfulness. "Grace is for the oppressed AND the oppressor, God gives mercy and NOT justice," states one commentator. Is this comforting or is this difficult to swallow? Contrast the differences in the mens' responses to this grace.
3. Another common thread in these two stories is the concept of selling possessions and giving money to the poor. Discuss why this kind of generosity is so central to Jesus' message.

MEMORIZE

Luke 19:9-10

In these two passages, we meet two men, flawed in very different ways. Jesus loves them exactly as they are and offers them abundant grace in the form of a relationship with him. How has Jesus done the same in your life? Reflect on his generosity to you, and how he might be calling you to respond.

For this study, the writer referenced the Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible, The NIV Study Bible, The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd Jones, the article Brene Brown and the End of Shame (See: Nazarene Carpenter) by Aaron M.G. Zimmerman (mbird.com) and the article "Offended by Jesus (and The Man Who Didn't Have Any Friends) by Justin Holcomb (mbird.com).