



Jesus Confronts the Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19:16–26



LESSON GOAL

The child will admit his sinfulness, count the cost of eternal life, and follow Christ.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- The rich young ruler asked Jesus how to be saved.
- Jesus revealed the rich man's sin.
- The man went away sad because his wealth was more important to him than salvation.

KEY VERSE

“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

—Matthew 19:26

APPLICATION

- Examine your heart to see how you have disobeyed God's laws.
- Do not rest in your own good works to please God.
- Rejoice that God does the impossible when He saves man.

NEXT WEEK

Matthew 20:1–16

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to...

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are...

- _____
- _____
- _____

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point them to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

**Materials
Needed:**

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

Instead of traveling through Samaria on His way from Galilee to Judea, Jesus spent the months before His death on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Matt. 19:1). In Matthew 19:1, Matthew refers to the area as “the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.” (Although officially called Perea, the area was sometimes called Judea because Herod the Great had ruled over both areas.) Jesus was followed into the area by a great multitude (19:2). In addition to healing and teaching the people (Matt. 19:2; Mark 10:1), Jesus wisely answered the Pharisees who were testing Him with questions about divorce (Matt. 19:3–12). Following the Pharisees’ testing of Jesus, Jesus blessed the little children (Matt. 19:13–15). Just as Jesus turned on the road to leave the area (Matt. 19:15; Mark 10:17), a rich young ruler came running up. He threw himself on his knees before Jesus (Mark 10:17) and asked the question he urgently wanted answered: “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16).

Jesus’ Dialogue with the Ruler (Matt. 19:16–22)

Little is known about the rich young ruler apart from what his dialogue with Jesus reveals about his spiritual condition. The word for “young” in Matthew 19:20 only limits his age from approximately 20 to 40 years old. Matthew 19:22 reveals that the man had “great possessions,” but no more is said about the extent of his wealth. Of the three Gospels, only Luke mentions that the rich young man was a ruler (Luke 18:18). He most likely had a position in a local synagogue, perhaps in the town Jesus was just leaving. While little is known about the externals of the rich, young ruler, his question to Jesus reveals much about his heart.

The young man asked Jesus, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16). The man sensed that he lacked everlasting life. More than just an unending existence, everlasting life refers to a quality of life enjoyed by those who are alive to God and the things of God. Jesus paralleled the man’s request with entering the kingdom of heaven (19:23) and the disciples paralleled it with being saved (19:25). The man recognized that he was not ready for the kingdom of heaven and sensed a need to be saved. But the rest of his question reveals how far he was from understanding how to gain everlasting life.

The young man was right in coming to Jesus, the good teacher, for the answer of how to get eternal life, but he wrongly thought that he could receive eternal life by doing a “good thing” (Matt. 19:16). Following typical pharasaical thought, the man believed that salvation was based on his works. When he sensed he did not possess eternal life, he naturally began looking for a work that would earn him what he was missing.

From the beginning, Jesus' answer was directed toward revealing to the man his sin. Jesus began by pointing the man to God's character. He asked, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (19:17). Jesus did not deny that He possessed the divine attribute of goodness, but did question whether the man knew what it meant to call someone good. The man freely used "good" in referring to both others and his own works. Jesus' correction that only God is good should have caused the man to wonder whether his works really were good and also to marvel at Jesus' goodness.

Jesus continued to show the man his sinfulness by directing him towards God's Law. Jesus promised that if the man kept the commandments he could enter into everlasting life (Matt. 19:17). The man should have humbly responded that he had failed to obey God's commands. Instead, he foolishly asked, "Which ones?" (19:18). His confidence in his ability to satisfy God's standard was unshaken. If there was a law he was not aware of, he wanted to know so he could keep it as well as he had kept the others. Jesus responded not with some secret law, but with laws the man would have known since he was a child: "You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "Honor your father and your mother," and "You shall love your neighbor yourself" (19:18–19). Five of the commands are from the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20) and the last command is from Leviticus 19:18. Even though the commands should have left him begging God for mercy, the young man still responded, "All these things I have kept from my youth" (Matt. 19:20). The man had already reduced God's laws to a checklist of actions which he could successfully complete. He was convinced that breaking the Law was not his problem. Still grasping for eternal life but unwilling to admit his sin, the young man asked Jesus, "What do I still lack?" (19:20).

Despite the man's rebellion towards God, Jesus still loved the man (Mark 10:21). Because the man could not receive eternal life until he realized his own wickedness, Jesus opened for the man a window into his own soul. Jesus commanded the man, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Jesus promised the man perfection (completion or wholeness) and treasure in heaven if he obeyed Jesus' command. Jesus was not giving the man a work he could do to gain salvation but challenging the man to submit to His Lordship. If the man truly understood his sinfulness before God and the judgment he was facing, he would have quickly obeyed Christ and submitted to Him as Lord. But the rich young man had another ruler in his heart.

The ruler received what he had come to Jesus for: instruction on how to inherit eternal life. But Matthew says that "when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (19:22). The man had not expected Jesus to demand that he die to himself and follow Him. Because he was unwilling to see his sin, the man saw no reason to follow Jesus' command. He was not desperate for eternal life because he did not fear eternal judgment. Jesus offered salvation to the man if he would only die to himself and live for Christ, but the man chose his possessions instead. The Lord knew where the idols were in the ruler's heart. When He revealed them, the rich man chose to continue bowing to his possessions rather than bowing before the Messiah. The rich young man went away sorrowful that the salvation Jesus offered cost more than he was willing to pay.

Jesus' Dialogue with the Disciples (Matt. 19:23–26)

After the rich young ruler went away, Jesus turned to His disciples. He showed the seriousness of what He was about to say by opening with "Assuredly, I say to you" (Matt. 19:23). Jesus was about to say something that would challenge the disciples'

perception both of this world and eternity. Jesus said, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Jesus further explained exactly how difficult it is for a rich man to be saved. He said, "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" (19:24). Just as it is impossible for a camel, the largest Palestinian animal, to go through a needle's eye, it is impossible for a rich man to be saved. Although the rich young ruler turned away from Christ because he loved the false security and superficial satisfaction that his riches brought him more than eternity in the kingdom of God, his salvation was impossible for another reason.

Jesus' statement challenged the disciples' presuppositions. Matthew says that when the disciples heard Jesus' proclamation about the impossibility of the rich being saved, "they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'" (19:25). The disciples marveled at Jesus' words, which apparently closed the gates of the kingdom of heaven to all men, not just the rich. Jews thought that being rich was a sign of God's blessing. The disciples reasoned that if those most blessed by God could not gain eternal life, then those less blessed by God could not gain it either. In desperation, they wondered if anyone could be saved.

Looking intently into their faces, Jesus authoritatively proclaimed: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (19:26). Rich men are not the only ones who cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Ultimately, it is as impossible for any man, whether poor or rich, to gain eternal life as it is for a camel to go through a needle's eye. No man will be saved unless God changes his heart. If salvation were up to men, no man would ever be saved because none would repent, none would humble themselves before God, and none would cease from their efforts to save themselves. Only when God does the impossible and grants repentance (2 Tim. 2:24–26) will wicked men, whether poor or rich, come to salvation.

Conclusion

Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler should humble all who desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Entrance is not based upon efforts to keep God's commands or the apparent possession of God's blessing. The only way any will come to salvation is if God does the impossible—changing their hearts so they see their sin, repent of their sin, and believe in Christ as the sacrifice for their sin. All who confess to be saved must examine their hearts to see if there is anything Jesus could require from them that they would be unable to part with. If they leave Christ in preference for other desires, then God has not yet done the impossible in their hearts.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Where did Jesus take the disciples?

Jesus took them to the top of a mountain.

Who did Jesus take with Him?

Jesus took three disciples and they were Peter, James and John.

What happened when they got to the top of the mountain?

When they arrived on the mountain Jesus was transfigured.

What does it mean to be transfigured?

Jesus is God. For just a moment the disciples saw Jesus' glory as God. It was very bright, like the sun.

Who did the disciples see with Jesus on the mountain?

The disciples saw Elijah and Moses with Jesus.

What did the disciples hear God the Father say?

A cloud came down onto them and they heard God's voice from heaven. God said that Jesus is His Son and that they should listen to Him.



The Rich Young Ruler

The rich young ruler was a wealthy man, and most likely a leader in the synagogue. This would have been a very honorable position for a young man as himself. For Him to admit he needed eternal life and to come to Jesus to find it would have been a very unusual thing.



Eternal Life

In this passage the term eternal life refers to the quality of life rather than the quantity of life. It refers to the joy, peace, hope, rest, and assurance one receives when they trust in Christ. The rich young ruler, despite having all that the world has to offer, knew that he did not have this God-given type of eternal life. In his dissatisfaction the young man was sensing that he needed a closer relationship with God than he had. When he was told of what this relationship would cost him, the rich young ruler was unwilling to pay.



Salvation by Keeping the Law

Jews like this man were taught all their lives that the way into life was through obedience to God's commandments. When asked to keep all the commandments, the rich young ruler merely responded with, "Which ones?". The young man had failed to see what Jesus was trying to reveal to him, and that is that the command-



ments he knew by heart and was trying to keep could not possibly provide him with the life. to which they pointed. In trying to show the man his sinfulness, Jesus was pointing out that perfectly keeping the law is impossible for every man.

Perfect

In this context, the term is used as a synonym for salvation. Jesus was saying, “If you truly desire eternal life, prove your sincerity by selling your possessions and giving what you have to the poor.”



You Can't Get Through

Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. Bring a needle to class and some thread with various thicknesses. Ask the children which ones they think you will be able to thread through the needle. Bring out a thick rope and ask the children whether you could thread it through the needle. You may let some of them try. Then show them a picture of a camel. Do they think anyone could get a camel through a needle? What can be harder than getting a camel through a needle? In today's lesson we will see that Jesus said something was even harder than getting a camel through the eye of a needle.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

During the final months of Jesus' life He ministered to people, taught them, and called them to follow Him. He was also being persecuted by the Pharisees. They challenged Him often, trying to trap Him in doing something illegal so they could arrest Him. But it was not Jesus' time to die yet. One of the people who he spoke with during this time was a young Jewish man who was very wealthy and powerful. Jesus met him while He was walking on a road on His way out of town. This young man came to Jesus, threw himself on his knees before Jesus, and asked Him a question. He said, “Good Teacher, what good things shall I do to have eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16).

This man wanted to know how to go to heaven because he wasn't sure that he had done enough to get there. He thought there was something that he could do to go to heaven, and he wanted Jesus to tell him what it was. Jesus saw that this man needed to see his sin and repent of it. He knew that the young man needed to see his need for a savior, because on his own he could not possibly do what he needed to do. Jesus said to the man, “But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17) Jesus knew that it was impossible for any man, apart from Himself, to keep all of the commandments perfectly for his whole life, so he was

giving the young man an impossible task. The young man obviously did not see the lesson Jesus was teaching him, because he asked Jesus which commandments he had to keep to go to heaven.

Jesus spoke with the man knowing that in the end, he would reveal the young man's sin to him. He told the him that he had to keep the following commandments: "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:19). These were all laws that would have been well known to the young man. He said, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I lack?"

The young man believed that he had perfectly kept those laws, yet he still did not have confidence that he would go to heaven. Jesus knew that the young man had not been perfect, and he also knew what the real issue was in his heart. He knew that this young man was not willing to make Jesus his Lord, the ruler of his heart. He knew that his riches and his wealth were his lord. Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21).

When the rich young man heard this, he walked away very sad, because he knew that he would not go to heaven since he was not willing to obey Jesus and make Him Lord.

Jesus used this to teach a lesson to His disciples. After the young man had left, he turned to them and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, 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" (Matt. 19:24). This was very surprising to the disciples. The Jews believed that rich people were rich because God was pleased with them and chose to give them lots of money. If a rich man so blessed by God could not get into heaven, then the disciples realized that it was impossible for anyone to go to heaven. "Who then can be saved?" they asked Jesus (19:25). Jesus told them that when men try to save themselves, it is impossible. Men cannot possibly do enough good things to get them into heaven. But, Jesus told them, with God, it is possible. A man, any man, can be saved if God chooses to give grace to that person. That person will repent of their sin and make Jesus the Lord of their life.



Lesson Questions

Who came to ask Jesus a question?

A rich young ruler.

What did the rich young ruler ask Christ?

He asked how to be saved.

What did Jesus tell him?

Jesus said that he must obey the commandments.

What did the man say?

He said that he had kept all the commandments.

What did Jesus tell him to do?

Jesus told him to sell all his possessions.

Was the rich man willing to do this?

No, he loved his wealth more than he wanted salvation.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



A Spotless Heart

After teaching the lesson, explain to the children that in order to get to heaven we need a spotless heart. Draw a heart on the board and then begin going through the commands of scripture one at a time. Ask the children whether they have ever disobeyed this command and make a mark on the heart each time they acknowledge their sin. After some time it will be apparent that our hearts are not just stained, but black with sin. Who then can be saved? Explain that only God can save us because only Jesus' blood can erase the sin in our hearts.



Who Wants to Go to Heaven?

Before teaching the lesson you can ask the children who wants to go to heaven. How hard do they think it is to get to heaven? In today's lesson, a certain animal will tell about getting to heaven, so they must watch and listen carefully to find out what animal it is. As you teach the lesson, paste the various parts of a camel picture onto the board until by the end of the lesson the children can see the complete camel. Ask them what this animal tells us about heaven. Finally, explain the last part of the lesson to them which is that it is harder for this camel to go through the eye of a needle than for us to save ourselves.

Praise and Worship

Humble Thyself In The Sight Of The Lord

Holy, Holy, Holy

Change My Heart, O God

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.

Impossible/Possible Reminder

Give students double sided craft page strips. Instruct students to fold on the dotted line. When completed the flap should cover over the "IM" of "IMPOSSIBLE" making the word "POSSIBLE."

Coloring Pages

Give each child a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.

MEMORY VERSE

“But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’” —*Matthew 19:26*

Possible with God

With
men,
salvation
is...

IMPOSSIBLE

Matthew 19:26

With
men,
salvation
is...

IMPOSSIBLE

Matthew 19:26

With
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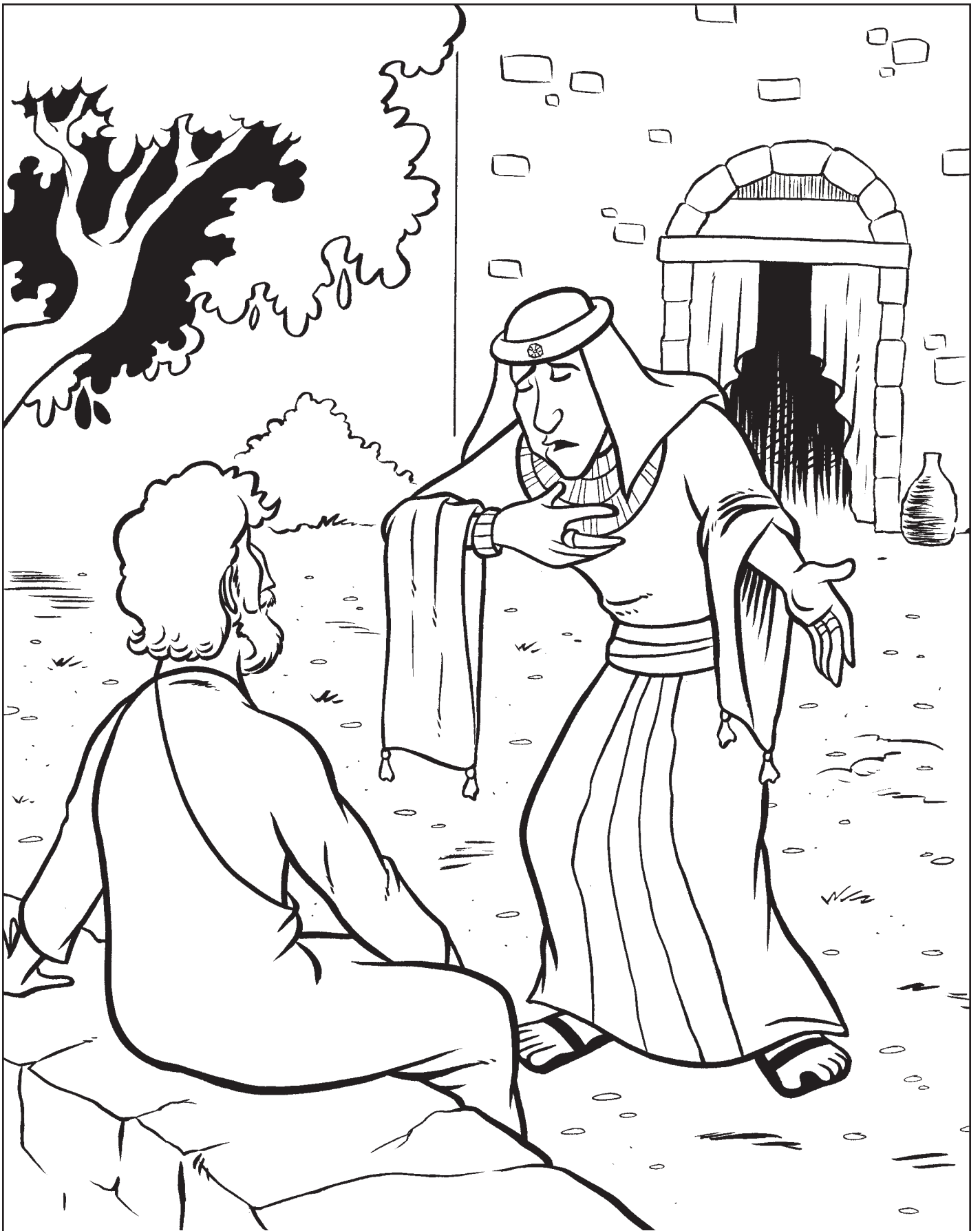
Matthew 19:26

Possible with God

	With God, all things are...
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	With God, all things are...
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	With God, all things are...
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“Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” —Matthew 19:16



**"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful,
for he had great possessions." —Matthew 19:22**

