

Matthew 19:16-26

LESSON GOAL



Students will admit their sinfulness, count the cost of eternal life, and follow Christ.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Explain why the rich young ruler came to Jesus.
- List the ways Jesus showed the man his sin.
- Tell why the man went away sad.

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 and get to heaven.
- Ask Christ to reveal anything in your heart that you are unwilling to give up for Him.
- Rejoice that God does the impossible when He saves man.

NEXT WEEK

Matthew 20:1-16

Teacher Planning Sheet

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	PREPARE
	Objectives/Truths to cover this week
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	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
Materials	Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.
Needed:	·
	- 0
	PROCLAIM
	_ Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.
	_ Presentation Ideas
	Praise/Music Ideas
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	-
	- Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

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 in Matthew 17:1–2? *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 in flesh but when He was transfigured the disciples could see His glory.

Who else was with Jesus on the mountain? The disciples saw two other people on the mountain with Jesus and they were Elijah and Moses.

What happened when Peter offered to build tabernacles (shelters) for each of them?

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.

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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 lacked 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 commandments 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."



Can You Get to My House?

In today's lesson Jesus reveals that it is impossible to get to heaven by self-effort alone. This can be illustrated in a simple skit in which a man comes asking whether he can come to your house to visit. You can explain to him that He could never get to your house, but have the man insist that he wants to try. Explain to him that you live far away and have the man reply that he can walk. Explain that you live very far away and have him reply that he can drive. Explain that you live across the ocean and have him reply that he can swim. This line of argumentation can be continued for some time (sailing, flying, etc.) while you keep insisting that he cannot get to your house. Explain that Jesus once met a man who wanted to know how to get to God's "house" and Jesus had to show him that he couldn't get there. After the lesson you could come back and end the skit with the man completely exasperated saying, "Well then, how can I get to your house?" you can reply, "You can't get there, but if you ask me, I'll take you." Explain to the children that only Jesus can take us to be with His father we cannot get there on our own.



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.



Can and Can't Do

Make a list of some things that you want your class to do today. Half of these items should be things that they can do relatively easily and the other half should be just completely impossible for them to accomplish. (The absurdity of those things that are impossible should be such that the kids think you are crazy in asking them to do them. (i.e. asking them to fly, creating a thunderstorm, etc.) In asking the students to do these various activities they should be able to distinguish the difference between those things that can or can not do. This will help the students understand the concepts of possibility and impossibility for today's lesson. Jesus tells His disciples today that man cannot obtain salvation for himself. Where it is impossible for him to earn salvation, all things are possible with God. Only through His Son Jesus Christ can a man be saved.

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

Passage Outline

Jesus' Dialogue with the Ruler (Matt. 19:16–22) Jesus' Dialogue with the Disciples (Matt. 19:23–26)

Introduction

Can you think of some things that are just impossible to earn? Money, cars, respect, whether they are material or immaterial, most things can be earned. It's very hard to think of even one thing that can't be earned. If someone is willing to pay enough or give enough, odds are they will be able to get what they want. Well today's lesson is about a man who wanted the one thing he could not purchase. No matter what the rich young ruler did or gave, he could never earn himself the right to be with God in heaven. To see what is necessary for one to have eternal life, lets now look at Jesus' conversation with this rich young ruler.



Lead-off Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: Why did the rich young ruler want to talk to Jesus at the beginning of today's lesson?

Answer: Matthew records that the young man asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). The man had come to Jesus because he felt that he did not have eternal life. He knew that he was not ready for the Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus had been talking about. Because of this, the rich young ruler was feeling the need to be saved before God.

LOQ: What did the rich young ruler's question reveal about his understanding of how to gain eternal life?

Answer: The young man was right in coming to Jesus for the answer of how to get eternal life, but he wrongly though that he could receive eternal life by doing a "good thing" (19:16). Like most people during his time, the young man believed that salvation was based on what he could do for God. When he felt the need to be saved, he naturally began looking for some work that he could do that would earn him eternal life.

LOQ: How did Jesus respond to the young man's question? **Answer:** That the man thought that he could earn his way into heaven was a sin before God. The rich ruler had no idea what salvation was all about. His heart

was selfish and his thinking was sinful. Jesus' response to his question was an attempt to show the young man his sin. Until he was aware of his sinfulness, the rich young ruler would never be ready for salvation.

LOQ: How does Jesus first try to show the young man his sin? **Answer:** 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." Jesus was asking the young man if really knew what it was to be good. When the young man thought of what it was to be "good," he thought of himself and his works. Jesus' tells the man that God is the only one who is perfectly good. Unlike the young man, God was completely holy and pure. Jesus knew that the rich young ruler would never be ready for eternal life until he realized that his works could never be good enough before God.

LOQ: How did Jesus attempt to show the man his sinfulness by pointing him to the Law?

Answer: Jesus promised that if the man kept the commandments he could enter into eternal life with God (19:17). Pointing to such a high standard as God's Law should have revealed to the man his sinfulness. Everybody, including the rich young ruler, have been disobedient to God's commands one time or another. This is because all people are sinful and in need of someone to save them. Nobody can save themselves. Despite Jesus' attempt to show the man his sinfulness, the young ruler responded with being confident in his keeping of the law. In his mind, he had not broken one of God's commandments. Even though he wanted eternal life with God, the rich young ruler was unwilling to admit his sin. Until he admits to his sin, the young man would never be ready for salvation.

LOQ: What was Jesus' last attempt at showing the man his sin? **Answer:** Because the man could not receive eternal life until he realized his own disobedience, Jesus attempted show him sinfulness. Jesus commanded the man, "If you want eternal life, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). Jesus knew that the rich young ruler loved himself and the things that he possessed more than he loved Christ. If the young man were willing to die to self, give up those things that he loved more than God, and submit to Christ, then he would have eternal life.

LOQ: How did the rich young ruler respond to Jesus' command to go and sell everything he had?

Answer: Matthew writes 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. When he realized what it cost to follow Christ, he went away sad. Because he was not willing to see his sin, the man had no reason to follow Christ. Jesus had offered salvation to the man if he would only die to himself and live for Christ but the man chose his possessions instead. The rich young ruler went away sad that the salvation that Jesus offered cost more than he was willing to pay.

LOQ: Why did Jesus say that was impossible for a rich man to be saved? **Answer:** By using the illustration of a huge camel being able to walk through the eye of a tiny needle, Jesus described a rich man receiving eternal life as being impossible. To the Jews, rich people were those individuals that were greatly blessed by God. The idea here then is, if rich people (those blessed by God) can not get themselves into heaven than no one can. For man salvation from his sins is impossible.

LOQ: Why were the disciples surprised that Jesus had said it was impossible for a rich man to enter heaven?

Answer: The disciples were confused at what Jesus had just said. If a rich person, who was blessed by God, could not enter the kingdom of heaven, then no one could. The disciples were thinking no one could be saved of their sins. This must have been so discouraging.

LOQ: How did Jesus close today's lesson by encouraging His disciples? **Answer:** The disciples had understood the message; no one has the power or the ability to save himself. But Jesus was not finished. Even though man entering heaven was about as possible as a camel walking through the eye of a needle, man still has hope. Even though they could not save themselves, someone could. That person was God. With man, salvation is impossible. With God, all things are possible. Only when God does the impossible and leads a person to repent of their sin and believe in His Son Jesus will an individual be saved. Apart from God working in a person's life, no one is able to enjoy salvation.

Summary

In today' lesson, one young man had the wrong idea about what was needed to have eternal life. Having everything that he could ever want the young ruler still knew that he wasn't ready for the Kingdom of God. He had tried His whole life to be obedient to all of God's commandments, yet it still was not enough. The young man needed to realize that he was sinner and that he needed the Savior, Jesus Christ, to save him from his sin. In order to show the man just how sinful he was, Jesus asked him to give up all that possessed on earth. Unwilling to pay such a great cost, the rich young ruler went away sad. Instead of dying to himself and following Christ, the rich young ruler loved himself and his possessions more than God. Jesus used his conversation with the young man to teach his disciples just how impossible it was for a man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Salvation was a work that only God could do. Man could never do enough good things, or earn their way into heaven. For them to be saved require that God lead them in true repentance and faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

Application

We, like the rich young ruler, are sinful people and are in need of someone to save of us from our sins. Thankfully, God has given us His Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Apart from following Him, there is nothing any one of us could do to earn our way to heaven. Salvation is only possible through God. Today we should ask him to look at each of our hearts to see if there is anything we love more than His Son Jesus. If we do love something more than God, then God has not worked in our hearts and given us eternal life. If any wish to receive salvation in Him, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him.

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.

Is It Hard to Get to Heaven?

Before teaching the lesson 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.



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.



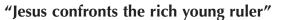
Impossible/Possible Reminder

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."



"Questions and Answers"

Have the students write out the questions and statement in the verses from Matthew 17.



Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The worksheet is located at the back of the lesson.



Small Group Activity: "Possible with God"

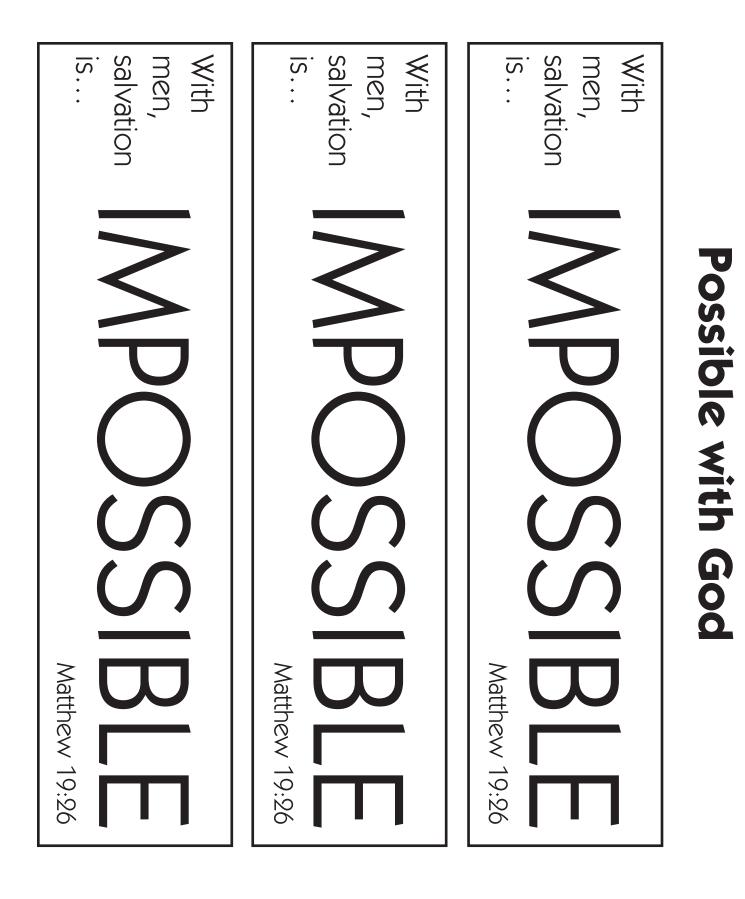
Use this worksheet in a small group. Lead the students in discussing the questions and their answers. The worksheet is located at the back of the lesson.

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



With God, all things are	With God, all things are	With God, all things are

Jesus	
confronts the rich young ruler	Matthew 19:16-26

	Name						
1.	What kind of ruler came to Jesus?						
	a. poor and old c. tall and blond						
	b. rich and young d. short and young						
2.	The man asked Jesus what he needed to do to gain						
3.	Jesus told the ruler that no one was good but						
4 .	True or False: The young ruler was right in saying that he had kept the law from his						
	youth.						
5.	Is it possible to keep the law and be perfect by ourselves?						
6.	How did the man respond when Jesus told him to go and sell all he had?						
7.	It is impossible to be perfect by ourselves, with God it is						

Possible with God

"But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" -Matthew 19:26

Have you ever been very, very good for one whole day, and did you feel like you deserved something special for it? That's how the rich young ruler in today's Bible lesson felt. He thought by keeping God's laws, he could earn a place in heaven. Yet, when Christ told him a good work to do—"…go sell what you have and give to the poor…and come follow Me'"—the rich young ruler went away sad because he loved his money more than obeying Christ. By asking the rich young ruler to do a very good deed, Christ revealed what was really in the rich young ruler's heart. In the word search below circle the sins (**Pride**, **Selfishness**, and **Love of Money**) that were hiding in the rich young ruler's heart.

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Possible with God

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Then Christ told the disciples that 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, and they asked Him, "Who then can be saved?" Read Matthew 19:26 for the answer and write it in the space below.	It is impossible for anyone to do enough good works to earn a place in heaven. The only way people can be saved is for God to reveal the sin in their hearts, and for them to repent and accept Christ's sacrifice for their sins. Have you asked Christ to search your heart? He wants to do the impossible in your heart. I know that I cannot earn heaven by my good works because:	I want Christ to search my heart and show me my sins because:	I have disobeyed God's law by:	I want to ask Christ to forgive my sins:
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