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*Ask the bigger questions*

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## Putting God first

***A cost benefit analysis of following Jesus:***

***What does Jesus require of me? Is it worth it?***

***- Session 8***

*Understanding that a disciple of Jesus means putting God first in life - from Luke 18:15-30*

### **The words of Jesus**

#### **Luke 18:15-30**

*15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

*18 A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*19 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"*

*21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said.*

*22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

*23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

*26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?"*

*27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."*

*28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!"*

*29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."*

### **Deuteronomy 5 ...**

*6 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 7 "You shall have no other gods before me. 8 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them ...*

11 "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. 12 "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you...

16 "Honor your father and your mother...

17 "You shall not murder.

18 "You shall not commit adultery.

19 "You shall not steal.

20 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

21 "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

### **Q1. "Money can't buy happiness"? Do you agree? Why or why not?**

- Follow up question: what is it about money that matters to us?
- Stability, security, independence, status, value.

*"Every adult life could be said to be defined by two great love stories. The first - the story of our quest for sexual love - is well known and well charted, its vagaries form the staple of music and literature, it is socially accepted and celebrated. The second - the story of our quest for love from the world - is a more secret and shameful tale. If mentioned, it tends to be in caustic, mocking terms, as something of interest chiefly to envious or deficient souls, or else the drive for status is interpreted in an economic sense alone. And yet this second love story is no less intense than the first, it is no less complicated, important or universal, and its setbacks are no less painful. There is heartbreak here too."*

Alain de Botton, Status Anxiety

### **Q2. What does the rich ruler have to do in order to follow Jesus? How do you feel about this?**

- Sell everything he has and give to the poor.

### **Q3. Is money evil? Or is it wrong to be rich?**

- No, otherwise Jesus wouldn't tell the rich man to give to the poor
- It is the "love of money" that "is a root of all kinds of evil"
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19 *"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*

### **Q4. So what is the rich man's problem? Why is it so hard for him to enter the kingdom of God? How does he differ from the children who are brought to Jesus earlier on in the passage?**

- The problem with the rich man is greed, his love for money
- Independence versus dependence on God

- Trust and reliance.

Note that Jesus cites from the 10 commandments, but leaves out the first few relating to God himself, and the last one which is “*you shall not covet...*”. “To covet” means “to yearn to possess (something, especially something belonging to another)”. To covet is to be greedy or to “be consumed with desire for”. The rich ruler yearned to possess money and status – at the cost of a relationship with God.

*“The human heart is an idol factory that takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.”*

Timothy Keller in *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters*

**Q5. How then can we be saved?**

- What is impossible with man is possible with God. How does God save us?
- How can we obtain that salvation?

**Q6. Will you miss out if you decide to follow Jesus?**

- Yes: you will miss out on some of the possessions you might have had, some experiences, some “friends” and some recognition
- No: verse 29 – so much more, so much better
- What does it mean you will “receive many times as much”? Does it mean if you gave up one house, Jesus will give you 10 in return?

**Q7. Can we hedge our bets and have a safety net in case it doesn’t work out with Jesus?**

- It shows that we don’t fully trust Jesus.

**Q8. If Jesus were having a conversation with you, which of the following statements might he say to you?**

- Take the money you’ve saved to go on overseas holidays and give it to the poor
- Stop dining at nice restaurants or cafes and give away the money you save
- Give up your job and instead, work at a supermarket checkout counter
- Stop buying new clothes and give away the money you save
- Don’t buy a house or apartment, continue to rent accommodation for the rest of your life.

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