

# THE GENEROUS HEART

• A BIBLE STUDY FEAST FOR ALL •

## Session 2 - The Rich Young Ruler: *SHOUT*

### ..... APPETISER .....

The following background notes are provided to help you in preparation for the main teaching and follow-up activities. A summary of the content is provided in the teaching video to be shown in the 'Today's Special' section of this session.

*'Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.'* (Psalm 100:1)

In Psalm 100:1 we are called to *'Shout for joy to the Lord'*. This particular shout was reserved for the king. It was a clear indicator to all around that your allegiance was firmly placed with the monarch. It demonstrated that you were 'all-in', 'on board', 'fully committed' and you wanted the whole world to know about it. God has always asked this of his followers. Remember when Jesus was challenged by a group of Pharisees, quizzing which was the greatest commandment? 'Jesus replied: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* (Matthew 22:37).

In today's session we find a young man struggling to live out the greatest commandment. Before releasing his shout of praise to the King, he needed to read the fine print.

- **What** were the costs and benefits of following Jesus?
- **What** was he signing up too?

Unable to offer his heart, soul and mind, he left filled with sadness. As we delve into his story today, let's learn from the poor choices he made. From the combined accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke we discover that the young man was powerful, wealthy and had his whole life ahead of him.

*'As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good – except God alone.*

*You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother."*

*'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these 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 to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'*

*At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

*Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'*

*The disciples were amazed at his words.*

*But Jesus said again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!'*

*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.'*

*The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?'*

*Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'*

*(Mark 10:17-24)*

The young man lived in a society where wealth was seen as a demonstration of God's favour, and blessings were linked to rule-keeping and sacrifice. The man ran to Jesus and fell to his knees, desperate to learn what was required to follow him. The Jewish law was complex and the young man took the opportunity to ask Jesus to cut to the chase.

*"Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17).* In his response Jesus questioned the young man to discover if he knew who he was talking to.

*"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone." (Mark 10:18)*

Jesus gave him little chance to answer and moved on, stating that if eternal life was the goal, then keeping the commandments was the way to get there.

*"You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.'"*  
*(Mark 10:19)*

We can almost see the young man mentally ticking off the list...

- murder ... *yep, not done that!*
- adultery ... *all good on that one!*
- stealing ... *nope!*
- giving false testimony ... *nope!*
- defrauding ... *I might need to read the small print on that one!*
- honour your father and mother ... *there's a couple of teenage years where it was questionable, but on the whole, yep!*

*"Teacher," he declared, "all these 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 to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Mark 10:20-21)*

If we're not careful, then we could take from this Scripture that every Christian should sell everything they have and give it to the poor. Although we are called to a life of generous discipleship, sharing what we have with those in need, Jesus doesn't call everyone to give up everything. It was clear that this young man was influential and wealthy. Jesus scanned his life and identified the weak point. He didn't do this from a place of judgement and condemnation; he did it from a place of love. Jesus found the one thing that was standing in the way of a fully surrendered heart and lovingly pointed it out.

**"The highest kind of obedience is not based on a desire for reward or the fear of punishment. It is motivated by love. In His life and His teaching, Jesus tried to show the people that the inner spiritual blessings are far more important than the material gains. God sees the heart, and God wants to build character. Salvation is the gift of God in response to man's faith. Material riches are not a guarantee that God is pleased with a man." (Warren W Weirsbe, 2007)**

The young man had cultivated what he thought was the perfect life, bank account and image. Jesus was asking him to give all that up.

*'At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.'* (Mark 10:22)

Imagine yourself in his position. You've spent your life following the teachings of your faith, attended the synagogue regularly and ticked every box you were asked to tick. You desperately want to serve God more, to follow him faithfully, to declare him as sovereign over your life and shout to the world that he is your King – but then he spots it. He finds the one thing that you can't walk away from: money, a relationship, a church, a job or a habit.

- **What** would it be for you?

*'Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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."'* (Mark 10:23-25)

The disciples were taken aback by what they were witnessing. In their culture, wealth was a reflection of God's blessing. If this rich young man couldn't get into the Kingdom with all the perceived blessings God had given him, then what hope was there for anyone else?

*'The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."'* (Mark 10:26-27)

There's no small print, contract to be discussed or negotiation to make. There's no financial payment or list of tasks we can complete to enter the Kingdom of God. It's about a life of surrender to Jesus Christ, a life where we are willing to shout to anyone who will listen that he is our King.

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**STARTERS**  
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**Choose a starter to share with your group.**

**FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE**

**Select a couple of the following questions to discuss:**

- **If you could** only eat at one restaurant for the rest of your life, where would you choose?
- **If you could** only listen to one piece of music for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- **If you could** only read one book for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- **If you could** only watch one film for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- **If you could** only take part in one sport for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- **If you could** only live in one place for the rest of your life, where would it be?

## ROYAL ROLES - Real or Fake

Read the following job descriptions and decide whether they are **REAL** royal jobs or **FAKE** ones.

- 1. Grand Carver of England** – Do you come from a prestigious family? Are you a dab hand with a carving knife? Then this is the job for you. Applicants must have impressive meat carving skills and be available for royal dining events. **REAL**
- 2. Master of the Queen’s Music** – The exact job description is sketchy! Applicants must be able to create a musical masterpiece on demand that is pleasing to the royal ear. **REAL**
- 3. The Folder of the Garments** – Do you like to keep things neat and tidy? Do you find sock folding fascinating? Then this is the job for you. Applicants must be able to organise and co-ordinate the royal sock collection, ensuring that the right sock is available with the right outfit. **FAKE**
- 4. Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection** – Do you enjoy collecting stamps? Do you like looking after other people’s collections of stamps? Then this is the job for you. Applicants will be responsible for cataloging and caring for the royal stamp collection. **REAL**
- 5. Official Harpist to the Prince of Wales** – Since biblical times, royals haven’t been able to get enough of the harp. If you can play the heavenly harp then the Prince of Wales needs you. Applicants must be available to attend royal events, playing beautiful music at the request of the prince. **REAL**

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## TODAY'S SPECIAL

Today we are focusing on the following verse from Psalm 100:

*‘Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.’ (Psalm 100:1)*

Watch the teaching video to discover how this verse links with our theme for today - the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

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## MAINS

In Psalm 100:1 we are called to *‘shout for joy to the Lord’*. This kind of shout was reserved as a demonstration of allegiance to the King.

- **How** can we live a life that demonstrates our allegiance to King Jesus?
- **What** would that life look like on a day-to-day basis? How would it impact the choices we make?

In today’s session we find a man struggling to live out the greatest commandment, to *‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’*. (Matthew 22:37)

Before releasing shouts of praise to the King, he needed to read the fine print.

- **What** faulty thinking did the young man reveal in Mark 10:17?
- **In what** ways do we fall into this way of thinking?
- **How** do we know that the man genuinely wanted to follow Jesus?
- The young man proudly stated that he had kept all of the commandments since he was a child. Given the opportunity he would have been able to list his spiritual achievements. **What kind** of things would make the list in our modern-day Christian lives?
- **Although** many of these actions may demonstrate our commitment to God, what does Jesus make clear that they don't do?

Jesus doesn't question the young man's obedience to Jewish Law, but he does highlight the 'one thing' that he lacks. The young man lived in a society where wealth was seen as a demonstration of God's favour.

- **Is that** still the case today? If so, why do you think that is?
- **What** is your response to the following quote?

**'The highest kind of obedience is not based on a desire for reward or the fear of punishment. It is motivated by love. In His life and His teaching, Jesus tried to show the people that the inner spiritual blessings are far more important than the material gains. God sees the heart, and God wants to build character. Salvation is the gift of God in response to man's faith. Material riches are not a guarantee that God is pleased with a man.'** (Warren W Weirsbe,2007)

- Weirsbe states that 'salvation is the gift of God in response to man's faith'. **What** do you think he means by that?
- In this story Jesus is offering the young man a gift. **Why** do you think the young man is only able to see it as a sacrifice?
- **What** kind of things can stand in the way of us receiving the gift of salvation Jesus is offering to us?
- **Do you think** it is possible for someone to attend church regularly, tick all the right boxes and yet have a heart that is unwilling to follow Jesus? What does it look like if someone is living this way?
- **If Jesus** were talking to you, how would he finish the sentence, 'One thing you lack' (v21)?

**Read Mark 10:23-27.**

- **Why** do you think the disciples were amazed by what Jesus was saying?
- **Are you** amazed by it? If so, why/why not?
- **What** is the overriding message in the story we have shared today?

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## DESSERT

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We have focused on the book of Mark today, but in Matthew's account of the story Jesus says to the young man:

*“If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matthew 19:21)*

The *Message* paraphrase says, *‘If you want to give it all you’ve got’* which, rather than a quest for perfection, sounds more like Jesus asking if the young man is *‘all in’*. No amount of good deeds will lead to our salvation, but our part is to be *‘all in’*, fully committed, offering a heart of surrender.

A life of generous discipleship is a life based on a full commitment to following Jesus Christ. For the rich young ruler, money was the key issue stopping him from giving his all. Reflect on the following question. You may want to play one of the musical tracks provided in the ‘Background Music’ section as you listen to the music.

- **What** is the one thing that stands in the way of you being ‘all in’ as a follower of Jesus?

### PRAYER

Father God,

We give you our all, holding nothing back.

Search our hearts for the one thing that stands in the way of our relationship with you.

Give us courage to choose a different path from the rich young ruler.

We shout our praises to you, King Jesus, and offer our all to you.

Amen.

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## SIDES

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The *‘Sides’* and *‘For Sharing’* courses provide additional activities that can be used as part of the main session or at another time. Ideally these would be used after the *‘Mains’* course of the main session.

### DISCIPLESHIP QUOTES

Discuss the following quotes about discipleship.

- **Which** ones resonate with you or challenges you the most?

**‘The trouble with deep belief is that it costs something. And there is something inside me, some selfish beast of a subtle thing that doesn’t like the truth at all because it carries responsibility, and if I actually believe these things I have to do something about them. It is so, so cumbersome to believe anything. And it isn’t cool.’** (Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*)

**‘Those who aren’t following Jesus aren’t his followers. It’s that simple. Followers follow, and those who don’t follow aren’t followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it.’** (Scot McKnight, *One Life: Jesus Calls, We Follow*)

**‘Our greatest fear should not be of failure but of succeeding at things in life that don’t really matter.’**

(Francis Chan, Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God)

**‘Any person who only sticks with Christianity as long as things are going his or her way, is a stranger to the cross.’**

(Timothy J Keller)

**‘The greatness of the man’s power is the measure of his surrender.’** (William Booth)

**‘Whatever you are holding on to in this life, hold it loosely so it won’t hurt when the Lord has to pry your fingers open to take it away.’** (Priscilla Shirer)

### **GATEGATE!**

*‘The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 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.”’* (Mark 10:24-25)

Roughly a thousand years after the time of Jesus, a new story began to surface regarding a camel’s ability to get through the eye of a needle. It was suggested that there was a small gate in Jerusalem that camels struggled to get through without having all of their baggage removed. People started to interpret Jesus’ words as an illustration that we need simply to offload some of our baggage in order to follow him.

- **Why** do you think this story was created and perpetuated?

There is no evidence to suggest that this gate ever existed, so we are left with the original metaphor given to us by Jesus.

- **What** do you think he meant by the words, “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”?

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## **FOR SHARING**

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### **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

**Read Mark 10:17-27.**

Using all that you have discovered from today’s session, create a modern-day version of the rich young ruler.

Consider the following questions to help you create a picture of this biblical character. Be creative and careful that you don’t fall into easy stereotypes.

- **Who** could the rich young ruler be today?
- **What** is their name?
- **How** old are they?
- **Who** is their closest friend?
- **What** is their family background?
- **What** was their childhood like?
- **What** is their greatest achievement?
- **What** is their greatest regret?
- **What** are their political views?
- **What** is their idea of a perfect Saturday night?
- **What** must no one find out about them?
- **What** are their hopes for the future?

Share the character you have created and discuss the following question.

- **If Jesus** had an opportunity to talk to your modern-day rich young ruler, what kind of conversation would they have?

### **BACKGROUND MUSIC**

Listed below there is a selection of music that fits with the theme of today's session.

- **King of Kings** - Hillsong Worship
- **I Surrender' (From All I Held Onto)** - Phil Laeger
- **I Surrender (remixed & remastered)** - Phil Laeger

### **SALVATION ARMY SONGBOOK**

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|---|---|
| 41. 'Let all the world in every corner sing'  | 61. 'The King of love my Shepherd is'               |
| 49. 'O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder' | 64. 'The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty' |
| 52. 'O worship the King, all glorious above'  | 74. 'At the name of Jesus'                          |
| 55. 'Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven'     |   |
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## Takeaway!

A psalm. For giving grateful **PRAISE**.

**SHOUT** for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

**WORSHIP** the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

**KNOW** that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

**ENTER** his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good and his **LOVE** endures for ever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

(Psalm 100: 1–5)

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