



***YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!***  
**Summer 2018 Leader Commentary**

**Unit 3: Final Destinations**  
**Session 2: On My Way (see pp. 146-149)**

**The Question:** How can I get to heaven?  
**The Point:** I must have faith in Jesus Christ.  
**Background Passage:** Mark 10  
**Focal Passage:** Mark 10:17-27

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “How can I get to heaven?” and drive home this one truth: I must have faith in Jesus Christ.

**Focus on These Points**

***Can’t Be Good Enough***  
***(Mark 10:17-18)***

Little is known about the man who approached Jesus or how he first heard about the Messiah. In his gospel, Matthew said the man was young (Matt. 19:20), while Luke pointed out that he was a ruler of some kind (Luke 18:18). Based on a synthesis of all these accounts, he has become known as the “rich young ruler.” While our knowledge of the rich young man is limited, his actions show that he definitely respected Jesus and understood there was something special about Him. First, he ran to meet Jesus. This is significant because in first-century Jewish culture, it was considered undignified for a man to run anywhere for any reason. So, to some extent, the young man was already willing to set aside his social conventions if it meant connecting with Jesus. The man also knelt before Jesus, even though it was probably more out of respect than out of worship. He also addressed Jesus as “Good teacher,” which, as we will see below, was not a common greeting—even for rabbis.

The man came to Jesus with a question about eternal life. He may have sincerely wondered about his eternal destiny, or he may have wanted to affirm what he already believed about his personal righteousness.

Jesus focused on what it means to be “good.” The Greek wording emphasizes being “intrinsically good.” It was a moral statement. While we tend to use “good” in a general way to describe things we like, first-century Jews defined it much more strictly. For them, it was not appropriate to call another person “good.” As Jesus pointed out, that was a title reserved for God alone.

***Can’t Do Enough***  
***(Mark 10:19-24)***

Returning to the man’s original question, Jesus pointed out the traditional Jewish response. He specifically pointed to a few of the Ten Commandments as standards for righteous living. Interestingly, He only mentioned the commands that deal with a person’s relationship with other

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people: murder, adultery, theft, fraud, lying, and family. He did not mention the commands about one's relationship with God: idolatry, profanity, and the Sabbath. This could have been because these commands were the easiest to identify through outward action. It also could be that an individual's love for God is actually demonstrated in how we treat those around us.

Scripture makes it clear that it is impossible to love God without loving others. When Jesus was questioned about the greatest commandment, He mentioned both—loving God and loving people—because both are vital to a genuine faith (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28). Likewise, in his first epistle, John also wrote that it is impossible to love God and hate your brother or sister (1 John 4:20-21). Loving the Father means loving the ones created in the Father's image.

The young man had a ready and confident answer for Jesus on this point. He stated that he had kept all of these commandments for as long as he could remember. And, while his confession sounds noble, Scripture reminds us that keeping all the commandments is basically impossible. Even the most pious individual struggles—and occasionally falls—to sin. So, while the young man may have been sincere, his personal evaluation was sincerely wrong. In addition, when Jesus gave the man an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to the second half of the commands (and, as such, the first half as well), he rejected other people in favor of his wealth. Yet, Jesus still saw something in the man that touched His heart. The man was confused and had questions, but he also was asking genuine, heartfelt questions.

While Mark does not mention it until verse 22, the young man had material substance, and that wealth proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. We should not read this passage as an indictment against wealth.

As Jesus demonstrated, the “one thing” missing in the man's life was not a proper knowledge of the law but a proper understanding of what it means to keep the law. He missed the deeper purpose of God's commands. His focus on external actions is common among individuals who are relying on their own good works for eternal life rather than faith. None of us can be good enough or do enough to earn God's favor.

### ***Only Jesus Is Enough*** ***(Mark 10:25-27)***

For centuries scholars have debated the exact meaning of the “eye of the needle.” Some soften the overt message by saying Jesus was talking about a small gate in Jerusalem's wall that locals would have called the eye of the needle. To enter camels would need to kneel—a symbol of the humility rich people would need to approach God. But there is no evidence that such a gate existed. Another interpretation states that “camel” should be rendered “rope” because the two Greek words are similar in spelling. But that translation is also unsubstantiated. Jesus probably was using a hyperbole—an overstatement—to drive His message home. The only way a camel—probably the largest animal any of His disciples had actually seen—would fit through that small opening would be a miracle from God. As such, it would take a miracle for wealthy people to reach heaven. Human effort and wealth are not enough to guarantee eternal life. One needs a relationship with God to spend eternity with God. But God has graciously made a way, making what seems impossible within the reach of all of us.

The disciples' astonishment (v. 26) may have been tied to concerns about their own eternal security. For the most part they were not rich men. Plus, they had essentially left whatever resources they did have to follow Jesus. Peter, speaking on behalf of the group, expressed this in Mark 10:28. So, if a rich person could not reserve a seat at God's table, what hope did they have? The assurance that a personal relationship with God through Christ was the only thing necessary for eternal life would have comforted them greatly. God is not about titles or wealth.

He is more concerned with faithfulness and obedience. He will not abandon anyone who puts his or her trust completely in Him.