

Life Group Questions

January 5, 2024

The First Will Be Last – Pastor Vinh Doan – [Matthew 19:16 - 20:16](#)

NOTE FROM PASTOR JONATHAN

Happy New Year!

I hope you all had opportunities to celebrate and serve this Christmas season. If you have any photos or videos, please send them my way!

QUESTION OVERVIEW

Let's Warm Up

1. Did anything stand out to you in the sermon?
2. What makes a rule easy or hard to follow?
3. What have you sacrificed for and was it worth it?

Let's Get Started

4. Can someone be good enough to earn eternal life? Why or why not?
5. Is it easier to sacrifice if you have a lot or very little?

Let's Dig In

6. Why did Jesus target the man's material possessions?
7. Why do people need God to save them?
8. What do we struggle to give up to God?
9. What can we do when we struggle to sacrifice for God?

Mark It Up – Matthew 19:16 - 20:16

¹⁶ And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷ And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸ He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰ The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” ²⁷ Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” ²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

¹ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, four and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’ ⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it, they grumbled at the master of the house, ¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Let's Warm Up

1. Did anything stand out to you in the sermon?

Did any part of the Bible passage hit home? Was there a point made or a question asked that convicted you? Did an illustration help things make sense?

2. What makes a rule easy or hard to follow?

Some rules are easy because they don't affect my life. It may come as a surprise, but I don't own nuclear weapons so I can visit Smithers (<https://smithers.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/74663/?preview=29478>). On the other hand, I don't like paid parking rules because I don't want to spend an extra \$5 or \$10 on top of a meal or event I'm attending. I'm not always sure how much parking I need so I'm not sure how much to pay. The phone apps to extend time always have extra "convenience fees".

How about you?

3. What have you sacrificed for and was it worth it?

Do you sacrifice junk food for healthy eats and sleeping in for early morning workouts so you can have washboard abs? Did you spend tons of money and years of education to get the training or qualifications for a job? Have you given up having tons of friends so you can just focus on a few? Have you given up fun, but ultimately unfulfilling or God-honoring relationships so you could pursue something more edifying?

Are you glad you made those sacrifices? If you could go back in time, would you make the same decisions? Would you recommend others do the same?

Let's Get Started

4. Can someone be good enough to earn eternal life? Why or why not?

A majority of Canadians believe there's life after death (<https://angusreid.org/do-canadians-believe-life-after-death-afterlife-reincarnation/>). We believe there *is* something after we die. The man in the passage believed he could earn eternal life through his actions. Buddhists try to follow the Eight-Fold Path to reach Nirvana (https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/docs/introduction_to_buddhism). Hindus believe you can be liberated and achieve Moksha by living right (<https://iskcondwarka.org/blogs/moksha/>). Some Jewish people believe studying Jewish law will lead to eternal life (e.g., Talmud Megillah 28b; Berakhot 21a).

As Christians, we believe that after we die, God will judge us for our actions (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11-15). Unfortunately for all of us, we are all guilty of breaking God's laws and deserve His punishment (Romans 3:23; 6:23). We can't make things right by undoing the damage to others and our relationship with God. All we can do is wait for God's judgment. So, God came to earth and as a human named Jesus. He obeyed God perfectly but died on the cross to receive the punishment that we deserved (Hebrews 9:28). His actions earned eternal life with God and He offers it to us. Now, we can have eternal life if we believe Jesus paid the price for us (John 3:16).

Jesus bluntly says it's impossible for people to save themselves. Only God can.

5. Is it easier to sacrifice if you have a lot or very little?

If you don't have much, it might be hard to sacrifice because you already don't have enough. Or it could be easy because you know how to live with very little. If you have a lot, it might be hard to sacrifice because you're used to that. Northcote Parkinson said, "A luxury, once enjoyed, becomes a necessity." Or it could be easy because you have plenty even after you give.

Many of us lived with less while we studied or began our careers as young adults. Covering a friend's meal might mean having ramen instead of McDonald's for dinner. Now that you've got a career, sacrifice might mean downsizing your living space or swapping an overseas vacation for a road trip.

While in university, I took a summer from work to serve in an evangelism ministry (Child Evangelism Fellowship), sacrificing my highly lucrative \$4.25 per hour summer job at Winn Dixie. I could have made about \$1,000 over the summer to help pay for my overpriced science textbooks. Would I be willing to make a similar sacrifice now that I have a higher-paying job but need to support a family?

Let's Dig In

6. Why did Jesus target the man's material possessions?

He seems like he's got it going on. He's financially successful. Luke calls him a "ruler", meaning he could be a religious leader so he's got high status. From the world's standards, life is good! But it's not enough because he knows he's going to die someday.

Jesus cites the 5th through 9th laws of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12-16). The man says, "Check, check, check, and check. Anything else?" This guy is cocky! He doesn't even take a second to think about whether God thinks he's done it right. So, Jesus hits him where it will be obvious.

The Greek word for perfect is from the root τέλος (telos), referring to the end or conclusion of a process. He's trying to be and do enough to earn eternal life after this life's over. But now he's at a crossroads, he

can either choose material possessions or eternal life by following Jesus. By choosing wealth, he failed the first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3), because he put money above God.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus encounters another rich man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus volunteers to give away half of his money to the poor and restore any money he defrauded from people fourfold (Luke 19:1-9). He does all this when he meets Jesus without Jesus telling him to. No doubt if Jesus told him to give more, he would.

7. Why do people need God to save them?

To earn eternal life, we must follow God’s commands perfectly. Jesus sums up all the laws: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-40).

We all have thing(s) that we love more than God and people. Even though God was standing right in front of the rich man, he couldn’t let it go and chose wealth over God. He needed God to change his heart to pick God over wealth. He needed God to show him the value of following Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:3-6). He needed the Holy Spirit to change him (Galatians 5:16-25).

8. What do we struggle to give up to God?

I learned the Ten Commandments in Sunday school and thought they were *easy* for us kids. I’d want to beat up my bullies, but I wouldn’t *murder* them. Adultery is for adults, that’s why it’s called *adultery*. My parents bought me plenty of toys, so I didn’t need to steal. Following God was easy! I was probably not too far from the rich man.

But following God is not so easy. Jesus sums up all the laws: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Love God. It’s easy to say we love God, but what do we put above God? Does social media or watching YouTube prevent us from spending time with God? If you’re looking for a special guy or girl, are you picking someone who also loves God or do you have a different priority? And if we are doing those things, are we doing it because we must or because we love God?

Love People. God has given us all our possessions and wants us to share them with others (e.g., 1 John 3:16-17). Are we willing to give up some creature comforts to love others by sacrificing our time or money? Do we only talk about or do events that we enjoy? Or are we willing to do what makes others

happy? Are we only focused on our experience on Sunday morning, or are we looking out for new visitors or others who need help?

9. What can we do when we struggle to sacrifice for God?

Bad news: NONE OF US CAN PERFECTLY OBEY GOD. Good news: GOD KNOWS AND HE WANTS TO HELP.

Pray. Jesus plainly says it's impossible for us to save ourselves, but God can save us. Let's ask God to help us! If we're struggling with a sin, confess it, ask for forgiveness, and seek His help to clean it off us (1 John 1:9).

Look at the Rewards. Jesus tells His disciples they'll get a 100x return *and* eternal life. And eternal life isn't just living forever. Even vampires can do that. Eternal life is an eternal relationship with Jesus (John 17:3). Isn't that better than anything else?