

The Gospel of Mark, Teacher's Guide

Week 14: Surrendering Everything to Jesus

Mark 10:1–31

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Mark 10:1–31 places four searching scenes side by side and asks the disciple to consider four kinds of surrender. The Pharisees' question about divorce becomes the occasion for Jesus to root marriage in the creation order and to call His people to a higher standard than the cultural compromises of their day (10:2–12). The disciples' dismissal of little children becomes the occasion for Jesus to declare that the kingdom is received with childlike trust (10:13–16). The rich young man's earnest inquiry becomes the occasion for Jesus to name the one thing his heart was holding above the kingdom (10:17–22). And the disciples' astonishment becomes the occasion for Jesus to teach them about the difficulty of riches, the impossibility of self-saving religion, and the great promise to those who actually leave everything to follow Him (10:23–31). Doctrinally, the lesson must address the New Testament teaching on marriage and divorce, the childlike reception of the kingdom, the proper relation of obedience and grace in the gospel response, the spiritual dangers of wealth, and the certain reward of disciples who genuinely surrender to Christ.

The teacher should handle the divorce section with both biblical clarity and tenderness. Many in any congregation carry wounds in this area, whether from their own past, the divorces of parents or children, or marriages currently under strain. Jesus does not soften the teaching. He pulls it back to creation and calls disciples to pursue marriage as God designed it. At the same time, Matthew 19:9 records the explicit exception of sexual immorality, and 1 Corinthians 7 addresses the further situation of a believer abandoned by an unbeliever. Teach the standard with care. Hold up the New Testament pattern. Offer comfort to those whose past lies under the cross, and call all believers, single or married, to honor the covenant of marriage on Christ's terms.

Formationally, the most piercing question of the lesson is Jesus's word to the rich young man: "You lack one thing." Every student in the room has a 'one thing,' and most of them know what it is. The lesson should not let students slide past this. Help them name the specific thing Christ has been putting His finger on, and the specific step of surrender He is asking for. Close with Peter's testimony and Christ's promise. The disciple who has left everything has not lost anything. Christ's reward is sure, in this life with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Question 1

Student Question:

When the Pharisees test Jesus with a question about divorce, He goes back behind Moses to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and concludes, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (10:6–9). What is Jesus teaching about the nature and permanence of marriage as God designed it, and how does Genesis 1–2 ground the New Testament’s vision of marriage as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the Pharisees ask whether divorce is lawful, Jesus does not begin with Deuteronomy 24 (where Moses regulated divorce in fallen Israel). He begins with Genesis 1 and 2 (where God designed marriage in unfallen creation). This is a critical move. The Lord’s teaching about marriage is rooted not in the concessions of Moses to hardness of heart but in the creation pattern itself.

From Genesis 1:27 He affirms, “From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’” Marriage is a covenant grounded in the deliberate creation of two sexes, male and female, by God Himself. From Genesis 2:24 He quotes, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” The picture is one of two becoming one. Leaving and cleaving. A new household. A covenant joined by God Himself. The summary is bracing. “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:8–9).

Several doctrinal truths flow from this. First, marriage is a creation ordinance. It is grounded in the original design of God for human life. It is not invented by culture, and it is not for any culture to redefine. Second, marriage is between one man and one woman. Christ explicitly affirms “male and female” as the creation pattern. Third, marriage is a covenant joined by God. It is not merely a contract between two people; God Himself joins them. Fourth, marriage is intended to be permanent. “Let not man separate.” Fifth, the “one flesh” reality of marriage is real, not a metaphor. Husband and wife are joined in a profound union that touches body, soul, and household life.

For Christians today, this provides the foundation for everything Scripture says about marriage. Marriage between one man and one woman, intended to be lifelong, joined by God, expressed in covenant faithfulness. The Christian view of marriage is not the modern view of marriage. It is the creation view of marriage, recovered and clarified by Christ.

For students, this teaching also reframes the conversation. Many discussions about marriage today begin with cultural assumptions or personal preferences. Christ begins with creation. Faithful Christian thinking about marriage begins where He begins. The starting point is not, “What do I want?” or, “What does my culture allow?” but, “What did God design from the beginning?”

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Marriage as a creation ordinance grounded in God’s design (Genesis 1:27; 2:24)
- Marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman (Mark 10:6–8; Ephesians 5:31)
- Marriage as joined by God, not merely arranged by people (Mark 10:9; Malachi 2:14)
- Marriage as intended to be lifelong (Romans 7:2–3; 1 Corinthians 7:39)
- The “one flesh” reality of marital union (Mark 10:8; 1 Corinthians 6:16–17)
- The Christian view of marriage rooted in creation, not in shifting culture
- The marriage of believers as a witness to the gospel and to Christ’s love for the church (Ephesians 5:22–33)

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Jesus take the question of marriage back behind Moses to Genesis?
- What is the difference between a contract and a covenant in the way the Bible describes marriage?
- How does the creation-based view of marriage differ from the contemporary cultural view?

Question 2

Student Question:

Privately the disciples ask Jesus about His teaching on divorce. He says, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (10:11–12). Connecting this with Matthew 19:3–9, Malachi 2:13–16, and 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, what is Christ teaching about why God permitted divorce in the Old Testament, the one exception named in Matthew 19:9, the seriousness of the marriage covenant before God, and the call of Christians to pursue marriage on Christ’s terms?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the disciples privately ask Jesus about His teaching, He delivers one of the strongest sayings on divorce in the New Testament. “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (10:11–12). This is a clear, sober word that has to be received as Christ said it.

At the same time, Matthew 19:9 records that Jesus included a critical exception. “I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” Mark does not record the exception clause, probably because his Roman audience needed to hear the standard pressed plainly against their permissive culture. Matthew, writing more to a Jewish setting where the rabbinic debates about Deuteronomy 24 were familiar, records the exception. The two accounts complement each other. The standard is that marriage is permanent; the only ground for divorce that does not produce adultery upon remarriage is sexual immorality on the part of the spouse.

Several other passages fill out the New Testament teaching. Malachi 2:13–16 reveals the LORD’s heart on the matter under the Old Covenant. “The LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless... So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD” (Malachi 2:14, 15–16). The God of the covenant hates the breaking of marriages by faithless spouses. 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 instructs believers, “The wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.” 1 Corinthians 7:12–16 addresses the further situation in which an unbelieving spouse leaves a believer. In that case, “the brother or sister is not enslaved.”

How is this taught in a faithful congregation today? Several principles. First, the standard is high. Marriage is meant to be lifelong, and divorce is never the first option to be considered. The God of the covenant hates the breaking of marriages. Christians enter marriage prepared to give the rest of their lives to the covenant. Second, the named biblical grounds for divorce are limited. Matthew 19:9 names sexual immorality. 1 Corinthians 7:15 names abandonment by an unbeliever. These exceptions are real; they do not nullify the standard. Third, divorce is a tragedy even when it occurs on biblical grounds. It is the breaking of what God joined. It is not to be sought lightly, treated casually, or normalized. Fourth, the church must teach this with both rigor and tenderness. Many disciples carry wounds in this area. The gospel speaks both the demand of holiness and the comfort of forgiveness. Past divorces handled badly can be repented of and brought under the cross. Present marriages, however imperfect, must be honored and worked on. Future marriages must be entered in fear of the Lord and according to His design.

For students, this teaching must be received as Christ gave it. Marriage is for life. Christ’s standard is high, and the cost of His standard is real, especially in a culture that has long since lowered the bar. But the standard is good. Marriages that honor Christ produce homes that bless children, model the gospel, witness to the world, and stand as visible signs of the covenant love of Christ for His church (Ephesians 5:22–33).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Marriage as a covenant under God, not to be broken by human choice (Malachi 2:13–16; Mark 10:9)
- Christ’s high standard for marriage and divorce, set against cultural compromise (Mark 10:11–12; Matthew 19:3–9)
- The exception clause for sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9)
- Apostolic teaching on the believer and unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:10–16)
- The serious nature of remarriage following unbiblical divorce (Mark 10:11–12; Romans 7:2–3)
- The forgiveness available in the gospel for sins committed in this area (1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 John 1:9)

- The faithful, tender teaching of the church on marriage as both rigorous and gracious

Discussion Prompts

- How do Mark 10 and Matthew 19 work together to give us the full teaching of Christ on divorce?
- What grounds for divorce does the New Testament name, and how should the church teach about them today?
- How can a congregation hold the standard with rigor while also being a place of comfort and restoration for the wounded?

Question 3

Student Question:

Whether you are married or single, divorced or contemplating marriage, the marriage covenant in its God-designed shape calls for a particular kind of surrender. Where in your own attitudes toward marriage (yours, your children's, your friends', our culture's) does Christ's teaching require honest examination, and how can our church family help one another walk faithfully in this area?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question is for everyone, not only the married. Single students live in a culture saturated with confused messages about marriage. Married students walk in covenants that need ongoing tending. Divorced students may carry pain or unresolved questions. Parents are watching adult children navigate marriage choices. Grandparents are praying for grandchildren who have not yet considered what marriage is. Older saints have years of experience to offer the next generation.

Where does Christ's teaching require honest examination? Several places, depending on the person. For single students, it presses on the question of whom they will eventually marry, and on what terms. "Marry only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). Pursue purity now (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8). Reject the cultural narrative that marriage is just a long-term partnership to be entered and exited at will.

For married students, it presses on the daily work of honoring the covenant. Refusing the cultural escape routes. Practicing forgiveness. Pursuing oneness in spirit, mind, and body. Bringing real grievances to the light rather than letting bitterness accumulate. Modeling Christ's love for the church in how a husband loves his wife. Honoring the leadership of a faithful husband and walking in the strength of being a faithful wife (Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

For divorced students, it presses on what faithfulness looks like now. Where reconciliation is possible, pursuing it. Where it is not (because of remarriage or abandonment by an unbeliever), walking forward in repentance, integrity, and faithful living under Christ's lordship.

For all students, the question is how we talk about marriage in our families and our congregation. Do we honor it? Do we speak of it as the lifelong covenant God designed? Do we hold one another accountable? Do we surround young couples with prayer, counsel, and the example of older faithful marriages?

Help students identify one specific place where Christ's teaching requires more from them. The hidden grievance to release. The conversation to have with a young person who is drifting. The renewed commitment to pray for a struggling marriage in the church. The book or class to read together with their spouse. The repentance for a way of speaking about marriage that has been more cynical than Christlike.

And help students see that the local church is the family in which faithful marriages are formed. Marriages do not thrive in isolation. Encourage students to lean into the church family for the formation of their own marriage and for the support of others'.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christian marriage as part of the church's witness in the world (Ephesians 5:22–33)
- Singleness as honorable in the Lord and to be lived with purity and devotion (1 Corinthians 7)
- Marrying "only in the Lord" as a clear apostolic command (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18)
- The church as the family in which faithful marriages are formed and sustained
- The role of older men and older women in teaching younger believers about marriage (Titus 2:1–8)
- The gospel as both the standard and the comfort for those who have struggled in this area

Discussion Prompts

- What honest examination does Christ's teaching require of you in this season?
- How can our congregation more faithfully form, support, and protect marriages?
- How can older saints help younger ones walk in this area?

Question 4

Student Question:

When the disciples try to keep little children away from Jesus, He is indignant and says, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (10:14–15).

What is Jesus teaching about the heart posture in which the kingdom must be received, why a "childlike" reception is different from a childish one, and how this teaching shapes the way the church values and welcomes children today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Right after the demanding teaching about marriage, parents bring little children to Jesus to be touched and blessed. The disciples rebuke the parents, treating the children as interruptions of their important teacher's time. Mark records that Jesus was indignant. The verb is strong. He does not gently correct the disciples; He is angered by what they have done. He calls the children to Himself, takes them in His arms, lays His hands on them, and blesses them.

Then comes the doctrinal sentence. "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (10:15). This is a foundational statement about the heart posture in which the kingdom is received. It is not a statement about doctrinal naivety or moral innocence. Children are not morally neutral; they are made in the image of God and yet inherit the corrupted human condition the same as every other human being. Jesus is teaching something specific about the kind of trust that receives a gift.

Childlike reception of the kingdom involves at least these things. First, openness. The child does not come with a list of credentials. They simply come. Second, dependence. The child knows they cannot provide for themselves. They look up. They reach. Third, trust without scaffolding. The child does not require a complete intellectual map before they will love their father. They love and trust because their father is their father. Fourth, the willingness to receive a gift. The child is not negotiating terms. They receive what is given them with both hands.

This is different from being childish. Childishness is selfish, undisciplined, and immature. Childlikeness is open, dependent, and trusting. The Christian life is meant to grow toward maturity in understanding and wisdom (1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:13–15), while remaining childlike in dependence on the Father.

This teaching shapes the way the church values and welcomes children today. Children are not interruptions of the church's "real work." They are part of the church's real work. They are taught to know the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4). They are received in His name (Mark 9:36–37). Their nurture is a primary concern of believing parents and of the church family. When they are old enough to understand the gospel for themselves (to hear, to believe, to repent, to confess Christ, to be baptized into Him), they make their own personal response. Until then they are loved, taught, and held in the church family.

For students this passage reframes how we think about coming to Christ at any age. The kingdom is not earned. It is received. The disciple receives the kingdom not because they have built up enough credit but because they have learned to come empty-handed, dependent, trusting. That is the posture in which the kingdom is entered, and that is the posture in which the disciple continues to live.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The childlike posture in which the kingdom of God is received (Mark 10:14–15; Matthew 18:3–4)
- The dignity and welcome of children in Christ's kingdom (Mark 9:36–37; 10:14–16)

- Children as image-bearers of God to be cherished and taught (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 127:3–5)
- Christian parents’ responsibility to raise children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4–9; Ephesians 6:4)
- The personal nature of each individual’s response to the gospel when old enough to understand (Acts 8:36–37; Mark 16:16)
- The difference between childlike trust and childish immaturity (1 Corinthians 13:11; 14:20; Hebrews 5:11–14)
- The continuing Christian life as growth toward maturity while remaining dependent on the Father

Discussion Prompts

- What does it actually mean to receive the kingdom of God like a child?
- How is childlike trust different from childish immaturity?
- How does this passage shape the way the church welcomes and disciples children?

Question 5

Student Question:

Where in your own walk has adulthood, expertise, or long church experience produced the kind of self-sufficient posture that finds it hard to receive the kingdom of God like a child, and what would becoming “like a child” mean for you in the specific area where Christ has been pressing on your heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Long-tenured Christians are at particular risk of losing the childlike posture of receiving the kingdom. We have learned the doctrines. We have served in the church. We have memorized passages. We have built spiritual habits. And, almost without noticing, we have begun to come to God on the basis of what we already know, what we already have, and what we already do, rather than as children with empty hands.

Help students examine the specific area where this is most likely to show up in their lives. For some it is in prayer. We pray well-formed prayers full of theology and rarely the simple “help me, Father” of a child. For some it is in study. We come to the Word as experienced interpreters who know what the passage is going to say. For some it is in service. We carry our service like a credential rather than as the joyful response of dependent love. For some it is in our discipleship of others. We teach as those who have arrived rather than as fellow children at the Father’s feet.

What does becoming “like a child” mean in the specific area Christ has been pressing? It means coming back to simple dependence. Praying the prayers a child would pray. “I cannot do this.

Help me.” “I do not know what to do. Show me.” “I have failed. Forgive me.” It means receiving from God rather than performing for Him. It means being teachable, being honest about our weakness, being willing to be small in the area where we have grown big.

For students, encourage one specific practice this week. Maybe a morning prayer of childlike dependence. Maybe a deliberate confession of an area where they have been operating from credential rather than from receiving. Maybe a willingness to ask for help from a brother or sister, in an area where they have always wanted to appear competent. The kingdom is entered and lived as a child. Long discipleship is meant to deepen, not undo, that posture.

There is sweet freedom in this. The child does not have to be the impressive one. The child does not have to know everything. The child does not have to manage everything. The child gets to come, to reach, to be held, to be helped. Many tired Christians have not enjoyed the kingdom in years because they have been performing it rather than receiving it. The doorway back is the doorway in. Become like a child again.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Continuing childlike dependence as the posture of mature Christian life (Mark 10:15; Matthew 18:3–4)
- The temptation of long-tenured Christians to operate from credential rather than dependence
- Prayer, confession, and honest reception of grace as the practical shape of childlike posture
- The Father’s welcome of His children at every age (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15–17)
- The danger of performance-based religion that has lost the child’s heart
- The freedom and joy of receiving rather than earning

Discussion Prompts

- Where has long Christian experience made you less, not more, childlike before the Lord?
- What practice would help you come back to childlike dependence this week?
- What is the difference between mature faith and self-sufficient religion?

Question 6

Student Question:

A man runs up, kneels before Jesus, and asks, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (10:17). Jesus answers him by pointing to the commandments, then by looking at him in love and telling him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (10:21). What is Christ teaching about saving faith, the place of obedience in the gospel response, the danger of treating discipleship as a list of moral achievements, and the cost of following Him as Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The rich young man's question is one of the great moments in the Gospel. He runs to Jesus, kneels, and asks, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:17). He is sincere, devout, and successful. He has kept the commandments from his youth. He represents the best of moral religious life as his culture understood it. And yet he senses he is missing something.

Jesus answers him in a way that is both kind and probing. He takes him through the commandments. The man says he has kept them all from his youth. Then Mark gives us one of the most tender sentences in the Gospel. "And Jesus, looking at him, loved him" (10:21). The next words come from love. "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

What is Jesus teaching about saving faith and the gospel response? Several things, woven together. First, eternal life is something God grants, not something we earn by moral resume. The young man's commandment-keeping was good, but it was not enough. He still lacked something. The instinct that drove him to ask reveals the inadequacy of mere moral religion.

Second, the gospel response always involves the surrender of the lordship of self over our lives, including over our possessions. The young man's "one thing" was that his wealth was holding his heart. Until that idol was named, dethroned, and given up, he could not come and follow. Jesus did not negotiate. He did not soften the demand. He spoke the truth in love and let the young man decide.

Third, the gospel does not bypass obedience; it requires it. Jesus tells him to go, to sell, to give, and to come and follow. Obedience is part of the gospel response. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). The New Testament plan of salvation includes hearing, believing, repenting, confessing Christ, and being baptized into Him for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Romans 10:9–10). Each is an act of obedience. The young man's refusal to obey what Christ commanded was the refusal to surrender to Christ as Lord.

Fourth, the danger of treating discipleship as a list of moral achievements is real. The young man had been faithful in many things. The 'one thing' that he lacked was the one thing that exposed where his heart actually was. Long-time religious people can be exactly where the young man was. They have many good things in their lives, and one quietly forbidden thing they have never been willing to surrender. The chapter walks straight into that with all of us.

For students, the question to bring home is the same. What is your 'one thing'? What is the area Christ keeps putting His finger on that you have been refusing to release? The kindness in Christ's voice does not soften the demand. The fact that He loves you is the reason He asks. He will not let any disciple settle for a curated obedience that has set aside the very thing He has come to set free.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Saving faith as the surrender of self and the obedient response to Christ's lordship (Romans 10:9–10; Hebrews 5:9)
- Eternal life as a gift of God received by faith and obedient response (John 3:16; John 10:28; Romans 6:23)
- The plan of salvation as hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4)
- The inadequacy of moral religion apart from surrender to Christ as Lord (Romans 10:1–4; Philippians 3:4–9)
- The cost of discipleship and the call to leave behind whatever competes with Christ's lordship (Luke 14:25–33)
- Christ's love as the foundation of His exact demands, not the soft alternative to them
- The continuing danger of unsundered areas in the lives of religious people

Discussion Prompts

- What does the rich young man teach us about the difference between moral religion and saving faith?
- How does Jesus' command, "go, sell, give, follow," reveal the heart of the gospel response?
- How does the New Testament plan of salvation embody the same surrender Christ asked of him?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jesus looked at the young man and loved him, and yet did not soften the demand on his life. He named the "one thing" that was holding the young man's heart. Where in your own life is there a "one thing" Jesus has been naming with the same kind of loving but uncompromising clarity, and what is making it hard to surrender it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses on every student in the room. Almost every disciple can identify a 'one thing' Christ has been naming in their life. It is rarely an obscure or hidden sin. It is usually something they know well, something they have prayed about more than once, something the Lord has been patient with for a long time.

For some it will be wealth, exactly as in the case of the young man. For some it will be a relationship that has begun to compete with Christ for the deepest loyalty of the heart. For some it will be an ambition or a career that is shaping every other decision. For some it will be a habit (intake, speech, pattern of life) that is incompatible with the disciple's confession. For some it will be a refusal to forgive that has hardened into a settled posture. For some it will be a long-postponed obedience (a confession, a reconciliation, a step of service, a deeper commitment to the local congregation, a public confession of Christ and baptism into Him).

What makes it hard to surrender? Usually one of several reasons. We are afraid of what we will lose. We have built our identity around the thing. We have rehearsed the worst-case scenarios of giving it up. We have grown comfortable with the partial obedience we have offered. We have convinced ourselves that the thing is too important, too valuable, or too central to our flourishing for the Lord to actually be asking us to lay it down.

Jesus' love is the right context in which to face this. He looked at the young man and loved him. The exact demand was the form His love took. He is doing the same with you. The thing He is asking you to give up is not the thing you cannot live without. It is, ironically, the very thing that has been preventing you from living the life He intends for you. The young man walked away sorrowful. The disciple who actually obeys walks away free.

Help students name their 'one thing' honestly and identify the specific step of surrender. The phone call to be made. The check to be written. The confession to be offered. The habit to be broken. The change of plans to be enacted. The relationship to be reordered. The baptism to be received. Then commit to the step this week.

And help them see that they are not doing this alone. Christ is not an absent demander. He is the One who looks at His disciples and loves them, who walks with them through the surrender, who supplies the strength to obey by His Spirit, and who will be the great reward in the end.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The specific, named call of Christ on each disciple's life
- The love of Christ as the foundation of every demand He makes (Mark 10:21; Hebrews 12:5–11)
- The Spirit's empowerment of the believer to do what would otherwise be impossible (Philippians 2:12–13; Galatians 5:16)
- The freedom that follows obedience compared with the bondage of unsundered idols
- The role of brothers and sisters in walking with us through costly surrender (Galatians 6:1–2; Hebrews 3:13)
- Christ's reward as the joy beyond every present loss (Matthew 13:44; Hebrews 12:1–2)

Discussion Prompts

- What is the 'one thing' Christ has been naming in your life?
- What makes it hard to surrender?
- What is the one specific step of surrender you can take this week?

Question 8

Student Question:

After the young man leaves, Jesus tells the disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (10:23–24), and adds the famous picture of a camel and

the eye of a needle (10:25). The disciples are amazed and ask, "Then who can be saved?" What is Christ teaching about the particular dangers of riches for the soul, the impossibility of self-saving religion, and the necessity of the saving work of God in the heart of every disciple (compare 1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17–19)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the young man leaves, Jesus delivers some of the most uncomfortable sentences in the Gospel for any reasonably comfortable disciple. "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (10:23). "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" (10:25). The disciples are amazed. "Then who can be saved?" they ask. Jesus answers, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (10:27).

Several truths converge here. First, wealth is dangerous to the soul. Not because money itself is evil (1 Timothy 6:10 says it is the 'love' of money that is a root of all kinds of evils), but because money has a particular ability to insulate, distract, and quietly claim our trust. Rich people are not damned by their wealth. But they are surrounded by a constant temptation to live as if they do not need God, do not need His community, do not need the gospel's daily mercy, and do not need to surrender. The 'one thing' the young man lacked was the willingness to let his wealth go. He is not alone.

Second, no one saves themselves. The young man's question, "Then who can be saved?" is the right question. The answer is that salvation is impossible for human beings on their own, and possible only because of God. Even the willingness to surrender comes from Him. Even the faith that responds comes from Him. The disciple is utterly dependent on the saving work of God in Christ.

Third, the church must teach about wealth honestly. 1 Timothy 6:9–10 warns, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." 1 Timothy 6:17–19 instructs the rich, "As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Fourth, the proper Christian response to wealth is not indifference to material things but stewardship of them under Christ's lordship. Christians are to work honestly, give generously, share gladly, and refuse the love of money. We are pilgrims who steward what has been entrusted to us, not owners who hoard what has come to us.

For students, this teaching is meant to land specifically. Most American Christians are rich by global and historical standards. The dangers Jesus warns about are not someone else's dangers. They are ours. The question is not whether wealth threatens our discipleship; it does. The question is what we will do about it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The particular spiritual dangers of wealth (Mark 10:23–25; 1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17–19)
- The impossibility of self-saving religion and the necessity of the saving work of God (Mark 10:27; Ephesians 2:8–9)
- The love of money, not money itself, as a root of many evils (1 Timothy 6:10)
- Stewardship of material resources under Christ's lordship (Luke 16:1–13; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2)
- Generosity and good works as fitting fruits of grace (2 Corinthians 8–9; Ephesians 2:10)
- Christian life as pilgrim, not as accumulator (Hebrews 11:13–16; Philippians 3:20)
- The witness of a generous, content, Christ-trusting believer in a wealth-obsessed culture

Discussion Prompts

- Why is wealth particularly dangerous to the soul, even when not flagrantly misused?
- How does Christ's answer, "With man it is impossible, but not with God," shape the way we see salvation?
- What does faithful Christian stewardship of wealth look like in our setting?

Question 9

Student Question:

By global and historical standards, most American Christians are rich. Where do you sense that wealth (your income, your accumulated savings, your home, your possessions, your sense of financial security) is influencing your discipleship in ways you have not fully examined, and what is one specific act of generosity or release Christ may be calling you to this season?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

By any honest measure, most American Christians are rich. We have housing, food, transportation, healthcare, education, retirement savings, leisure time, and discretionary income that the majority of people in human history could not have imagined. This is not condemnation; it is simply reality. The question is not whether wealth is shaping our discipleship; it is.

Wealth shapes us in subtle ways. It insulates us from dependence on God for daily bread, even as we still pray the line. It allows us to engineer life so we rarely have to take risks of faith. It produces in us a quiet sense of having a backup plan if Christ does not come through. It makes us slow to give, because giving feels like loss rather than investment. It builds in us a

comparative anxiety with other wealthy people that has little to do with kingdom priorities. It dulls our urgency about the lost, the suffering, and the poor whom Christ identified Himself with (Matthew 25:31–46).

Help students examine the specific ways wealth has been influencing their discipleship without their full attention. The annual giving that has stayed flat while income has grown. The savings that have crossed the line from prudence to insulation. The lifestyle that has crept upward to match every income gain. The decisions about where to live, what to drive, how to spend leisure time, what to teach children to value, that have been shaped by the wealth-norms of the broader culture rather than by Christ.

What is the one specific act of generosity or release Christ may be calling for? It will be different for each person. For some it is a meaningful increase in giving. For some it is a long-delayed special gift. For some it is hospitality offered with the home God has given. For some it is the use of skills, time, or savings in direct service to the kingdom or to a person in need. For some it is a significant simplification of life so that more resources can be released to the work of Christ. For some it is the willingness to invest in their own household and church family with generosity, not just in their own future.

Encourage one concrete step this week. Not vague intention. Not next year. This week. The lesson should produce action. The young man left sorrowful because the demand was real. The disciple who actually obeys discovers something the young man never did: the freedom that comes when wealth is dethroned and Christ is given His place.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithful Christian stewardship of wealth as a serious discipleship issue (Luke 16:1–15; 1 Timothy 6:17–19)
- Generosity as a fruit of grace and a discipline to be cultivated (2 Corinthians 9:6–11)
- Contentment as a learned grace (Philippians 4:11–13; Hebrews 13:5)
- Care for the poor and the needy as a continuing call upon the church (Galatians 2:10; James 1:27)
- Lifestyle as a witness, either to the lordship of Christ or to the lordship of comfort
- The continuing freedom that comes from holding possessions loosely

Discussion Prompts

- In what ways has wealth been quietly shaping your discipleship?
- What is one specific act of generosity or release Christ may be calling you to this season?
- How can our class help one another think faithfully about wealth in our setting?

Question 10

Student Question:

Peter says, "See, we have left everything and followed you," and Jesus responds with one of the most striking promises in the Gospels: "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (10:28–31). What is Christ promising to those who surrender everything to Him in this life, in the age to come, and how does this promise both encourage and reorder the disciple's expectations about cost and reward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Peter speaks for the disciples. "See, we have left everything and followed you" (10:28). It is honest and a little self-aware. They have left fishing nets, tax booths, homes, families, and visible security to follow Jesus. They are wondering whether it was worth it.

Jesus' answer is one of the most expansive promises in the Gospels. "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (10:29–31).

Several truths converge here. First, the surrender disciples make for Christ is not lost. It is exchanged. The believer who has left house, family, or land for the sake of Christ and the gospel receives in this life a hundredfold of houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and lands. This is largely fulfilled in the church. The believer who has lost natural family because of faith gains a vast new family in the local congregation and across the worldwide church. The believer who has given up homes finds a hundred more open to them in the hospitality of brothers and sisters. The believer who has surrendered fields finds the resources of the kingdom community on which to draw.

Second, the promise includes 'with persecutions.' Jesus does not hide this. The life of the disciple is not free of suffering. Following Christ in this age carries the cost of persecution, sometimes mild, sometimes severe, but never absent. The hundredfold is real, and the persecutions are real. The two come together, not separately.

Third, the age to come brings eternal life. The deepest reward is not in this age. It is in the age of resurrection, where every faithful disciple shares fully in the inheritance of Christ. "Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Philippians 3:20–21). The disciple does not finally lose anything. "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18).

Fourth, the closing sentence reorders our expectations. “Many who are first will be last, and the last first.” The visible status, success, and standing of this age will not map onto the standing of the age to come. Hidden faithful disciples will receive their reward. Self-important religious leaders may find themselves further from Christ than they imagined. The kingdom’s reckoning is not the world’s.

For students this chapter ends in deep encouragement. Whatever Christ asks us to lay down, He more than makes up. The marriage we honor with His teaching. The children we receive in His name. The wealth we hold loosely for His sake. The ‘one thing’ we have struggled to surrender. None of it is lost in His hands. The Lord who looked at the young man with love still looks at every disciple with love and still calls them to surrender, and still keeps every promise He has made.

Close the lesson by inviting students to look across the four scenes of the chapter and to identify the one place where surrender is currently being asked of them. Then to take the next step. And to take it in the confidence of Mark 10:29–31. The Lord is not in their debt. They are not at a loss. He has a hundredfold more to give than they have ever offered up.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The exchange Christ offers His disciples: present hundredfold within the family of God and eternal life in the age to come (Mark 10:29–30)
- The local church as the new family in which disciples find a hundredfold of relationships, hospitality, and resources (Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 5:1–2)
- The reality of persecution as a normal feature of faithful discipleship (John 15:18–21; 2 Timothy 3:12)
- The hope of eternal life in the age to come as the deepest reward of the disciple (Romans 8:18; Revelation 21:1–4)
- Final reversal of “first” and “last” at the judgment of Christ (Matthew 19:30; Luke 13:30)
- The trustworthiness of Christ’s promises in every season of Christian life (Hebrews 10:23; 1 Corinthians 1:9)

Discussion Prompts

- What part of Christ’s promise in 10:29–31 most encourages you in the place where surrender is being asked?
- How have you already seen the hundredfold realized through the local church?
- What is the one specific step of surrender you intend to take this week, in the confidence of His promise?