

Me or we?

Mark 10:17-31

Weekly Christian ed lesson

[Adapted from an article by Joelle Brummit-Yale
in Presbyterian Outlook](#)



Jesus can be frustrating. In today's gospel, he tells a rich man, "Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." But if we sell everything we had and gave away the money, how could we take care of ourselves? Jesus' call in this text is not an easy one, nor is it as cut-and-dried as it seems. In this week's lesson, children will explore the challenges and joys of living into Jesus' call to focus on the community's needs.

Begin your time with the children by placing a small snack in front of them — this should be one serving of a very small snack such as a granola bar or an apple. Ask the group who is hungry right now. Then, inquire about who might be hungry later in the day. They all must decide together: Should they save the snack or eat it now? How will the group make sure no one is hungry? Point out that it is difficult to determine what to focus on — your own needs or the needs of others in the group. Encourage the children to keep this idea in the back of their minds as you read the lectionary passage.

Prepare to read aloud Mark 10:17-31. Share with the children that this reading features a man asking Jesus for help. However, it's a bit different from other stories of individuals approaching Jesus. Usually, those seeking Jesus' aid ask for his healing. Ask the children to notice what this man focuses on when he speaks to Jesus.

Read aloud [Mark 10:17-31](#). Have the children recount what the story tells us about this man. How is he described? What is important to him? Note that the only descriptor we get for him is that he is rich. This means he likely had all he needed for earthly life and more. He also believes he has done all that he should to be in God's favor. He has kept the commandments. When the man approaches Jesus, he asks how he might gain eternal life. Then, ask the group to summarize Jesus' response to the man. What does Jesus tell him he must do to have eternal life? Jesus tells the man he should sell all he has and give the money away to the poor. The man cannot accept this answer and leaves.

Continue your discussion with the children by looking at the differences between what the rich man focuses on and what Jesus calls on him to do. Who is the rich man most concerned about when he speaks to Jesus? Who does Jesus emphasize in his answer? Note the rich man prioritizes himself. He asks about his own ability to gain eternal life and is unwilling to give up what he sees as his own. Jesus sees the well-being of the community as what God most wants. As Jesus continues teaching the disciples, the kingdom of God is a community. It requires us to give all to God rather than focusing on one's own needs.

Expand the conversation to the reality of prioritizing "we" over "me." Ask the children to reflect on Jesus' call in this passage. Jesus says that the kingdom of God is a way of life where we take our earthly treasures and turn them into something that is for those who have the least. When we do this – with God's help – we receive the greatest reward.

How easy or difficult is it to do what Jesus says? What is challenging about giving up things that you see as your own? How is it better for the community to have more but for you to have less? Give the children space to honestly share their thoughts and feelings about this idea. Encourage them to struggle with it and to recognize that this struggle is part of what it means to be a Christian.

Extend your discussion into the children's lives. Ask them to pick one thing that they value. It may be a possession or money. It may be their time. Talk about why it is important to them. Then ask them to think about how they could use this item to benefit the community. How could it be used to benefit someone other than themselves? Encourage them to put this into practice for a few days and then to reflect on the experience. For instance, a child may say that she values the hour each day that she gets to play games on her iPad because she enjoys the games. She could choose to spend that hour reading to her younger siblings or doing chores around the house.

Please note that the children should select something that has enough value that it matters but it should not be something that negatively affects their well-being. If a child says he values having food to eat at each meal so he wants to give this food to a food pantry instead of eating, discourage him from causing himself harm by not eating.

Instead, help him think of other ways that the food resources in his home could benefit the community while also allowing him to be healthy.

As an extension activity for older children, watch some of the [Story of Stuff](#) videos. This animated series looks at the distribution of resources and the way that our patterns of consumption negatively affect the most vulnerable people in our communities. “The Story of Bottled Water” and “The Story of Broke” are particularly applicable to this lesson.

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