

DRAMATIZED  
**Bible stories**  
ON THE TOPIC OF  
**ATTITUDES TOWARDS WEALTH**

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**Camels & Needles**

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# Topic Overview

## An Introduction to Attitudes Towards Wealth

The Bible talks a lot about wealth and money. In these lessons on Attitudes Towards Wealth we will learn and discuss what is a healthy attitude towards money and wealth and what is a dangerous attitude to have. There are clearly instances in the Bible where God has bestowed wealth to individuals. Abraham, Isaac, Job, Solomon, David, and Joseph (the son of Jacob) are some of the more popular individuals.

Before we dig into our lessons let us consider the following questions. It is up to your group leader to decide to talk about these now or to just be thinking about these over the next few weeks.

- 1) Are there dangers associated with being wealthy? If so, what are they?
- 2) Is money the root of evil? Explain your answer.
- 3) Can you name any non-Christians that are wealthy?

What is their general attitude towards life and others?

Do they appear to be happy?

- 4) Can you name any Christians that are wealthy?

If yes, how do you think they maintain a balance between serving God and managing their wealth?

Do they appear generous?

# Before The Story

- 1) Who teaches us wealth has value?
- 2) Has God blessed us if we are wealthy? Explain why you wrote what you did.
- 3) How do we accumulate wealth or what are some of the ways we earn it?
- 4) What are some of the benefits or drawbacks to being wealthy?

# The Story

## Camels and Needles

Based on Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 10:17-31, Luke 18:15-30

Talk about an incredible letdown... you'll never guess what I saw happen. Well, now that I think about it – maybe it wasn't a letdown. Maybe it was an awesome revelation. I don't know. I can't decide. Here, I'll tell you what happened, and you can decide for yourself.

For starters, my name's Pepe. You may not have heard of me, but you've probably heard of my dad, "Joseph Sly the Camel Guy". My dad's the guy that pays people to walk through the market place yelling out ads for his camel dealership.

"Looking for a quality new or pre-owned camel? Look no further! Come visit Joseph Sly the Camel Guy! We've got younger models, older models, one hump or two, all domesticated. We have the largest selection of camels west of the Jordan River. Bad credit, no credit, no problem! At Joe Sly's no one with a job is turned down for any reason. We'll offer you financing because we want you to ride out of our lot with one of our top-notch camels under your saddle. No need to shop anywhere else. Why pay sky-high when you buy when you can shop with Joseph Sly the Camel Guy!?"

Yup, that's my dad.

So, anyway, my dad tells me last night that I have to deliver this camel to some guy who lives near the Jordan River. Mom's going to have to work in the office so he needs me to take my sister along with me so she doesn't have to stay home alone. He gives me the name and address of the guy along with some directions on how to get to his house and tells me the guy wants the camel first thing in the morning. So, I had to get up early today, get the camel ready to be delivered and round up my little sister who had just turned 6.

As far as little sisters go she's alright. Actually, she's pretty cool. I kind of like hanging around my little sister - just don't tell anyone or my friends will give me a hard time. She's been on this doll kick lately. My mom's been teaching her how to make dolls using felt made from the camel hair.

When I woke my sister up and told her to get ready to go she grabbed some of her felt, string, a few buttons, and a couple needles and put them in a little pouch she carries around. She's gotten pretty good at making the dolls. She has no problem walking while working on them, which is what she did most of the way to get to the guy's house where we were supposed to deliver the camel. It was about a three hour walk.

We arrived at his house just after breakfast. I knocked on the door and his wife answered. I told her I was Joe Sly's son and I was here to deliver the camel her husband had ordered yesterday when he stopped by. "One second," she said, then she quietly closed the door.

"You ordered a what?" I could hear her yell at her husband. "You already have 4 camels, you don't need another one!"

"But this is one of the new camels. It comes with everything... leather seats, power steering, outside air conditioning..."

"There's no such thing as outside air conditioning!" she interrupted. "You are not getting another camel until you sell one of the camels you already have!" I heard light footsteps heading back to the front door. The door opened gently, and the woman said, "I'm sorry, there's been a misunderstanding. We're not taking that camel."

"But, ma'am..." I exclaimed. But it was too late, she had already closed the door in my face.

"Oh man, dad is not going to be happy." I told sis.

We sat down under a nearby group of trees and took a drink of water and ate a piece of bread. My sister showed me the doll she had completed on the way there. Wow, she was getting really good and really fast. She was getting ready to start a second doll on the way home.

After our short rest we started the walk home. We hadn't gone too far when we came across a crowd of people.

"What's going on?" I asked someone.

"It's Jesus. The one from Nazareth. He's been here a while. He's teaching." they replied.

I turned to ask my sister if she wanted to stay and listen to him but she was gone. She wasn't by my side. I had only turned my head for a split second to ask what was going on and now my sister's gone!

As I glanced around frantically my panic quickly subsided. She had pushed her way to the front to see Jesus. I pardoned myself as I asked people to kindly move aside so that I could get up to the front to get my sister. When I finally made it up to where my sister was I was kind of surprised to see Jesus disciples giving parents a hard time. Apparently some of the parents wanted their children to meet Jesus and the disciples were shooing them away.

"Take your children and go back to where you were sitting, please." I heard one disciple say.

Another disciple wasn't as kind, "Jesus doesn't have time for children. Don't disrupt his teachings and stand aside so that others may see and hear him better."

Jesus said, "Don't stop them. Let the children come to me." Then we waived for my sister to come over to him. "It's okay, come on over."

Her eyes opened wide and her face glowed with excitement as she ran over to him still carrying the doll she was working on. He picked her up and sat her on his lap, kissed her forehead, then he said, "The kingdom of God belongs to children just like this girl. Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you."

"Anyone that does not accept God's kingdom..." Jesus then covered his chest with his hand as if to imply he was talking about himself, "with the simple faith like these children will never enter it."

Just then, a man stepped forward from the back of the crowd. He was a very well-dressed man. He seemed a bit timid for someone of his apparent stature. He asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Buy my camel!" I shouted over to him. Everyone laughed. But the man kept eye contact with Jesus anticipating his response.

Jesus looked at the man for a second. He appeared to be sincere in his questioning. "Why do you call me good? Only God is good?"

The man paused. I don't think he was expecting to be questioned by Jesus. But before he could answer Jesus continued, "I believe you know the commandments. Keep them."

"Which ones?" asked the man.

"Do not kill anyone, do not have illicit sex, do not steal from anyone or withhold earning from them, do not lie, show honor to your father and mother, take care of them as they grow older, and love your neighbor as yourself, no matter how your neighbor treats you."

The man paused again. He thought long and hard. "For as long as I can remember I have done my best to keep these laws. Is there anything else I must do?" he asked.

Jesus looked at him a second time. Not only was Jesus noticing his fine clothing but also the man's expensive rings and jewelry. "There is." Jesus hesitated. He could sense the sincere tone in the man's question, but also the overwhelming attachment to his wealth. "Go and sell everything you own, give the money to the poor. Then you will have riches in Heaven."

At first the man was puzzled but before he responded Jesus continued to talk, "Then come and follow me."

I couldn't believe it myself! How exciting! Jesus had hand-picked his first twelve disciples some time ago but I just witnessed a personal invitation from Jesus to the wealthy man to come and follow him. Wait until I tell my friends and family what I saw today. I was about to see the newest disciple! ...Or so I thought.

The man looked more confused now than before. He was silent. Actually, we all were. We were waiting to see his excitement as he realized how special the invitation was that he had just received. He looked back at Jesus, who still had my sister sitting in his lap. Then he looked at the twelve disciples. Something didn't seem right. He looked back at Jesus, and this time looked down at the clothes Jesus was wearing, and then at the disciples clothes, and then he looked down at his own clothes.

His face slowly saddened. His shoulder's slumped down. In fact, his whole body seemed to slump over. His posture was that of someone in great sorrow and mourning. As he turned away from Jesus his eyes seemed to be swelling with tears. He didn't speak a word as he slowly walked away dragging his sandals in the sand as he walked.

What a letdown.

As the crowd filled in the area the man just walked through Jesus looked down at my sister and noticed the little doll she was working on. He kissed her on the head again and took the needle my sister was using out of the doll. He held the tiny needle up for everyone to see and as he pointed to my camel Jesus said, "It is easier for that camel to go through the eye of this needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

With that he gave my sister the needle back and headed her in my direction.

One of Jesus's disciples seemed confused by this and asked, "Well then, who does have a chance to get into God's kingdom?"

Jesus replied, to everyone, "If you think you can get into heaven by anything you do... If you think man has the answers, you're wrong. You're very wrong. But listen carefully, if you trust in God to provide the way into heaven everyone has a chance. With God, all things are possible."

I decided we should continue on back home. I wanted to try and make it home by dinner. As we left, it sounded as though the disciples were still asking questions. As we walked I just couldn't stop thinking about the rich man. I wondered what it would be like to be rich. I wondered what it would be like to be challenged by Jesus. I wondered if he might change his mind and sell his possessions and follow Jesus anyway.

# After The Story

- 1) Why do you think the rich man called Jesus good?
  
- 2) Where do you think he heard about eternal life?
  
- 3) Why do you think he came to Jesus for the answers and not a priest or priestess from another religion?
  
- 4) In the original manuscripts for the Gospel of Luke, he has the rich man identified as a magistrate. A magistrate is civil officer or “judge in training” that conducts court cases for minor offenses or holds preliminary hearings for more serious cases. As far as knowing the law, what would we expect of someone like that?



# Topic Review

Intended to be used after reading the following three lessons:  
Camels and Needles, When Less is More, and My Pal “Short Stack”.

1) Which of the three stories had the biggest impact on you? Why?

2) At the beginning of this series we mention wealthy people from the Bible, but they were all from the Old Testament. Does the Bible mention any wealthy Christians in the New Testament?

If you answered “no”, why don’t you think there are any wealthy Christians in the New Testament?

If you answered “yes”, can you name any? What makes you think they were wealthy?

3) Are there changes you need to make in your life so that your attitude towards wealth stays in check?

If so what are they?

How can you accomplish those changes?

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Topic Overview

### An Introduction to Attitudes Towards Wealth

Typically throughout this book most of the questions will be answered. While I may not have answered them in the introduction, the key questions will be answered before the end of the book.

More Biblically educated Christians may already know the answers to some of the questions in the introduction or even many of the questions relating to the different dramatizations. What we really want throughout this book is to allow for some self-discovery. Don't feed your students all the answers, allow them to struggle with them, especially the more difficult questions.

Figuring out a solution on your own holds a higher rate of information retention than just being told an answer. Hopefully we have included enough information, including backgrounds and context to help even the more educated students to have their own "ah ha!" moments.

It may also be a good idea to leave a question or two unanswered until your next meeting time. This allows students time to process what they have learned and try to figure out how to apply that information on their own. Just say something simple like "Let's think about this question some more and get back to it next week."

For those of you that can't stand having questions unanswered - this is for you... Don't share the answers to the first two questions with your students yet. They will come up again in later lessons.

- 1) A wealthy person can begin to rely on their ability to gain wealth for themselves. They can begin to think their success is based on what they are doing and not what God is allowing them to do. They stop relying on God because they have relied on themselves.

Greed and pride are also two very difficult habits or personality traits to overcome.

- 2) Money is not the root of evil. The love of money is. Money in and of itself is not a good or bad thing - it's just an object. It is how the wealth is viewed that can lead to a poor character flaw in an individual.

The answers to the next two questions are sharable with your students. These are just some starting names. To make the list more relevant to your group you may want to add more or different names.

- 3) At the time of the writing of this book names might include Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, various music artists, movie stars, or professional athletes.
- 4) At the time of the writing of this book names might include Billy Graham (evangelist), Chris Pratt (actor), Tom Hanks (actor), Faith Hill (musician), Chuck Norris (actor), and Carrie Underwood (musician, actress).

A quick Google search on “Christian celebrities” should allow you to find people most relevant to students in your group.

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Before The Story

- 1) Teaching can come from all sorts of places. We can learn about wealth from the media, our parents, our friends, and yes, even the Bible.
- 2) There is not a right or wrong answer to this question. It is meant to get people to verbalize what they think and why they think it. Listening to students answer may help give you some insight as to where they are spiritually. Certainly there are verses in the Old Testament that imply this, such 1 Kings 2:3
- 3) You may get several answers to this question. Work for it, get it as a gift or inherit it, invest money in the stock market etc... Allow students to talk about this a little but end the discussion for this question with Deuteronomy 8:18. Remind students that even if we work for our money it is because God has given us the ability to work. It is nothing we have done on our own.
- 4) This question is just meant for conversation. Ask students to explain why they feel the way they do. Sometime you'll get different meanings from the same outcome. For example: (1) If you are rich it is because you kept your relationship with God close and you continually pray for advice. Or (2) If you are poor it is so you will keep your relationship with God close and you will continually pray for advice.

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## After The Story

- 1) We do not actually know why the rich man called Jesus good. There are several possibilities: he was being polite, he wanted favor with Jesus, he actually recognized the fact that Jesus was God (or of God the Father). But the truth is, we are guessing no matter which option we choose to believe.
- 2) We don't know. It is likely that he either heard about it from someone that heard Jesus talk about it or he heard it from a Pharisee.
- 3) Again, we don't know. But Christianity is the only religion that's puts all the responsibility of salvations (one's ability to get into heaven) into the hands of God and not into man. In all other religions it is about what you, as a person, must do to earn your salvation (or next level up, or whatever)

This may be why the man's question starts with, "What must I do..."

- 4) Possible answer might include: that he studies and knows the law, that he is a good righteous individual, that he is of good moral character.
- 5) By Jesus' day Jews had 613 "commandments" or rules on how to keep the original 10 that were given to Moses. It may have been a sincere question. He may have been asking do I really need to know and keep all of the 613 commandments? Just knowing all 613 rules would have been an accomplishment, let alone having the ability to keep them all.
- 6) The magistrate probably felt quit relieved when Jesus listed only a few commandments. And when he said he had kept them since he was young he would have meant to the best of his abilities. He was probably just stating a fact. He is already a magistrate - there is not a reason to try to brag or make himself look better than someone else.
- 7) He may have sensed that there was something Jesus was not telling him. Maybe the answer seemed too simple. Or possibly he was prompted by the Holy Spirit. We do not know why he asked a follow up question. We just know that he did.
- 8) Jesus did not quote the first 4 commandments or the 10th one.

- 9) See all that you have and give the money to the poor then you will have treasures in heaven. Then come and follow me.
- 10) In the case of this particular individual it specifically relates to the first 2. It was obvious to Jesus that this man cared more about his wealth (money and possessions) than he did his relationship with God.
- 11) We understand that, according to the Bible, there are actions we can do while we are here on earth that will create “treasures” that will be waiting for us when we get to heaven. The Bible doesn’t specifically say what that is but God is the giver of all things good and the Father of Truth. If God has made a promise - it will be kept.
- 12) The magistrate realized that he had a problem with how he valued his wealth.
- 13) This may be a question for personal reflection. If you are in a small group setting you may ask students to share for the sake of prayer and accountability but do not force anyone to share. This can be very personal or embarrassing. Just allow students to have time to ponder the question. If students are willing to share out loud you could offer a time to allow students to come up with solutions to help put God first in their lives. Students may have issues with money (a job), someone they are in a relationship with, time used to play video games, sports or other extracurricular activities that hinder personal prayer and devotions or even church attendance.

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Topic Review

Intended to be used after reading the following three lessons:  
Camels and Needles, When Less is More, and My Pal "Short Stack".

- 1) Listening to what stories your students choose and why may give you some insight either into their current living situation or the values in life. You may get an unexpected answer such as, "I related to the story When Less is More because I feel like the widow." Or "My dad owns a finance company and doesn't go to church. I feel like my family might fit into the Camels and Needles story." While the question was meant for personal reflection you never know what a student might give for an answer.

Be prepared for surprises. Be prepared not to be judgmental. Be prepared to show compassion and encouragement. Be prepared to follow up with a student outside of the classroom. If a student feels like the widow, a study session, in front of peers, might not be the best place to explore why - especially if they come from a broken home or a family living off government assistance.

- 2) Yes, the Bible does mention wealthy Christians in the New Testament. Here is a list of some of them that gave generously to those in need.

- Joseph, called Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37)
- Dorcas (Acts 9:36)
- Cornelius (Acts 10:1)
- Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6-12)
- Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
- Jason (Acts 17:5-9)
- Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3)
- Mnason of Cyprus (Acts 21:16)
- Philemon (Philemon 1)

These people lived faithful Christian lives in addition to enjoying wealth. Note the example they set: they were wealthy AND they gave generously. Throughout their actions they lived out the responsibility placed on their lives that came with the wealth.

Peter Parker's (Spider-Man) Uncle Ben once told him, "Along with great power comes great responsibility". The same can be said for someone that God has entrusted with wealth. Along with great wealth comes great responsibility. Wealth is not just



to take care of you and your family. It is a gift that comes with the responsibility to help take care of others.

- 3) Hopefully everyone has learned they need to change at least a little bit throughout this lesson series. If not, that is okay. It is quite possible that some students just do not think about wealth at this point in their lives. For them, we are planting seeds for future growth and responsibility.

For the students that recognize they need or want to change, help them verbalize clearly what they would like to change. Help them develop a plan of action.

While there are many good additional resources I would recommend Compass Ministries (<https://compass1.org>). They specialize on money matters using Biblical principles.