The Point
Jesus teaches us how to live and calls us to follow Him.

The Bible Meets Life
When a person wants to learn a certain skill or profession, there are certain schools or universities that come to mind. They have the best teachers in that area of study. But where do we go when we want to learn about life? Although many people see Jesus as a religious figure, He didn’t come to earth to teach us religious things; He came to show us and teach us about how to live life.

The Passage
Mark 1:21-22; 10:17-22
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Mark 1:21-22; 10:17-22

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:21-22 occurs early in Jesus’ ministry. He had completed 40 days in the wilderness, John the Baptist had been arrested, and Jesus had called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him when they entered a synagogue in Capernaum and Jesus began to teach. Mark again records Jesus teaching in the latter part of Mark 9 (in Capernaum) and the early part of Mark 10 (in Judea). Against the backdrop of Jesus’ teaching, a man approached the Teacher to ask a question.
ENGLISH

ENGAGE: Begin the session with one or more of the Engage Options on the next page. (This is optional. If you’d rather skip the Engage Options, just begin with the first discussion question.)

SAY: Although many people see Jesus as a religious figure, He didn’t come to earth to teach us religious things; He came to show us and teach us about how to live life.

DISCUSS: Lead students to discuss the question, “What do you like best about your favorite teacher?”

GUIDE: Call attention to The Point. Explain that this is the key idea to keep in mind throughout the session.

Jesus teaches us how to live and calls us to follow Him.

READ: Read and summarize The Bible Meets Life for your group.

Whatever you’d like to learn, someone will teach it to you. If you want to enter a certain profession, you can find a college, university, or trade school that will take your money and give you an education and training in that specific field. Some skills, however, are best learned through a private tutor or instructor. Whether you are hoping to discover how to play the piano, plant a garden, or program a computer, people are available to help you on your way. They instruct, lead, teach, correct, guide, and encourage. And with their help, you gain a skill set. But where do you go to learn how to live well? Where do you go when you want to know how to overcome challenges? Who do you seek to teach you what is best or how to make right choices? Do you go to social media? Reality shows? The Internet? The greatest Person to teach you about life is Jesus Christ. He is not simply a religious icon or a distant God speaking in intangible terms. His teaching is clear and gets to the heart of what it means to live a life that matters. Let’s consider how the Giver of life is also the Teacher of life.

PRAY: Transition into the session by praying that students will remember the teachings of Jesus and choose to follow Him.
Engage Options

▶ Lead with Action
Ask volunteers to stand in a line. Hold out a scarf and ask everyone to hold on to it with one hand. Explain that you will lead everyone around and that they should keep their eyes closed, if they can. Lead the group on as challenging a course as your space and their abilities will allow. Give your students instructions around difficult obstacles. Say: “Jesus calls us to follow Him, but He teaches how to do this.”

▶ Lead with Atmosphere
Before students enter, place signs and notes around the room that have conflicting directions. One sign might say “Sit on the floor,” while another sign might say “sit in a chair.” One sign could say “spin in circles and sing the alphabet,” while another says, “please remain absolutely quiet.” Once the confusion settles, say: “The signs up in the room probably weren’t very helpful, as they were all sending conflicting messages. Jesus shows us clearly in Scripture how we are to live and what it means to follow Him.”

▶ Lead with Media
Find a clip of a “Weekend Update Garth & Kat” segment from Saturday Night Live (there are several options; one good choice is “Garth and Kat Christmas”). Play this funny clip, and then say, “What makes this segment so funny is that Kat tries desperately to follow Garth on the spot, with no preparation. Who we choose to follow is important. Scripture calls us to follow Christ above all else. He is the most perfect example, and the most worthy of following.”

OPTION: Consider setting your meeting area up to resemble a classroom that students would recognize.

OPTION: In the days or weeks before the session, video students answering the following questions: Who is your favorite teacher? Why is he/she your favorite? What qualities make him/her a good teacher? Collect the different recordings, editing them together to make a video introducing today’s session about Jesus’ teaching.
MARK 1:21-22

SAY: When Jesus began to teach, people were astonished because, unlike the scribes, He was teaching them as one having authority.

GUIDE: Lead students to talk about Jesus’ authority as He taught.

For the rest of us, any authority we have is limited to the roles we’ve been given. Whether you’re the President of the United States or a mother corralling a three-year-old, your authority only extends so far. It’s finite. Yet Christ’s authority is unlimited because it rests intrinsically within Him. He taught with authority like no other because He Himself is that authority. He embodies absolute truth, even saying that He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Jesus also backed up His authority with His actions. He demonstrated the dependability of His words with miracles.

- He paid his taxes with a coin out of the mouth of a fish (Matt. 17:24-27).
- He cast out demons (Mark 1:23-27).
- He raised the dead (Mark 5:35-42).
- He turned a few fish and bread into a giant meal for thousands (Mark 6:30-44).
- He walked on water His followers feared (Mark 6:45-52).

His actions and miracles gave credibility to His words. If Jesus’ teachings had gone no further than the ones who originally heard Him speak, the authority in His teaching might have gotten lost on the dusty shelves of history. But His teachings didn’t end with those events. In fact, shortly before He returned to His Father, Jesus commanded His followers to go out in the world and teach on His behalf. Out of His authority, He gave us this charge. What’s more, after He gave this commission, He returned to heaven and, once again, sat down. He sat down at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

DISCUSS: Ask students to answer the question, “What’s the difference between knowledge and authority?”

SAY: Jesus sits in a position of authority today, and He has called us to both live and teach His words from a position of authority.
[VERSE 21] The events in Capernaum follow the account of Jesus starting His ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14-15) and His calling four disciples—Simon, Andrew, James and John—on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (vv. 16-20). Capernaum was an important town in the territory of Herod Antipas on the main trade route from Mesopotamia to Egypt. This town would be Jesus’ base of operations during His Galilean ministry.

On entering the city, Jesus immediately went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Luke noted that Jesus' attending synagogue services was His usual practice or custom (Luke 4:16). On the occasion in Capernaum, the synagogue setting was the logical and appropriate place for Jesus to announce the good news of God (Mark 1:14-15). Services consisted of prayer, praise, reading from the (Hebrew) Scriptures, and an exposition of the reading. The leader of the synagogue could invite anyone he deemed capable to read and expound the Scriptures. (Luke 4:14-27 is a prime example of the practice.) It’s likely that because of Jesus’ preaching ministry in Galilee (see Mark 1:14-15), He was known to be a capable teacher. Thus, He was invited to speak and immediately began to teach.

[VERSE 22] The synagogue congregation was in for a surprise as the visiting speaker began to teach. The congregation was amazed because, unlike the scribes, He was teaching them as one having authority. Jewish scribes were experts in the law. When the role of scribes was first created, recording events and decisions had been their task. During the Babylonian exile, they took on the role of copying the Hebrew Scriptures in order to preserve them. Because of their thorough familiarity with the Scriptures, the scribes began to interpret and teach the Scriptures. By the time of the New Testament, a professional class of scribes had developed. In their role, they sought to apply the Scriptures’ dictates to all areas of life. The scribes seldom if ever gave a personal, independent judgment. Instead, they referred to past legal experts to bolster their decisions.

In sharp contrast, Jesus did not quote past authorities but spoke with the force of personal authority. The term teaching probably referred to both what Jesus taught (the content) and manner in which He taught. His authoritative teaching astonished (astounded, amazed) the listeners. They may even have been alarmed by His distinctively different teaching. They had never heard such forcible teaching.

In part, the people’s astonishment arose from their knowledge that Jesus was not a trained scribe but a lay teacher. He lacked a rabbi’s credentials. Yet Jesus spoke prophetically, having divine inspiration and authority that came directly from God.
The Point: Jesus teaches us how to live and calls us to follow Him.

MARK 10:17-21a

DISCUSS: Lead students to discuss the questions, “When have you asked God for something only to be surprised by His answer?”

READ: Read or have a volunteer read the following:

Most Jews of that day would assume that the way to eternal life was through obedience to the law. Yet a man came running to Jesus, wanting to know what he must do to inherit eternal life.

Jesus first listed several of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). Jesus started where the man was—striving for eternal life through keeping the law—but He would show the man that wasn’t enough. The man quickly acknowledged his obedience, but Jesus called the man to a greater level of obedience, beyond just keeping the letter of the law.

What was the “one thing” the man lacked? He lacked a radical trust in God that would allow him to abandon everything and follow Jesus.

Jesus’ love drove everything He said and did, including His teaching. Out of love, Jesus affirmed this man’s actions and gave him one very powerful piece of advice: Sell all he had and give it to the poor. Because in doing so, he would store up treasures in heaven.

Out of love, Jesus conveyed to this man—and us!—an explosive truth, an awesome reality that ought to guide all that we do. Life isn’t just about what we can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. Life goes beyond what we know now. Treasures in heaven are far more valuable than storage rooms full of stuff.

Out of love, Jesus urged this man to let go of all the things there were keeping him from experiencing true treasure.

DO: Direct students to complete the Action Point, “Tough Teachings Of Jesus.”

Tough Teachings Of Jesus

Spend a few minutes looking through the red letters of the Bible to see the tough teachings of Jesus. (Check out the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.) List those teachings, then discuss with your group how we normally respond to these teachings.
[VERSES 17-19] As Jesus was setting out on a journey—His final journey—toward Jerusalem (see 10:32), a man ran up to Him. The man knelt down before Jesus. Customarily, people did not kneel to a rabbi, so his act was unusual. The man’s question to Jesus rang with urgency: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Notice that Jesus did not give the man a concise answer. Instead, Jesus directed his attention to the Ten Commandments’ second table, with which the man was thoroughly familiar. Commandments Five through Ten deal with relationships with other human beings. Jesus placed the Fifth Commandment last, and rephrased the Commandment not to covet as “do not defraud.” The Greek term rendered defraud has the sense of depriving someone of what rightly belongs to that person, of removing anything from another.

[VERSES 20-21a] The inquirer confidently informed Jesus that beginning from his youth (perhaps age 13), he had kept the Commandments Jesus listed. As Jesus looked at the man, He loved him. The Greek word translated looking conveys the idea of gazing searchingly or earnestly. The term rendered loved is a form of the word agape, God’s kind of love. In response to the man’s sincerity, Jesus genuinely wanted to help him enter God’s kingdom.

Jesus then answered the man’s question about receiving eternal life. He indicated the man lacked one thing. Then came the totally unexpected directive: “Go, sell all you have and give to the poor.” The man was to convert all his assets to cash and distribute the money to people reduced to begging in order to survive, people who were destitute.

Why was Jesus’ requirement so severe? Behind the directive seems to be the man’s focus on his wealth. His security was in what he had, not in God. Nowhere did Jesus reference the first table of the Law—the first four Commandments—that deal with relationship with God. Yet by implication, the man’s wealth had become his god; it occupied the center of his life, was uppermost in his mind, and drew his life’s energies. In essence, he had broken the First Commandment that only God is to be worshiped and served (see Ex. 20:3). Possessions had become the man’s idol.

Jesus’ demand of the man is not to be applied to every person who commits to Him; He does not call all His followers to reduce themselves to poverty. Instead, Jesus addressed a particular situation in which a man’s possessions had replaced God as the consuming priority of his life. Yet we must be aware that following Jesus may involve giving up something of value to us: our own plans or ambitions, occupations, lifestyles, or even relationships. Make no mistake: Jesus calls us to costly discipleship.

TIP: Keep in close contact with your Youth Leader. Whether it is a full time Student Minister or a volunteer within your church. Pray for them. Talk to them, encourage them, and help them as much you can.
STUDY THE BIBLE
The Point: Jesus teaches us how to live and calls us to follow Him.

MARK 10:21b-22

SAY: Jesus’ teaching calls for a response. To merely admire Jesus as a great Teacher, without applying the truths He taught, is to forfeit the treasure of which He spoke. It also leaves yourself vulnerable to life’s storms when they come.

GUIDE: Lead students to understand how obedience to Jesus’ teaching is evidence that we believe Him.

It is the same as declaring you really don’t believe Him after all. Obedience to what Jesus teaches is proof that you believe Him. Belief, after all, is to be demonstrated, not just discussed.

Acting in belief on Christ’s words requires faith. Faith is something we often misunderstand. We identify it as an emotion, something we hold to intellectually, or something we say we believe. Yet, faith is measured by your life, not your words. It involves your feet, not just your feelings. It should be a lifestyle, not an event.

In fact, to not live by faith is to call God a liar. It is to challenge His integrity because faith means you are taking Him at His word. Faith is only as powerful as the object to which it is attached. You could have all the faith in the world that your car was suddenly going to sprout wings and fly you to the moon, but you would still end up on the ground. Yet when you attach your faith to Jesus Christ and His Word—and you respond by obeying what He has revealed—that is the faith that moves mountains (Matt. 17:20). Responding to Jesus’ teaching means trusting Him enough to do what He says.

Jesus is the greatest Authority on how to live our lives. And He has given us His teaching in His Word. To read it, study it, discuss it, and yet not apply it makes no sense at all. Listen to Jesus’ teaching and respond with trustful obedience.

DISCUSS: Lead students to discuss the question, “Does our obedience accurately reflect our commitment to Christ? Explain.”
MARK 10:21b-22

[VERSE 21b] Jesus’ invitation to the man, to follow Him, most likely was a call to attach himself to Jesus as a disciple. Accepting that call would be to receive Jesus’ gift of Himself and thus of eternal life. Answering Jesus’ call involved self-sacrifice, obedience, selfless service, and total dedication to Jesus and His redemptive mission.

[VERSE 22] The man was stunned at Jesus’ demand. The Greek term rendered stunned means “to put on a gloomy and downcast look.” It was used of the sky’s lowering with clouds. At Jesus’ words, the man’s face expressed his disappointment. Perhaps his look was something like a puzzled, shocked frown. The term demand literally is “word” and likely refers both to Jesus’ instruction that the man rid himself of his wealth and to His call to committed discipleship.

The man went away grieving because he had many possessions. He was unwilling to follow Jesus’ instructions. He experienced lingering grief because he had not received what he came seeking. The Greek word translated many can mean great. The term rendered possessions could have the sense of holdings such as property, lands, or estates. Today, we would say he was a man of considerable means, with many and varied investments and assets.

Some interpreters have suggested the man’s grief offered a faint note of hope in an otherwise tragically sad scene. His sorrow may have left open the possibility that he later came to repentance and faith. We can only speculate about the ultimate outcome of the man’s encounter with Jesus. What is clear is that as the account ends, the man held on to his wealth but suffered incalculable loss. He lost the opportunity to receive the eternal life, entrance into God’s kingdom, he sought. He lost the priceless gift of being with Jesus and being instrumental in His redemptive work. He lost the opportunity of investing his life in the service of others—an investment that would bring eternal dividends.

What are the implications for us in the account of the wealthy inquirer? Among the lessons are: (1) Jesus’ teachings call for our response. We have to decide. (2) We receive eternal life—life of God’s quality that begins now and is endless—as God’s gift through repentance and faith in Jesus. (3) Jesus demands total commitment and obedience. (4) Committed discipleship often calls for sacrifice. (5) Loyal discipleship requires constant vigilance so no other people or things replace Jesus as the object of our devotion. We must be aware that idols are not figures of a remote past or of pagan cultures. We easily can fashion our own idols that draw our lives’ worship and energies. (6) In love, Jesus seeks to help us realize our potential as His followers.

**TIP:** Share a story in your own life where you were obedient to Christ when it wasn’t convenient. Help students know that we need to keep our commitment to Christ even when we think it is inconvenient to us.
APPLY IT

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud a few ways students can take what they have learned and Apply It.

▶ Read. Read one of the Gospels and as you come across Jesus’ teachings, identify how living by that teaching would benefit your life.

▶ Commit. Make a deliberate decision to live by the teaching of Jesus.

▶ Teach. Consider leading a small group Bible study at church or at school. You may also consider teaching and working with kids. Let God use you to communicate to others the teachings of Jesus.

GUIDE: Lead students to consider which of the three suggested responses to the Bible study most closely applies to them and their current circumstances.

ASK: Which of these responses do you personally need to focus on most as you live this session out? Allow time for responses.

WRAP UP

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help your students put feet to their faith and seek to be obedient to Jesus’ teachings.

ASK: Ask students about last week’s Live It Out options. Discuss any responses and encourage students as they choose to apply the Bible to their lives.

GUIDE: Encourage students to complete one or both of the Live It Out activities for the week. Let them know you will discuss them next time you meet.

TIP: Encourage the students to adopt a Bible reading plan. If they have a smartphone or tablet, there are reading plans available for download.
LEADER LIVE IT OUT

Before the session, challenge yourself to grow with your students through this Live It Out.

Let It Go | Mark 10:21-22

These three words, “Let It Go,” have been very popular since 2013 because of the movie Frozen. The song has become an anthem for people to let go of what others have done to them because holding on to things only hinders progress. Well this story in Scripture reminds us that other people aren’t the only stumbling blocks in our lives. Often we can be the ones holding ourselves back from growing closer to Jesus. This man thought he had it all figured it out, but after Jesus commanded him to let go of all his possessions in order to gain treasures in heaven, all the man could do was cry and walk away.

Are you the rich man in this story? You may not have a lot of wealth, but you may be rich in friends, material possessions, or social status. Are you willing to give any of it up if that’s what Jesus asks of you? Why or why not?

LIVE IT OUT: Your student has been encouraged to do one or both Live It Out activities in the Personal Study Guide. Here are some suggested ways to help your student:

If he or she plans to complete Let It Go:
- Evaluate your own life. Are you a model for your student of what following Jesus looks like?

If he or she plans to do Walking in Authority:
- Talk with your student about what it means for Jesus to be Lord of our lives.
- Encourage your student to evaluate whether he or she is truly surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.

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The Point:
- What’s one of the lessons Jesus has taught you about how to live?
- How has Jesus helped you live out the Christian life?

Discuss the following quote: “Radical obedience to Christ is not easy. . . It’s not comfort, not health, not wealth, and not prosperity in this world. . . But in the end, such risk finds its reward in Christ. And He is more than enough for us.” —David Platt


SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:21-22; 10:17-22

TOPIC: Christ’s Teaching

ONE CONVERSATION™

Use these discussion starters to help foster a spiritual conversation with your family.

STUDENTS

THE POINT: Jesus teaches us how to live and calls us to follow Him.
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