

**Ultimate Makeover**  
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For Berkeley Chinese Community Church  
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**Mark 10:17-31**

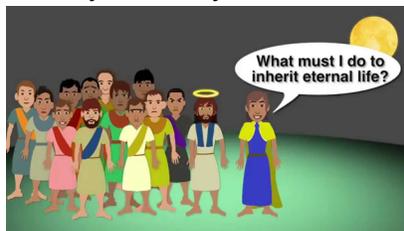
<sup>17</sup> As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>18</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother." ' <sup>20</sup> He said to him, 'Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.' <sup>21</sup> Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' <sup>22</sup> When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

<sup>23</sup> Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' <sup>24</sup> And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' <sup>26</sup> They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.'

<sup>28</sup> Peter began to say to him, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.' <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, <sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.'

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This is a special occasion –  
we just heard an account about the only call story where Jesus is turned down!



Did you notice? It starts out like any other Jesus story...he is traveling with his entourage. And like many stories – he is interrupted. This time by a young man... well, Mark doesn't actually say that he is "young." Matthew calls him "young" and Luke says that he was a "ruler." Mark just calls him a generic "man." So maybe this idea of "man" (generic *man* or *hu-man* or *wo-man*) stands there before Jesus representing all of us. He had "great possessions," but so do we, when we are compared to the vast majority of the world's inhabitants. We Americans have more stuff than we need...we have so much that every town, every city has its share of "storage units" to rent for folks to store what doesn't fit nicely in our homes.

So this generic someone meets Jesus and is called by Jesus. Jesus tells this person that the way to "eternal life" leads through discipleship. Jesus extends an invitation to be a disciple.

"Come, follow me," Jesus says.

So many had come and followed Jesus. All of the disciples, standing around witnessing this encounter, had left much and had followed Jesus. The journey had not been easy for them.

There was Simon and Andrew, James and John – all leaving everything behind to follow Jesus...their livelihoods, their boats, their families...their communities. Read through the gospel of Mark, and you get a sense of how tough it was for them to follow Jesus. Living that life with Jesus dangerous - full of misunderstanding, risk, confusion, and difficulties.

There were the official 12 disciples that Jesus named...but we sometimes forget that everywhere he went – there were people who dropped everything and followed him – from tax collectors to sinners to those deemed by society to be unclean and unfit for anything to the normal everyday Joe. Can you imagine such a motley crew traveling throughout the countryside from town to town? Life was most likely full of risks and dangers and suspicions.

And now, someone else is meeting Jesus, face-to-face; someone else is being asked to become a disciple. And after hearing how much it costs to be a disciple, the man slumps down and walks away very sad.



The story, then, is about a “generic” someone - someone like us - meeting Jesus and being asked to follow, but who decides that it is not a way he wants to go. He walks away. As far as we know, this is the only call story in all the gospels in which someone refuses to follow Jesus...a person like us being invited to be a disciple of Jesus, and...this person like us...walks in the other direction. Let us take note -- the reason was *money & possessions*.

We can probably identify with his materialistic encumbrances. Like him, all of us have many possessions, more than we need to live. We know how all of our *stuff* can chain us to the *stuff*. And we all know in our gut how risky a matter it can be to be met by Jesus and to hear him calling us to follow. We can probably sympathize with this man! We can probably understand why this man is walking away rather than following!

We know - and he knows - that Jesus is asking for a total makeover to follow him. I mean a makeover from head to toe, from head to heart, from how we see the world to how we order our values and priorities – the Ultimate Makeover!



We're not talking about the kind of makeovers we see on “What Not to Wear”... Have you ever

seen this TV program? It promotes an outside in kind of transformation. The subject of the makeover is usually someone who is the opposite of one who “dresses for success”...who with the help of wardrobe stylists, a makeup artist and a hair stylist, is transformed into a self-confident new person.



One such person was a young woman who grew up in an at risk community aka “The ‘Hood, had worked hard to finish her education and then began an after school program to help at risk kids in her community. But she was running into a problem. Whenever she met with parents and potential backers, she was not taken seriously. She still looked like an at-risk kid herself. So her friends and family believed in her and wanted her to succeed. They nominated her to be on “What Not to Wear” - if she agrees to let the experts take over her wardrobe, she gets a credit card with \$5K to buy a whole new wardrobe and makeover. When the fashion stylists take over – they get to know the essence of their subject and set about teaching principles of fashion and color...about figuring out what to wear that is appropriate for the occasion and the context. She goes shopping and pulls together a new wardrobe with help from her consultants...

Then she gets help from a hair stylist and a makeup artist and voila – a self-assured young professional woman emerges who can inspire confidence in parents and investors alike.



People aren't the only ones who get makeovers....There are stories of restaurant makeovers and hotel makeovers that relaunch with new personalities!

It seems that this is the time for makeovers, relaunches, reinventions...for restaurants, for businesses...for people.



But the makeover that Jesus is asking for is not just about leaving all that was important to us **BFJ – Before Following Jesus**. It's asking for a total, inside-out, his way becoming OUR way – becoming THE way we live...where love for God and love for the other as ourselves is the focus of how we live our lives!

He is asking that we consider the consequence of our actions and words and thoughts – how they will affect the other and God instead of how it will affect us! This is a reversal of what the world seems to value – aren't we living in a "me first" era?



He is asking that we consider the impact of what we do and say beyond the moment – how will it affect whoever hears our words and receives our actions in the days, weeks, months and even years ahead? How will it affect our relationship with each other?

All these considerations can draw up a whole new blueprint of us!



And if we think about it - it's a blueprint of what we *can* be – a blueprint of the child of God who can be a partner in building the heaven on earth we pray about. Sound impossible? Maybe like the proverbial "it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" kind of impossible?!?



Take heart – Mark gives us hope...he also says, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."



Speaking of impossibilities and possibilities – you might be wondering where's the good news in this story about someone Jesus calls who walks away?

And just for you - here's a story told by a friend and colleague...

# GOOD NEWS

One night, in a college dormitory Bible study my friend presented this same story of Jesus and the rich man and asked the gathered students, "What do you make of this story?" "Had Jesus ever met this man before?" asked one of the students? "Why do you ask?"



"Because Jesus seems to have lots of faith in him. He demands something risky and radical of him. I wonder if Jesus knew that this man had a gift for risky, radical responses. In my experience, a professor only demands the best from students that the professor thinks are the smartest and the best students. So, I wonder what there was about this man that made Jesus have so much faith that he could really be a disciple." Hmmm...never considered this possibility!

Another student sounded wistful when he said, "I wish Jesus would ask something like that of me. My parents totally control my life just because they are paying all my bills.



I complain about them calling the shots, but I am so tied to all this stuff I don't think I could ever break free. But maybe Jesus thinks otherwise."



Wow – these students heard what is usually seen as BAD news, as gracious, GOOD news.



So – let’s run with this thought – that there might be good news in the story of the rich, young man. You know

- we don’t know what happens to the man after he walked away.
- We don’t know if he gave away all his treasures and later – was among some newly recruited followers.
- We don’t know if he just sat home and moped and was dejected the rest of his life.
- We don’t know if he felt so bad that he committed suicide.
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So – how about us writing a sequel?

- What if – the man spent a lot of time thinking and mulling over what Jesus said to him.
- What if he prayed more and more to God.
- What if it dawned on him that Jesus asked him to give money to the poor and follow him.
- And it does NOT necessary in that order.
- What if he figured out that he can give his money away by helping the poor directly?
- What if he used his money to hire the homeless and the poor to grow food on his land to feed the poor?
- What if he used his money to build places where the homeless can live?
- What if he asked friends and family to befriend those who were declared unfriendly by society?
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AND by doing all of that – he **is** following Jesus. It’s a win-win situation...that would be great news! Jesus had faith in him and all is possible with God. That’s the good news...the great news!

For us too - Jesus invites all people to be his disciples: divest!

Break free! Let go of your stuff! Follow me! Jesus believes you can do it! Jesus has faith! The blueprints for the new you, the new me is being drawn up as we speak – for the ultimate makeover of each of us and of the world as we know it.

Let us pray.

Dear God, when we are met by you in the form of Jesus, help us to recognize you and give us the guts to follow you. Help us to have as much faith in ourselves as followers as *you* have in us. Amen.