Preschool–Grade 6

The Rich Young Ruler

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Love God more than things. Whatever holds first place in our hearts decides whether we follow Jesus or walk away.
Bible passage: Mark 10:17–27. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." *Mark 10:27 (KJV)* and "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." *Matthew 6:21 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Mark 10:17–31, Matthew 19:16–26, Luke 18:18–27 and Matthew 6:19–21. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: Trade Up (5–10 minutes)

On the board, write five things a preteen might want: a new phone, a game system, the newest shoes, a big birthday party, being the most popular kid in class. Students vote which one they would want most. Then ask: *Would you give that up if Jesus asked you to? Would you give up all five?* Let them answer honestly; no one is graded. Say: "Today we will meet a man who had to answer that question for real."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Mark 10:17–27. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **Good Master** (10:17): good teacher; **inherit eternal life**: receive life forever with God as a gift
- **commit adultery** (10:19): break the promise of marriage; **bear false witness**: lie about someone; **defraud**: cheat
- **observed from my youth** (10:20): kept since I was young
- **beholding** (10:21): looking at; **lackest**: are missing; **take up the cross**: be ready to give up anything, even your own life, to follow Jesus
- **grieved** (10:22): very sad; **great possessions**: many things, lots of property
- **how hardly** (10:23): how hard it is; **astonished out of measure** (10:26): more amazed than ever

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Put the three Gospels together: Mark gives no name. Matthew calls him "the young man" (Matthew 19:20), and Luke calls him "a certain ruler" (Luke 18:18) and says "he was very rich" (Luke 18:23). Put together, he is "the rich young ruler." He had kept the commandments since his youth (Mark 10:20), and he still knew something was missing. Jesus didn't scold him: "Jesus beholding him loved him" (10:21). Then He named the one thing standing between this man and following Him.

What happened next: the man "went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (10:22). Jesus told the disciples that it is hard for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God (10:23–24), and that a camel could go through the eye of a needle more easily than a rich man could enter (10:25). The disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?" (10:26), and Jesus answered with the memory verse (10:27). Right after this, Peter said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee" (10:28).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The man came running and kneeled (10:17). He was eager and he had kept the rules. What was still missing?
2. Jesus loved him and still told him the hard truth (10:21). Why is telling someone the truth a way of loving them?
3. Jesus' words to this man were about his riches. What "one thing" could hold someone your age back from following Jesus all the way?
4. Mark 10:24 says the problem is to "trust in riches." What is the difference between having things and trusting in them?
5. Read Matthew 6:21. How can you tell where someone's treasure is? What would your schedule and your spending say about yours?
6. "With men it is impossible, but not with God" (10:27). Why is it good news that we can't save ourselves, but God can?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **saith** means says; **impossible** means it can't be done; **treasure** is what we value most.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Mark 10:27 this week; keep working on Matthew 6:21 next week too.

If a student asks about Mark 10:18 ("Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God"): Jesus did not say He was not good. The man called Him good, and Jesus pointed him to God. The Bible teaches that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). Keep the answer short and go back to the lesson.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The man asked the most important question there is: 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' (Mark 10:17). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). On the day of Pentecost the crowd asked, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37, KJV), and Peter answered: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. If Jesus looked at me and said, "One thing thou lackest," what might that one thing be?
2. Where is my treasure right now? What would it look like to put Jesus first there this week?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you love Him more than anything you own or want.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: give away, share or set aside one thing that takes too much of your heart, and spend that time with God instead.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that You love us even when You show us what is wrong in our hearts. Help us never walk away from You. Be our treasure, more than anything we own or want. Thank You that what is impossible for us is possible with You. In Jesus' name, amen."

Keep it gentle: Jesus' words to this man (Mark 10:21) were for him and his great possessions. Don't tell students or their families to sell everything; teach them to love God first and trust Him, not riches (10:24).

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