

**Scripture**

Mark 10:17-27

# God of Impossibilities

**Jesus tells a rich man to give up all for the kingdom of heaven.**

- ◆ A rich young man comes to Jesus and is daunted by the invitation to give up all his riches in order to follow Jesus.
- ◆ This message of Jesus takes on special urgency in our consumer society today, that encourages massive accumulations of material goods at the expense of human relationships. We communicate Jesus' message to children by placing relationships with God and the children as the first priority of the faith formation group.
- ◆ In today's session, we teach today's story using a traditional metaphor of a "narrow gate."

**Question of the Week**

Jesus gives us the same chance he gave the wealthy man. When we feel him looking at us, how do we respond?

**Core Session**

- ◆ Getting Started
- ◆ Gospel Story: Put Them Down! Let Them Go! (*old newspapers, grocery sacks*)
- ◆ Camel Play
- ◆ Praying Together

**Enrichment**

- ◆ Discover the Good News
- ◆ Singing Together
- ◆ Action Rhyme
- ◆ Story-Review Games
- ◆ Info: Letting Go to Lead
- ◆ Info: Making a Difference for the Poor
- ◆ Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- ◆ Info: Where You'll Find Everything Else

**Helps for Catechists**

- ◆ More about Today's Scriptures
- ◆ Reflection
- ◆ The Scriptures and the Catechism
- ◆ The World of the Bible: Wisdom

## ✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

Children help solve a problem related to today's story—how to enter a narrow space.

**Before the session** inflate 16 balloons and divide them between the two bags. Check to make sure that the filled bags prevent your entering the room holding both. If necessary, add more balloons to the bags. Leave the bags in the hallway outside the room.

In the session, tell the children you need to leave to get a special surprise. Leave the room and get the two large bags of balloons. Carry one in each hand and try to get through the door.

Point out to the children that you have a problem. You cannot get in the door! Invite them to come to the doorway and suggest ways that you might get through the door.

Act on suggestions that have you lay the balloons down or aside. You might open the bags and hand the balloons through the doorway, one at a time, until each child has one.

## ✓ Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)

**Note:** You can begin by inviting children to help you make props to use in telling today's story. Help the children wad up newspaper and stuff the wadded-up paper into grocery sacks. Tape the sacks closed. Children can use markers to decorate the sacks. Use the sacks as "bundles" and "sacks of riches" in telling the story below.

### Put Them Down! Let Them Go!

Once there was a camel. It wanted to go into the city. The camel carried one bundle, two bundles, three bundles. So many bundles! The camel tried to walk through the gate. Uh oh! It can't get through the gate. What should it do?

Put them down! Let them go! Now the camel can go inside the city.

Once there was a rich man. He wanted to follow Jesus. The rich man carried riches: one sack, two sack, three sacks. So many sacks of riches! The rich man tried to follow Jesus. Uh oh! He can't keep up with Jesus at all! What should he do?

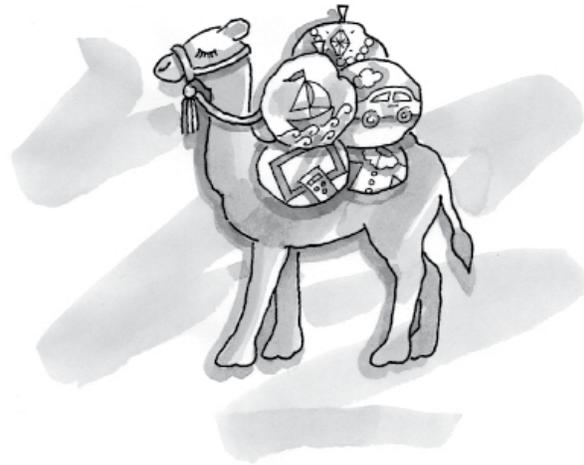
Put them down! Let them go! Now the man can go inside God's kingdom.

## ✓ Camel Play (5-15 minutes)

Children use creative drama to review today's story. Sit with the children in a circle. Have ready the bundles made in today's Gospel Story activity.

First ask one to three children to pretend to be camels. Explain to the other children that the camels work hard carrying heavy loads across the dry, dusty desert. (The children playing camels can act out this hard work. The other children can bring them bundles to carry.)

Ask the remaining children to stand and form a very narrow gate for the camels. Explain that the camel wants to go through the gate. Let the children and the "camels" show you what happens next.



## ✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Stand in a circle with the children. Invite children to hold hands. Then pray:

- ◆ God, thank you for hands to hold and hands to let go. *Amen.*

**Note:** Distribute this week's *At Home with the Good News* to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.

## □ Discover the Good News

(5-10 minutes)

In today's *Discover the Good News* you'll find the gospel story and a picture of two women: one ready to follow Jesus and one carrying too many riches. Use the picture to help children talk about which woman is ready to follow Jesus.

Page 2 also includes a To Parents note for families to use at home.

## □ Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From *Singing the Good News*, sing together:

- ◆ "God's Creation" (songbook p. 7)
- ◆ "Bring All You Have" (songbook p. 9, also available as an MP3)

**Note:** To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Singing the Good News*.

## □ Action Rhyme (5-10 minutes)

Use this simple rhyme to celebrate the joy of empty hands:

Look at me!  
Can you see?  
(*Make goggles around eyes with fists.*)

I can wave hello  
when my hands are free.  
(*Wave with both hands.*)

I can hug a friend  
when my hands are free.  
(*Hug self.*)

I can clap for joy  
when my hands are free.  
(*Clap hands together.*)

Sometimes it's good  
to have hands free.  
(*Hold empty hands to front, palms up.*)

## □ Story-Review Games (15-20 minutes)

Children play three games based on today's story.

### Camels Through the Gate

Invite children to form a gate by standing in two lines that face each other. The children kneel down and place their hands on the shoulders of the children opposite them.

Ask a volunteer to be the first *camel*. The *camel* crawls through the gate on hands and knees. Once *camels* reach the end, they kneel down and become part of the gate. After several *camels* have made the trip, encourage children to make the gate narrower and narrower. If you have a large group, invite several children at once to be *camels*.

### Precious Lord

Stand in a circle with the children. Use two chairs to form a narrow "gate" at one end of the circle. Play the African-American spiritual "Precious Lord" as the children pass a bag or sack around the circle. (Open your Fall-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Companion Music* for options on obtaining this music.) After a few moments, stop the music.

The child holding the bag when the music stops goes outside the circle to the gate, lays down the bag, and passes through the gate into the center of the circle to follow Jesus. Ask the child next to the gate to pick up the bag as you begin the game again. Continue until all the children have entered the circle to follow Jesus.

**Note:** For this game, we use Thomas Dorsey's beautiful spiritual, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." Dorsey, called "the father of gospel music," wrote this spiritual after losing his wife and newborn child. Its confident assurance in God's love models the faith we need to abandon riches and other attachments in order to follow Jesus.

**Note:** To learn more about Thomas Dorsey visit [http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/thomas\\_dorsey.html](http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/thomas_dorsey.html).

## Go to God's Kingdom

Stand in a circle with the children. Use two chairs to form a narrow “gate” at one end of the circle. Teach the children to sing these words to the tune of “Go Tell Aunt Rhody”:

*Go to God's kingdom,  
Go to God's kingdom,  
Go to God's kingdom,  
Leave everything behind.*

As the children sing, they pass the bag around the circle. The child holding the bag when the song ends goes outside the circle to the gate, lays down the bag, and passes through the gate into “God’s kingdom”—the center of the circle.

Ask the child next to the gate to pick up the bag as you begin the game again. Continue until all the children have entered “God’s kingdom.”

## INFO Letting Go to Lead

Adults who work with children sometimes need to let go of ideals that make their job harder, not easier. For example, some leaders feel that if they were doing a good job, the children would sit quietly for more than half an hour. In fact, young children can only manage this skill for 5-10 minutes at best.

All leaders may need to sometimes let go of their session plans when the children’s moods do not match the material. One child may be sad or angry and in need of extra attention; another child may be absorbed in play or drawing and in need of time alone.

## INFO Making a Difference for the Poor

For your own reflection, you can read and listen to the experiences of those living in global poverty at the Voices of the Poor project, found on the Web at <http://www.worldbank.org/prem/poverty/voices>.

Age-appropriate outreach materials developed for young children continue to be offered by Heifer International. Look for their section called “Educational Resources” on the Web at <http://www.heifer.org>.

## INFO Young Children and the Gospel

In today’s scripture, Jesus teaches that it would be easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God’s kingdom. Today’s session uses a loose translation of this comparison to teach children that we need to let things go to enter into God’s kingdom.

As we lead today’s session, we need to be careful not to pass on a confused theology that created things are bad or unimportant. God proclaims God’s creation as *good*. We can affirm the pleasure that we and the children find in well-loved possessions, even as we assert the greater importance of God’s human creation and the ultimate importance of choosing God’s Kingdom first of all.

## INFO Where You’ll Find Everything Else

- ◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  - Instructions for two *Story Centers* related to today’s Gospel Story that you can make to enrich the children’s free play: a drama center and a sewing center.
  - A copy of today’s *Gospel Story* which can be distributed or e-mailed to children and their families.
  - A copy of today’s *At Home with the Good News* to print or to e-mail to children and their families.
- ◆ Open your Fall-B *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Fall-B’s *Models of the Faith*.
  - A printable article titled *Learning through the Visual Arts*.
  - A printable article titled *Learning through Poetry*.
  - A PowerPoint presentation for catechists titled *Why Use the Arts?*
  - An article for catechists exploring the seasons of *The Church Year*.
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News*.

## More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings encourage us to release our attachment to things and trust Jesus to form us into a people of justice and compassion. Solomon seeks an understanding heart to guide God's people, instead of wealth or power. The author of Hebrews points out that only through Jesus will any of this be fully accomplished—as our apostle and high priest. Jesus advises a wealthy man who seeks God to obey God's commandments and to detach from his possessions and focus fully on God.

### Wisdom 7:7-11

Today's passage tells of King Solomon's quest for wisdom above all other gifts. At the beginning of Solomon's reign, God promised him any one request. Solomon asked for "an understanding mind to govern [God's] people, able to discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9).

In this reading the author describes Solomon's quest for wisdom and personifies wisdom as a divine companion (Proverbs 8:1–9:11). Solomon learned that possessing wisdom enriched him more than power or wealth. In choosing to acquire wisdom, Solomon was also rewarded with "all good things."

But in his later life, Solomon learned that wisdom was not a magic formula for success. His failure to choose wisely led to idolatry, a halfhearted devotion to God, and after his death a civil war (1 Kings 11:1-13).

### Hebrews 4:12-13

This reading unites the author's discussion about Jesus' superiority to Moses and the similarity of the Israelites' situation in the wilderness to that of Christian believers (3:1–4:11). The early Church saw itself as the new people of Israel, living between the time of the exodus and the time of entry into the promised land—the second coming. They have already been delivered by Jesus' redemptive work, but now are subject to the same temptations to disobedience and unbelief as the Israelites faced in the wilderness.

The author believes that scripture records the time of temptation as a way of encouraging those who follow to persevere despite temptation. These two verses continue this call to perseverance by noting that God's word is like a double-edged sword. It is a word of salvation—always achieving its purpose of giving and renewing life. But it is also a word of judgment—piercing in its activity—that judges rightly because nothing can remain hidden from it. God's word probes the inmost part of our being, revealing our true nature.

### Mark 10:17-30

Mark's account of the rich man centers on the difficulties of responding to the call to discipleship. This event illustrates Mark's parable of the sower, in particular those who hear God's word "but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing" (Mark 4:18-19). The focus is on God first. Thus Jesus rejects the word *good* for himself and redirects the man's attention to God, the source of all goodness.

The man's question reveals that he knows of his need for something more than a basic obedience to the commandments. Jesus' response focuses on the root issue for the man's conversion—his attachment to things. Jesus does not condemn material possessions, but urges detachment, freedom from "things" that allows for a more radical attachment to God.

Like many in Jesus' world, the disciples believed that religious duties were easier for the wealthy than for the poor, and that God sent prosperity to the righteous and poverty to the wicked. Jesus' teaching transcends these human limitations. He declares that eternal life comes to every human, rich or poor, only as God's gift. God accomplishes what no human can.

## Reflection

The genius of the gospel is often its unanswered questions. At one level, we don't know what eventually happened to the young man. At another level, the gospel raises questions to answer in our own lives.

In her book *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, Dr. Rachel Remen distinguishes between spores and seeds. The first hunkers down and walls off the life force when times are harsh. It is a survival mechanism. Many years later when conditions improve, a spore might unfold into a plant. So people may wall off parts of themselves that aren't encouraged in childhood. They do not grow but simply survive.

Some even forget that this is a temporary mode, not a way of life. "What you needed to do to survive may be very different from what you need to do to live." Reclaiming all the parts of ourselves, even those we may have judged shortcomings, is the first step back to being a fruitful seed.

When Jesus looks at the rich man, what is contained in that look? If it is an invitation to fuller life, then it is even more poignant when he refuses. Only we can answer the question of what will help us live rather than merely survive. We might ask the rich young man for help.

## The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today's readings show us that wisdom, the knowledge and skill necessary for the mastery of everyday life, is a gift from God (CCC, #733–41, #1830–31). The fruit of wisdom is summarized in the Word of God. The ten words or commandments of God are the fundamental guidelines for creating personal and social relationships that will be pleasing to God (CCC, #2052–82). God's Word is still "living and effective," creating and sustaining us and inviting us into a relationship with God that gives the most meaning to our lives.

## The World of the Bible

### Wisdom

For the Jews, wisdom was the practical understanding of how the world and society worked, and so it helped people cope with the complexities of everyday life, especially sickness and suffering, death and disaster.

Since wisdom did not rely on divine revelation but rather on practical human experience and observation of nature, it summarized the most helpful advice for responsible living which the Jews shared with many ancient Near Eastern peoples. The Jews, though, sought to merge this secular tradition with the religious guidelines of their covenant instruction (*Torah*). Thus Israelite wisdom joined the pursuit of knowledge to the ordering of life in relation to God.