

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.49**

# Jesus taught that we need to humbly admit our guilt

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 10:13-24, 12:30,31.**

## Last time

When word came from devoted followers, Martha and Mary, that their brother was very sick, Jesus didn't immediately rush off to their home village of Bethany, near Jerusalem. He and His disciples eventually went, but arrived four days after the burial. After speaking to Martha and Mary and seeing the despair of the people who were mourning, Jesus was visibly angry and moved to tears because of all that death implies for humans. The cave-tomb was then unsealed and Lazarus emerged after Jesus had brought him back to life by the authority and power of His command.

## Jesus teaches about the importance of child-like faith

We now return to Mark's account and take the chance to gain more insights into God's character and perspective as we observe Jesus interacting with people - first some children, then a rich guy who talks to Him.

One day some parents bring their young children to Jesus. (Mark 10:13-16) There's no indication that these people are in the very small minority who believe He is the Messiah...more likely they are among the bulk of the common people who view Him as a teacher, a Rabbi...perhaps even a prophet from God with some miraculous power. So it's not out of the ordinary in that culture for them to be bringing their children to Jesus so He can lay His hand on their heads and speak some words of blessing or pray for them. People do this regularly with Rabbis or those considered holy men.

On this occasion though, the disciples are anything but welcoming toward these parents and their children. "Why are you bothering Him? Can't you see He's very busy with lots of important things to do? Take your kids and move away." When He notices what's happening Jesus rebukes His disciples and

also takes the opportunity to address a bigger issue...along the lines of: “Hey, you guys, what are you doing, stopping them like that? Let the children come over here to me. Listen, the people who have submitted to God’s rule over their lives, are in many ways those who are just like these kids. Really. I mean this. If someone wants to be one of God’s people, to come under His rule and authority, they have to first of all put aside their assumptions and pretensions and realise that they are helpless, like a child. There’s no other way to be under God’s rule and to enjoy the rich rewards.”

The point Jesus is making is consistent, of course, with what God has been saying to human beings since Adam and Eve rebelled against His authority over them in the first place. That happened when they believed the false picture Satan had painted: that God was keeping them in some kind of childishly dependent state, and that they could only come to their full adult potential if they exerted their independence from Him. People’s view of what it means to be a mature, adult human being has been skewed ever since.

Adulthood, in the way we normally define it, is when someone is no longer reliant on their parents for everything. We say “they are their own person”; in other words, they now have their own opinions, relationships and resources. That’s not without truth in a human sense, but the problem is in how people apply it to their relationship with God as Creator and Father. As we know from His Narrative, God created human beings for a specific reason and for a particular kind of relationship with Him. In fact, that’s what it means to be human - someone created for that relationship with God. Again, as has been clearly demonstrated by the way the Father and now His Son, Jesus, relates to people, His intention was for the relationships to grow and mature. But, in what seems like a paradox, given the normal human view of *maturity* and *adulthood*, growth in the relationship of a person with God is marked, not by less dependence, but by more.

This is a very difficult thing to grasp for a person who has been conditioned by their society, and who has always heard that being a responsible adult is “standing on your own two feet”.

Jesus is fully aware of all of this - He knows the misconceptions in the minds of His disciples and others around, and so He takes the opportunity here to press the point home. His message then and today might be: “See these little children. Look how this one is simply sitting in her father’s arms. Why? Because she trusts him completely. She isn’t thinking she has to look after herself, doesn’t doubt for a moment that he cares for her and will look after her. That’s the way you need to come to God. That’s the correct approach. You can’t come under His rule and protection if you come with all your pride and preformed ideas, asserting *your* rights, *your* self-worth, *your* individuality. He’s God. *He* can take care of you far better than you ever could. *He* knows what’s good for you. *He* values you far more than you or anyone else possibly can. He made you an individual, He knows you, and He loves you, as you. Someone

growing in a childlike dependence on Him and submission to His authority is someone headed towards wisdom and maturity...is actually becoming a true adult.”

Mark records that Jesus does go ahead and takes each child in His arms and, in the traditional way, puts His hand on their head, while He blesses them.

## **Jesus challenges the assumptions of a young, wealthy guy**

Soon after, as Jesus is heading off to Jerusalem, a man - who we find out elsewhere is young, as well as wealthy - comes rushing up. (Mark 10:17-24) He kneels down in front of Jesus and says, “Good Teacher, what can I do to get eternal life?” In this encounter, Jesus is going to challenge a number of this guy’s assumptions and He starts out by questioning the words he uses, “What do you mean when you say I’m good? Only God is truly good.”

Jesus’ rhetorical question and statement might appear simple on the surface, but He’s actually digging into some important worldview issues: does the man’s concept and standard of *good* match up with God’s? Does he think he and Jesus are *good* in a similar way? He sees Jesus as a Teacher, but does he also recognize that He is God? But in answer to the question itself, Jesus mentions some of God’s laws that the guy obviously already knows...about not killing anyone, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and being disrespectful to parents. Of course as God’s Narrative has shown, Jesus isn’t saying that the guy can somehow follow every commandment and live up to God’s perfect standards. What He wants him to realise is the very thing God gave the Law for in the first place. He, like everyone, falls far short...he doesn’t have the slightest hope of earning eternal life through anything he does, or doesn’t do. But his response shows that he’s based his whole life on a false assumption. In fact, he says that he’s obeyed all the commandments since he was a kid.

A little bit later in Mark’s account (Mark 12:30,31) we hear how, in response to a question from the religious experts, Jesus sums up God’s Law like this, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind, and all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself.” Now, as He looks at this young guy, His heart goes out to him. What is the best way to demonstrate to him that his easy confidence in his own ability to fulfill God’s Law is misplaced... that he doesn’t even come close to loving God and other people as he should? “So, you’ve followed God’s Law? Okay, here’s just one more thing you need to do. Go and sell everything you have and donate the money to charity. It will be put to your account in Heaven. Then come and follow me.”

Again, we know that Jesus doesn’t mean that the guy can earn salvation by doing this. What Jesus was doing was putting His finger on the thing that was most important to him - his stuff, his money, his career. He was saying in effect,

“You say you follow God’s Law perfectly. But to really do that you would have to always prioritise God above everything else in your life. And, as a result, you would have to care about other people in every way more than you do yourself. Is that the reality? Do you do that?” Mark records that when he heard this, his face fell and he went away sad because he had a lot of possessions. Perhaps the reality was striking home that his money and stuff really was more important to him than anything else...in effect, that was his god, and he was not - at least at that moment - willing to turn away from it. Or maybe he was realising that all his efforts to follow the Law had been futile. As the guy leaves, Jesus makes a comment to His disciples that it is a really difficult thing for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. It’s not that God holds someone’s wealth against them, but when someone has attained what most others in the society are after, has “made it” so to speak, it is often very difficult for them to see themselves as needy. Often they’ve built their whole lives around having enough money and stuff so they feel secure and free of need. It is usually only through a very painful process that someone like that comes to the point of recognising their really desperate situation and bowing to God’s authority over their lives.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. Describe anything you care to about the circumstances that have shaped your concept of independence, being grown-up, “standing on your own two feet” etc. In general do you feel your experiences have helped you to have a correct understanding of what maturity looks like in your relationship with God (the picture that is emerging in the Narrative), or have there been some major obstacles to this?
2. Based on what we’ve heard in God’s Story so far, what do you think might have been some of the things Jesus said when He blessed the children?
3. Limiting yourself to what we’ve heard in the Narrative so far, in your own words describe what you understand Jesus meant when He used the term “Kingdom of God”.

4. Make some observations about Jesus' statement that it is difficult for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. Do you think that it is appropriate then to make corollary statements that it is easier for poor people to be saved? Is it valid to draw any principles from this about the kinds of people we should be trying to share His Story with, or not?



## ACTIVITIES

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1. Ask three people - at least one of whom is a non-Christian - the following questions, then record their answers (summarise if necessary):
  - (1) Do you think it is valid if people are attracted to Christianity by the idea that God will help them with financial security?
  - (2) How would you respond to someone who says that true followers of Jesus should be materially poor like He was?
  - (3) Do you think there are many really wealthy people who are also Christians? Share any observations you have about this.
  - (4) Do you think Christianity is a religion that is generally attractive to poor people? Can you suggest any reasons for your answer?