Fools and Simpletons
Open Your Hand
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Key Scripture:

Mark 10:17–22 (NLT)
17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
18 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked. “Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.’”
20 “Teacher,” the man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”
21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”
22 At this the man’s face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Romans 7:7 (NLT)
7 Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, “You must not covet.”

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What is something you held onto for too long—whether it was an object, a habit, or even an idea?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Mark 10:17**. What do these actions reveal about the rich young ruler’s heart? Why do you think he was so eager to ask this question?

- **Read Mark 10:20**. What does this verse reveal about the young man’s view of himself? Where do we see similar self-righteousness in Scripture? Do you fall into this trap?

- In **Mark 10:21,** how does Jesus' love shape the way He convicts and corrects us? How should this impact how we respond when we sense God calling us to surrender something?

- **Read Mark 10:22.** What are the consequences when we keep our fist closed and choose the things of the world over Jesus?

- In your own experience, what is the cost of following Jesus? Describe a time when you were challenged to surrender something that was difficult to let go of, and how that impacted your relationship with Him?

- What does it mean for you to "open your hand" to Jesus? How can we support each other in this process of surrendering and following Christ more fully?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- This week, spend time in prayer asking God to reveal anything you are holding onto that is keeping you from fully following Him. Write it down and take a tangible step toward surrender—whether that means releasing control, changing a habit, or inviting accountability from a trusted friend.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Jesus, we recognize that there are things in our lives that we hold onto too tightly—things that can keep us from following You completely. Help us to trust You enough to open our hands and let go. Give us wisdom to see what we need to surrender and the courage to take action. We want to follow You with our whole hearts. Thank You for loving us too much to leave us unchanged. In Your name, Amen.

Question: "Is it better, spiritually, to be poor than to be rich?"

Answer: How does one's *financial* status affect one's *spiritual* status? Or is there any effect at all? Which is better, to be poor or rich? This topic has long been debated within the church. Israel was promised freedom from poverty if the people followed God's laws (Deuteronomy 15:4). Yet Jesus taught that the poor are blessed (Luke 6:20).

The apostle Paul addressed the issue of wealth in 1 Timothy 6:8–10: "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Having money is not wrong, but *loving* money is. The abundance of money or the lack of money is less important than our spiritual condition.

In Jewish culture, poverty and even disability were often seen as the result of someone's personal sin. In John 9:1–3, the disciples of Jesus asked, "'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" While human nature often attributes poverty or other weaknesses to something wrong a person has done, God can and does use such circumstances to work His perfect plan.

The account of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17–22 shows how riches can be a spiritual stumbling block. Jesus told the young man to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and then follow Jesus. The man walked away sad because he was a man of much wealth. In this case, the man's wealth was a negative since it kept him from following Christ. He loved his money more than he loved Jesus.

While many of the psalms and proverbs speak matter-of-factly regarding the benefits of wealth and struggles of poverty, the Bible is clear that both poverty and wealth can be the will of God and a blessing from God. Jesus lived in relative poverty; Solomon was blessed with significant wealth. King David had a humble beginning and a wealthy ending. The apostles followed Christ to persecution and martyrdom; they were not regarded as wealthy, but they used all they had to share Christ with others (Luke 18:28). "Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all" (Proverbs 22:2).

The human perspective sees wealth as a blessing and poverty as a curse. God's plan is much greater and uses both wealth and poverty to accomplish His will. We are to avoid the temptation to see wealth as God's only blessing and instead be content in any and every circumstance, knowing that God's blessings are not defined by our possessions in this world but are found in their fullness in a kingdom not of this world.

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