

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

Rich Young Ruler

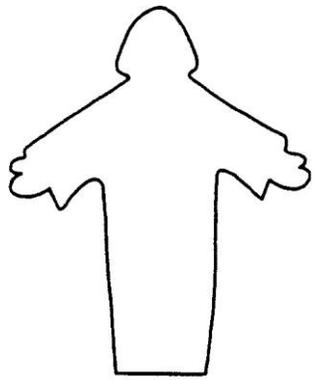
Adapted by:
Brenda J. Stobbe

Illustrations by:
Jennifer Schoeneberg

2nd Edition
©Good Shepherd, Inc. 1991
Good Shepherd, a registered trademark of Good Shepherd, Inc.
All Rights Reserved
Printed in U.S.A.

RICH YOUNG RULER MATERIALS

- small wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden young ruler figure
 - wooden Jesus figure



Jesus



Young Ruler

RICH YOUNG RULER LUKE 18:18-25

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Carry it back to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

During the few seconds of silence, gently stroke one or more of the wood figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the two figures in the center of the storytelling area, facing each other.

Shake your head as you speak.

Touch each finger of the left hand with the right hand as you list the commandments.

Move the young ruler figure slightly closer to Jesus and nod as you speak.

Hold up one finger and emphasize the word "one". Pause between sentences.

Move Jesus slightly to the right away from the young ruler.

Allow your head and shoulders to slump. Touch the young ruler briefly.

Touch the Jesus figure and speak softly and sadly.

\WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you make silence for me I will find all the words to this story.

A rich young man came to Jesus one day and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to live forever in heaven?"

Jesus said, "Don't call me good. Only God is really good."

Then he said, "You know what you must do. Keep all the commandments. Keep the family together. Don't kill. Don't steal. Don't lie and respect your mother and father. "

The young man replied, "I've done all of those things since I was a little boy. "

When Jesus heard his words he said, "There's only one more thing you must do. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor."

"Then come and follow me."

When he heard this the young man became very sad because he was very rich.

Jesus saw his sadness and said, "It's very hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God."

Cup both palms together to create a very small space.

"In fact," said Jesus, "it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into heaven."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how anyone could keep all those commandments for their whole life?

I wonder why Jesus didn't want the man to keep his money and follow him with it?

I wonder if God loves rich people?

I wonder how big the eye of a needle is?

Carefully place the two wooden figures in the story basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Be certain each child has had an opportunity to choose their work before dismissing the group for their work/art response time.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around and choose what each of us will do.

RICH YOUNG RULER TEACHER HELPS

We approach this story with a smile for the young ruler and a deep sadness for the rashness of his youth. First, is the fact that the young ruler came to Jesus. He may have been a leader in the synagogue or a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court. Whatever his position, it obviously was one that produced great wealth. Yet he came to Jesus, in spite of all his learning, to try to learn one more thing. He came to Jesus with a question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Most of us want to know what we can do, how we can manipulate life or change the facts so we can get what we want. The young ruler was obviously

accustomed to being in control of his own life. He knew there were things he could do to get other amenities. Jesus played along. "You know the commandments," he said to the young ruler. Jesus did not doubt for a moment that the young ruler knew each and every step he was supposed to take to be an obedient Jew. Here, we smile and shake our head. For only a **wm.g** man would dare say, "I've kept all those commandments since I was a child." We, the listeners laugh, because we know how hard it is to live even one day, much less a lifetime, keeping all the commandments of the law. But Jesus doesn't reprove the young ruler. Rather he tells him, "There is one more thing you must do." Then Jesus hit him where he lived. The young ruler was told to sell all he had and follow Jesus. It was the one sacrifice the young ruler was unwilling to make.

Note that the young ruler did not question Jesus' ability to give him what he asked for, but rather he decided the cost was just too great. It is interesting to note that this text comes immediately after the text where Jesus rebukes his disciples when they tell the children to leave Jesus alone. The author of the book of Luke follows the promise of the kingdom to those who are like children with a story of one who was grown and unwilling to obey Jesus commands. Children, who are the least powerful group of people in society, are models for the kingdom. This young ruler, rich and powerful, is a model for those who will have a difficult time entering the kingdom.

The author of the Gospel of Luke has a particular passion for the poor and oppressed. Here that passion takes on almost a reverse discrimination posture. We don't want to think about it being difficult for us to enter the kingdom because we, like the young ruler, are probably more captive to our possessions and wealth than we would like to admit.

Our first wondering question deals with the commandments being kept by the young ruler for his whole life. Even the very young child will probably realize the improbability of this statement. Without saying so, we acknowledge in our responses to this question that we are all sinners in need of the grace of God. That's why we need Jesus. Faithful telling of this story will lead children to this conclusion.

The second question is deeper. Why would Jesus not have accepted the young ruler following him with all his wealth intact? Adults may believe that it is because Jesus knew the young ruler could never give himself completely to Jesus if he was still concerned with or bound by his possessions. Children may have a different idea. Young children, especially, may concretize their thinking and visualize a young man carrying boxes and boxes of possessions as he followed Jesus. That kind of response is completely appropriate to their age development.

As we wonder if God loves rich people we give the children an opportunity to understand that God has a special affinity for the disenfranchised. But rich people are God's people too and they have a responsibility to free themselves of the burdens their wealth may place on them, so they will not feel separated from God. Young children can't understand that money might bring a lack of freedom. Their answers will be very clear cut and simple. We may not always be comfortable with the answer, but we need to accept it as theirs.

When we wonder how big an eye of a needle is, we can show the children a needle. A large darning needle could be carefully passed around so the children can visualize the small space we're talking about. Don't be surprised if the responses move into conversation about needles and sewing. That's how very young children relate and assimilate the rest of the world into their church world.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

What would be the most difficult thing for you to give up if Jesus asked you to leave everything?

How might having many possessions make you less free than having few possessions?

Does this story mean that God doesn't love rich people as much as God loves poor people?

People with a lot of money and/or a lot of talent have a responsibility to use it to the glory of God. How have you used the gifts God gave you to God's glory? How can you do so in the future?