

# “Growth Over Stability”

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2026 - MATT BRYANT



## Summary - “Growth Over Stability”

If we aren't careful, we can become stagnant in our Christian walk. We can have routines and plans that cause us to grow over the years, however, when those things simply become just that, a routine, and we become numb to God, His calling on our lives, or the steps of obedience that we need to take in Him, it can easily lead to a place of stagnation. At this point we perhaps are not growing in our faith, but rather, are relying on a pattern or decision that we perhaps made years or decades ago to direct us. We find ourselves simply going through the motions, but perhaps not truly connecting with God on a heart level. We can also find in this that we give our hearts to other things above God; idols. This week, in our study of Luke 18:18-30, we will see a young man who is dealing with this exact issue. He knows the rules, he understands the requirements, and he believes that he has followed God fully. This young man is a wealthy ruler, who is most likely honored in his society, is probably Jewish (since he understands the law), and seems to believe that he has done what is required of him to be a righteous man. He literally asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life and seems to believe that his own righteousness has accomplished this for him. Jesus, however, is going to quickly reveal this man's true heart, and in doing so, also reveal who, or in this case what, he truly worships and follows (his wealth). Jesus will then point out how hard it is for a wealthy person to enter into the kingdom of heaven; often because wealth, as well as many other earthly desires things, has a way of taking hold of our hearts and leading us to worship that which is earthly, and/or the things that it can do for us, rather than truly worshipping and following God. Having money or wealth is not the issue here, but rather, who or what we are worshipping and following is. As Jesus eventually points out to His disciples, it isn't things, wealth, status, or self righteousness that leads to eternal life, but rather, have you decided to pursue the Kingdom of 'God above all else, which is tied in this verse to following Jesus above all else. That is the ultimate question we must each ask ourselves: Is living for and following Christ, and His kingdom, truly the most important thing in my life?

## Scripture - Luke 18:18-30

And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”<sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.<sup>20</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”<sup>21</sup> And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”<sup>22</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”<sup>23</sup> But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.<sup>24</sup> Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!<sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”<sup>27</sup> But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”<sup>28</sup> And Peter said, “See, we have left our homes and followed you.”<sup>29</sup> And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers<sup>[a]</sup> or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,<sup>30</sup> who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

# Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

## Further Scripture Study

**Psalm 51:16; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 19:16-20:16 & 22:36-40; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 16:13; **Luke 18:18-30**; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:7-11; Hebrews 4:15 & 10:4-10**

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

### Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

### Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

# Key Thoughts

The young ruler calls Jesus “good teacher” which shows there is some level of respect, but we don’t truly know what this man’s true view of Jesus is at this point. (vs. 18)

Also, Jesus responds letting him know, “No one is good except God alone”, which is two fold. It quickly points out that this young ruler is not good because he is not God and also suggests that if you are calling Christ good that you therefore need to see Him as God, which He is.

Jesus is suggesting in this statement that He is not simply a good teacher, but that He is the Son of God. If he is going to call Jesus good and also ask this question about eternal life then he better be ready for the answer, which he is not. (vs. 19-21)

The young ruler also believes, however, that he has kept the law and has earned his own righteousness in his life because he has kept the commandments since his youth (vs. 21). He seems to think that he has done something on his own accord that has earned him eternal life.

This list in verse 20, that is tied to the ten commandments, causes this young man to think that he has achieved righteousness because he has done the things that his Jewish culture, under the law, have told him to do. He hasn’t committed adultery, he hasn’t committed murder, he has not stolen or lied, and he has honored his parents. Remember also that just because he says that he has kept the law doesn’t mean that he hasn’t committed some of the sins listed in this list. The law also provided rules around sacrifices which were offered for and could atone for sin. It doesn’t mean here that this man was sinless, but simply that he obeyed the law, which would have included the sacrificial system that was also in place to deal with sin.

We also know from other scriptures that simply keeping the commandments and the law is not the end goal. God is after our hearts. He desires that we love Him for the right reasons, not just out of obligation or because we attempt to do the right things. (see Hosea 6:6; Psalm 51:16; Hebrews 10:4-10)

In our Christian culture today we can often introduce this same type of thinking. We may not say that we have kept the law, but we might say something like, “I go to church most Sundays”, or, “I was baptized as a kid”, or, “I try to do what the Bible says”, however all of these things can be completely removed from following Christ.

# Key Thoughts

If we aren't careful, we can begin to get our Christian checklist of things that we are doing, yet perhaps not be growing and/or challenged in our faith. If not careful, we can get to a place where we have a response similar to the young ruler regarding what must be done to inherit eternal life: "I go to church on Sundays, I was baptized as a kid, I serve once a month in a ministry area, I try to vote for the right things..." These are things that we can be doing as Christians, but they don't necessarily mean that we are growing in our faith or truly following with all our heart, soul, and mind. We can do these things and still be stagnant.

The young ruler would have known that he felt he had kept all of these commandments prior to asking the question and it seems that he is looking for Jesus to perhaps even applaud him for his choices and his righteousness, however, Jesus is going to walk him down a path to show him where his heart truly lands in regards to the Kingdom of God. (vs. 20-23)

What Jesus tells him, and all those who are listening, in verse 22 would have completely flipped all of their thinking upside down. "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Jesus is stating that you must ultimately die to this life and follow Him; that this alone is the path to eternal life. It isn't about law keeping, but rather following Christ (The Son of God) with your whole life: heart, mind, soul (see Matthew 22:36-40).

We must see clearly here in this conversation between the rich young ruler and Jesus that it is not a sin to have wealth or possessions. Having wealth or possessions is not the issue at hand. Rather, allowing that wealth or possessions to determine if you follow Jesus is. It comes down to the key question of the heart; what are you worshipping most and is what you are worshipping keeping you from following the only One worthy of our worship?

Jesus challenges the rich young ruler with this idea and all of a sudden the man is called from a faith that is a collection of mental facts, to something that is actionable; "Come and follow me." Jesus is upfront and personal with him and lets him know the cost of doing so in an earthly sense. This man will lose what is earthly to him, but he will gain Christ in whom eternal life is found.

We all have moments like this in our walk where we are being challenged to take a step in obedience to Christ and we know it is going to challenge us in our faith and/or perhaps even cost us something in this earthly life.

The young ruler became very "sad" when he heard what Jesus told him. He wants to stay where he is at, comfortable; however, Christ is calling him to something uncomfortable.

# Key Thoughts

Jesus recognizes and discusses how difficult it is to let go of that thing (in this case wealth and possessions) that can so easily hinder us from following Him (vs. 24-25). Dying to self, dying to our sinful desires (anything that draws us away from Jesus) is very hard and creates great tension in our lives.

Jesus understands this temptation as scripture is clear that Christ was tempted in every way that we are tempted, yet was without sin (see Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

The tension of this moment causes everyone around to ask, “then who can be saved” (vs. 26). Jesus responds with, “What is impossible with man is possible with God” (vs. 27). Again, if we are counting on our earthly works, the law, our “do gooding”, our possessions, or anything of this nature to earn us eternal life (salvation) then it will be impossible. However, if we turn all these things over to God (the One who saves) and follow Jesus then it is possible to inherit eternal life. It is only through Christ that we find this (John 14:6).

We find in verse 28 that even Peter, and perhaps some of the disciples, question if they have given up enough (their homes). Jesus answers in verse 29 saying that it is more than just our possessions, but lists out some of the most key relationships any of them, or us, could ever have in our lives.

Jesus is not telling everyone here to leave their spouse, or family, or friends, but rather that our desire to follow Christ should take precedence, not just over any earthly thing or desire, but also over any earthly relationship in our lives, for the sake of following Him. The number one priority in our lives should be to follow Jesus.

We see in verse 30 that when we put Him first, we will receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life. This is not “health and wealth” preaching here, but rather Jesus pointing out that the greater thing is Him. Remember that the young ruler’s original question in verse 18 was, “what must I do to inherit eternal life.” No amount of earthly wealth, possessions, or relationships can even come close to the gift that is eternal life; however, that gift is found only in and through Christ. We must follow Him, even if it costs us everything in this life.

We may actually experience sadness in this at times; again, dying to self is hard. However, as we step into obedience to Christ, we begin to see more of Him, less of ourselves, and less of this world. We begin to find our joy, our passion, and our purpose in Him and Him alone. We learn more and more to live as Kingdom People because we recognize who the true King is and the Eternal Kingdom that we are living for.

# Reflect & Respond

Ice Breaker: If you had to give up one luxury in your life to follow a specific calling, what would be the hardest to let go of?

The rich young ruler asks, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" in verse 18. What is Jesus's ultimate answer to him? What must this man truly "do" to inherit eternal life? (see also Ephesians 2:8-9).

The rich young ruler claimed to have kept all of the commandments. Is there any place in your life where you are tempted to take credit for your maturity, or perhaps even your salvation, based upon works, rather than simply trusting in the grace that has been offered through Christ?

Though this young man claims to follow God, it is clear from these verses what the idols of his heart truly are (wealth and possessions). What idol(s) are perhaps hindering you in your life from fully following Christ? What interferes most with your daily walk? What are you perhaps trusting in, or perhaps even worshipping, above or instead of Christ?

Have you ever had a moment where you knew that Christ was calling you into a certain thing or direction, and you knew that you were going to follow Him more deeply in doing so, but that it was going to cost you something in this life? How did that work out for you? Where has your journey with Christ taken you regarding this? Please share.

What do you do with those moments of tension and sadness when you know that Christ is calling you to take a step forward into obedience? How do you typically handle it? To who or what do you turn to for answers? How do you typically walk through that tension?

Is there a comfort or rhythm to your life right now that you are stuck in, and in this, finding yourself stagnant in your faith, not growing, and not being stretched to pursue Christ more?

Who do you have in your life that you can talk to regarding these moments in your life?

When was the last time that you made an obedient change in the way that you live because God and His word were directing you to do so?