

What Must I Do? Study Guide

Relationship 1.5

So what do we have to do to be saved?

Some say, “Just believe” like if you think most of the stuff about Jesus is probably true, that’s enough – you’re saved.

Others say just pray a prayer – that’s it – tell God you believe in Jesus and you want him to save you. Pray that prayer and you’re saved. It doesn’t matter what you do after that. Once those words come out of your mouth, God writes your name in the book of life, and you’re saved.

Or how about those who say that if you do enough good stuff before you die, God will save you? They think God has some kind of moral debit and credit system going. The goal is to die with more credits than debits. If you do, you go to heaven because it’s our good works that save us.

There are even some who say, “Hey, I’m a pretty good person, God’s surely going to let me into heaven because I’m better than most. I don’t have a thing to worry about because God would never send me to hell.

What’s right? What does the Bible say? What does God require for us to be saved?

What must I do to be saved? Let’s learn how Jesus answers the question. There’s a guy in Luke 18 that comes to Jesus with this very question:

Luke 18:18 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus does not respond with, “just pray this prayer” ... he also does not respond with “Just believe” ... he doesn’t say if you do enough good deeds you will be saved ... and he doesn’t tell this guy that he shouldn’t worry about it because he knows this guy is basically a good person.

Instead, Jesus challenges this guy’s understanding of what it means to be good. He says,

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”

What kind of answer is that? This ruler has come with what we assume is a genuine question. Jesus pops him with a question about goodness and starts quoting commandments to him. What’s going on?

Jesus understands that this guy thinks he’s good enough to go to heaven because he’s a good person. Listen to what the ruler says to Jesus:

Luke 18:21 And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.”

This ruler basically tells Jesus he’s morally perfect. He keeps all the law. He obviously doesn’t understand his true condition of moral depravity before God. Like so many people who will spend eternity in hell, this guy thinks he’s basically a good person and that God will accept him because he’s better than most.

Instead of arguing the point, Jesus makes three demands.

Luke 18:22 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.”

1) Sell everything; 2) Give it all to the poor; 3) Come and follow me. Why does Jesus ask him to sell everything and give it away? Do you have to be broke to enter into saving relationship with Jesus Christ?

Jesus asks him to get rid of everything because he knows that money is this man's greatest love and highest priority in life. Jesus, however, demands first place in our hearts and lives if we are to follow him. He never accepts second place.

If this man is not willing to part with his possessions, Jesus knows he's not willing to make Jesus his first love and highest priority in life.

So, no, we don't have to be broke to be saved. But our wills do have to be broken. When we ask God to save us we're signing up to obey Him in every area of life by subjecting everything in our lives to His Lordship. This ruler must still want to call the shots in his own life. Listen to his response to Jesus:

Luke 18:23 But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

This ruler won't surrender his life to Jesus in obedience. He won't submit. He obviously wants to go to heaven or he wouldn't have asked the question. But when Jesus shows him that to come under His authority and be saved he must abandon all that he values and make Jesus his first love, he won't. He can't be saved. He's not broken – he won't come to God on God's terms.

And please note, Jesus lets him walk away. There's no arguing, begging, or, "please reconsider your decision."

Let's summarize all this

First: This ruler asked the right question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? That's the most important question any of us will ever answer – our eternity depends on getting it right.

Second: This ruler asked the right person - namely Jesus

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

But now the ruler makes several fatal mistakes as he responds to Jesus.

He refuses to acknowledge that he's a sinner bound for hell. He tells Jesus he's kept the law. He still thinks he's basically a good person. The Bible strongly disagrees with his assessment of himself:

Romans 3:10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

According to Jesus, all this talk about how God's going to receive us into heaven because we're basically good is completely wrong. None is righteous, no, not one. This rich young ruler is never honest about his violation of God's law. He not only doesn't feel bad about his moral failure, he has no concept at all that his life is an offense to God's holiness, that he's a law breaker, and that God's judgment awaits him. We can't be saved if we don't understand we need to be saved.

Romans 2:5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

And here comes another fatal error:

The ruler doesn't repent. He doesn't turn away from his sin. Repentance isn't mentioned as essential in this story because the ruler doesn't acknowledge that he has anything to repent from. But scripture makes it clear that if we don't repent, if we don't forsake the evil in our lives, and turn away from it, we cannot be saved.

Luke 13:5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

And still another fatal error

The ruler refuses to submit his life to Jesus. He won't obey. Jesus tells him what to do. He won't do it.

Jesus refuses to save any of us who will not acknowledge and confess our sin, repent of our sin, turn to Him as Savior, and obey Him. If we're not willing to make Jesus our first love and highest priority in life, we will die in our sins.

Friend, do you wish to be saved from God's wrath and enter into a loving relationship with Jesus today? If you do, ask yourself these questions:

- 1) Do I believe Jesus is who He says He is – has done what the Bible says He's done – and that He's alive today? Yes or no
- 2) Do I know in my thoughts and words and behavior, I've offended holy God? I'm a sinner worthy of God's judgment. If the Lord does not intervene on my behalf I will be condemned when I face God's judgement?
- 3) Am I willing to confess my sin to God? To be honest, transparent, real with the Lord.
- 4) Am I willing to repent of my sin and turn away from every thought, word, and behavior in my life that dishonors God?
- 5) Lastly, am I willing to submit my life to Jesus? I'll do whatever he wants me to do. I'll go wherever he wants me to go. When he says, "Come, follow me," I say, "yes, Lord."

If you answered all five of those questions with a "Yes," Jesus has good news for you. Here's a list of biblical promises:

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:47 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

John 11:26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Romans 10:11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." **12** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. **13** For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Back to it: What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Believe Jesus is who the bible says he is

Confess your sin to him

Repent – turn away from evil

Submit your life to Him

Study Guide Questions:

- 1) Why is believing not enough? (this question assumes that by believing one is simply agreeing that most of the facts about Jesus are true)

- 2) We know that God saves us by his mercy. So what role does repentance play in our salvation?
- 3) What does Jesus ask the ruler to do?
- 4) Why does Jesus allow the inquisitive ruler to walk away?
- 5) Why won't the ruler obey Jesus?