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INTRODUCTION

Helping the Next Generation See Jesus

By Robert Row

I had followed Jesus for thirty years, been through seminary, been ordained, and was serving as a youth pastor, but I had become numb to Jesus. As one friend put it, I'd become so focused on the window of theology that I missed the grand vista of Christ that window looked out on.

I had heard the gospel, preached the gospel, and tried to understand life through a gospel grid, but something was not connecting. All this gospel-centered stuff seemed floaty and theoretical. I had been given the good news but missed the heart of Jesus.

In the midst of this theological and personal desert, I attended a seminar on Jesus' humanity that was a cup of cold, refreshing water. I left deeply convicted and challenged to walk as Jesus walked. I set out on a journey to know Jesus as a person, to learn how he walked, to learn how the Second Adam did life. I immersed myself in Scripture, and material from *Sonlife* (www.sonlife.com), and later Paul Miller's *The Person of Jesus and Loved Walked Among Us* and "met" the ministry of seeJesus. I eagerly dove in.

Seeing the beauty of the Person of Jesus has changed my life. I'm seven years in now and feel like I've only just begun the journey to know the most extraordinary Person that has ever lived. I've discovered that the Person of Jesus is the Velcro of the gospel message. He makes the gospel stick. Knowing his message is paramount for salvation and life but if Jesus is missed as a person the message can become an ideology, a creed, a system. At the core of knowing him is beauty formation. As I see his compassion, I am more compassionate; as I see his honesty, I grow in honesty; as I see his dependence, I grow more dependent, as I learn from him how to trust the Father, my faith grows. In seeing Jesus, I see both myself and others more clearly, and I begin to understand why Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with everything you have and to love your neighbor as yourself. When I see Jesus, I see love in action. To know him is to love him, and to love him is to love our neighbors.

Seeing Jesus is the answer for the next generation. Having worked with students for 25 years, I desire to see students captivated by the beauty of the Person of Jesus and, therefore, transformed to love as he loves. Millennials and Gen Zers are finely tuned to authenticity, and there is no one more authentic than Jesus. These students are no longer content with religious platitudes, impersonal theology, or flashy programs. But neither was Jesus! If students see the real Jesus, they will fall in love with him. When they fall in love, they will listen to his truth—but love for the person comes first.

So how do we recapture their hearts to see Jesus? By slowing down and helping them discover him as he is revealed in the Bible. These interactive Bible studies are designed to do just that. We take scenes from Jesus' life and put the camera into slow motion. As we encourage the use of imagination, we make the biblical scenes come to life, and Jesus becomes real in the heart of students. We hope this tool helps students fall in love with Jesus and be captivated by his beauty. As that happens, the future of the church is filled with hope.

A study of the Person of Jesus is more than a resource,
it is a paradigm shift.

SUMMARY

of *The Person of Jesus*—*Student Edition*

WHY A study of the Person of Jesus is important for students.

Secularism is offering an enticing view of humanity and our students are believing it. The result, however, is one of the most anxious, depressed, and lonely generations in recent history. There is mass confusion over what it means to be human, and students are searching for answers. As followers of Jesus, we have the best vision of humanity to offer, the Person of Jesus. He is Humanity 2.0. seeJesus longs to help students see and reflect the beauty of Jesus: his compassion, his honesty, his life of dependence, how he incarnates with people, ultimately how he loves. seeJesus offers students a Person who defines for us what it means to be human and to live the true and better story.

When students see Jesus, they begin to fall in love with him, which will lead them into a longing to imitate him. In Matthew 11:29 Jesus says, “...learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart....” Learning from him leads to following in his footsteps, entering into a life journey with him as our guide. Secularism presses its view that the meaning of life is found in self focus: “it’s in you,” “follow your dreams,” “you be you.” Jesus, however, offers a beautiful alternative: himself. He says, “Follow me” and I’ll show you the path to life. He defines for us what it means to be human as we were meant to be so we may live the true and better story. In this series of interactive Bible studies, we long to help students begin seeing Jesus as a Person.

Unit 1: Compassion

What does Jesus do? He loves with compassion. In this first unit of *The Person of Jesus—Student Edition*, you will discover the beauty of the Person of Jesus. You will see how he moves towards people in love by seeing, feeling, and doing. His pattern of love challenges the common obstacles of compassion: judging, fear, and cynicism.

Unit 2: Honesty

What does Jesus do? He loves with honesty. Jesus balances compassion by being honest in all of his relationships. For Jesus, compassion without honesty is not love, just as honesty without compassion is not love. Jesus holds both in perfect harmony.

Unit 3: Dependence

What does Jesus want? To do his Father’s will. There is no self-will in the Person of Jesus. He only and always does the will of his Father. He is the most dependent person to ever live. He

didn't do life on his own. It was this dependence that gave Jesus discernment about when to be compassionate and when to be honest.

Unit 4: Faith

Who did Jesus love? His Father. The source and energy for the Person of Jesus' love is found in his trust of his Father (i.e. faith). He knows the Father loves him, which frees Jesus to live in total dependence on him. He doesn't feed off of other people, he lives for his Father.

Unit 5: The Passion

How does Jesus love? By laying down his life for his friends. In the final days of Jesus' life, his mind is on his Father and on others. He loves to the very end as he willingly takes the lower place of humility, so that others may receive the gift of love that will usher in a new kingdom of hope and resurrection life unto eternity.

HONESTY

Unit Summary:

We started our apprenticeship to Jesus in Unit 1: Compassion. We learned the three steps of love from Jesus: seeing, feeling compassion and helping. In this unit we look into another aspect of his love: honesty. Those who encountered Jesus said,

“Teacher, we know that you are an honest man. We know that you teach the truth about God’s way. You are not afraid of what other people think about you. All men are the same to you.” Matthew 22:16

As our apprenticeship to Jesus continues, we will once again watch and learn from him as we put gospel stories into slow motion. We will discover the motive and gift of honesty, its reshaping impact, and the multiple layers of honesty that make it so complicated: how we receive it, when do we speak up, when to keep our mouths shut, when do we wait on the Spirit, and finally Jesus’ very practical starting point of all honesty, “beam research.”

Our goal is to lead students into the discovery of Jesus’ honesty and that they will follow him in this area of their lives. Honesty is an art, so let’s watch the master artist, Jesus, continue to paint a picture of his Father and the fullness of humanity, for he is full of grace (compassion) and truth (honesty).

LESSON 1: HONESTY MOTIVATED BY LOVE

JESUS AND THE RICH YOUNG MAN

MARK 10:17–23

These summary pages are not to be taught. The purpose is to help prepare the person leading the lesson.

SUMMARY

In Unit 1: *Compassion*, we learned from the Person of Jesus how to love. He sees, he feels compassion and he helps. In this unit we begin looking into another aspect of the Person of Jesus, his honesty.

In this story of Jesus and the rich young ruler, Jesus’ compassion and honesty are in full view. Mark tells us that Jesus looked at this young man and loved him... but why? Because Jesus knew the young man was lost and confused: he had embraced a false faith; he had “discovered his own truth” and it wasn’t working out the way the world had promised. He came to Jesus, the Truth-Teller, for an answer to one of life’s biggest questions. How would Jesus respond? Would he merely love him with compassion or would he also love him with honesty? How would the young man respond? Would he receive honesty as a gift? Jesus offered a new way to eternal life, but would it be too costly for the man?

Compassion and honesty are not mutually exclusive, but two sides of the same coin. We look to the Person of Jesus to see how the two work together in love.

OUTLINE

- 1. Seeing Self—Holding on to “My Truth” 15 mins
 - 2. Seeing Jesus—Honesty Motivated by Love. 10 mins
 - 3. Becoming Like Jesus—Receiving His Pathway to Eternal Life 10 mins
- Total: 35 mins

GOAL

The students will begin to see the complexity of love as they learn both compassion and honesty from Jesus. His honesty will call us into a new pathway that involves dying to self.

LESSON PREPARATION

Love is complex and multifaceted; it includes compassion and honesty. We often view compassion and honesty as mutually exclusive but they are simply two sides of the same coin. As you prepare this lesson, ask the Lord to reveal your tendency to separate the two. In your relationships, do you tend to be more compassionate and neglect honesty or do you neglect compassion and blast people with your honesty? How do you receive compassion and honesty from others? Meditate on the beautiful union of compassion and honesty as seen in the Person of Jesus in this story.

SECTION 1: Seeing Self— Holding on to “My Truth”

10 mins

1. Imagine someone saying the following phrases to you:

- You lack one thing.
- You do not see.
- You do not hear.
- You do not understand.
- You are foolish.
- You are greedy.
- You invited the wrong people to your party.
- You are sitting in the wrong chair.
- Your faith is small.
- You still don't get it.
- You just want other people to notice you.
- You are a hypocrite.

How would you react?

Hurt, defensive, angry, sad, depressed.



2. In a word, how would you describe this person?

Rude, blunt, honest.



These are all things that Jesus of Nazareth said.

3. Why does this surprise us that these are Jesus' words?

We don't think of Jesus as being rude. He's too nice to say these things!

Some negative responses you may hear: He is a jerk! What right does he have to speak to people like that?

Read Mark 10:17–23

¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”



4. Based on this passage, what do we know about this man?

- He is respectful (He falls to his knees and compliments Jesus.)
- He is seeking.
- He goes straight to the point and asks the most important question anyone could ask Jesus.
- He’s uncertain of his salvation; or at least, his conscience is bothering him.
- He is wealthy.
- He really tries hard to be good.

5. What’s ironic about his actions?

Hint: What are his physical actions?

He is rich but he’s acting like a beggar running up to Jesus, falling on his knees. He’s acting like someone who is desperate, though he has great wealth.

6. Incarnate with the man. Is this young man content with his journey so far? How do we know?

Teach what they don’t say.

He is still searching for an answer to a really big question that his truth has not answered. He has all he wants in the world but something is still bothering him. He wants reassurance that he is being authentic to himself.

7. What was this man’s “truth”?

My money, possessions, status, and righteousness will give me life.



The Complexity of Honesty: Let's begin our journey into honesty as we see how Jesus responds to a man who needs compassion but also a heavy dose of honesty. Honesty can be complicated so watch closely how Jesus creatively goes after this man's heart with his honesty.

8. What truth does Jesus speak to this young man? Look at verses 19 and 21.

- “You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother’” (19).
- “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (21).



Here is a list of the Ten Commandments (*summarized from Exodus 20:3–17*).

- “You shall have no other gods before me” (3).
- “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth...” (4).
- “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...” (7).
- “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (8).
- “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you” (12).
- “You shall not murder” (13).
- “You shall not commit adultery” (14).
- “You shall not steal” (15).
- “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (16).
- “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (17).

Which commandments does Jesus leave out?

The first four commandments.

9. Why do you think Jesus leaves the first four out? What do those commandments teach?

Love for God.

10. What is Jesus exposing by leaving out the first four and saying, “Give everything away and follow me”?

This is a hard question. Give them time to think and answer. Teach what they don't say.

Jesus is exposing what/who the young man really loves: he loves his own righteousness, his own version of truth, and his own possessions more than he loves God.

11. How does the young man initially respond? See v. 20.

“Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”



Normally when someone rejects our honesty we move away, but Jesus moves closer.

Re-read v. 21: “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’”

12. What familiar pattern do you see in Jesus’ response?

(Hint see v. 21.)

Jesus looks at him and loves him. Remember from our study of the compassion of Jesus: love begins by looking.

13. In verse 21 Mark tells us, “And Jesus, looking at him, loved him.” This question is so simple it might be hard to answer: How do we know Jesus loved him?

The Bible tells us.

To draw out the students more, share this:

Jesus didn’t say that he loved him, so what do you think Peter (the main source for Mark’s Gospel) saw or heard that would lead him to conclude, “he loved him”?

Let the students contemplate this, then use the “Imagine the Scene” to help them see Jesus in this moment.



Imagine the Scene: Imagine Peter standing close by listening and watching the way Jesus interacted with this man. He was watching Jesus’ manner, his body language, his voice, perhaps his eyes, the way he spoke honestly to the man, etc. Peter concluded to John Mark, “He loved him.”

ROLE-PLAY: *(Allow extra time if you choose to role-play the lesson)*

This is an optional way to solidify the story in the minds and hearts of students.

Use different colored scarves or shawls worn over the head or around the shoulders for costumes. Assign roles to students and have them act out their part either by reading from Scripture or while another student or leader reads the passage. (Note: You can either read through the passage once, then assign the roles, or pre-assign them when students arrive.)

Once you finish role-playing, you can then lead through the lesson.

Other Props to consider:

Scarves

Jewels

A crown to make the rich man look rich.

Roles:

Person 1: Jesus

Person 2: Rich Young Man

Skit Idea:

Be sure the person playing the role of the rich young man enters the scene with eagerness and excitement. The demeanor and emotional swings of this role play are important. The man comes up to Jesus and falls on his knees and asks a vital question. Jesus lovingly engages him with compassion and honesty. (Have students role-playing re-say their lines as the narrator re-reads the story.) In the end, have the man walk away slowly confused and sad with his head down and shaking his head while Jesus caringly watches him leave. End the skit here.

SECTION 3: Becoming Like Jesus—Receiving His Pathway to Eternal Life

10 mins

14. Why do you think the rich young man goes away sad?

Teach what they don't say.

Following Jesus would cost him too much.

15. What has Jesus asked him to die to?

His self-righteousness, his love of money, his love of "his truth."



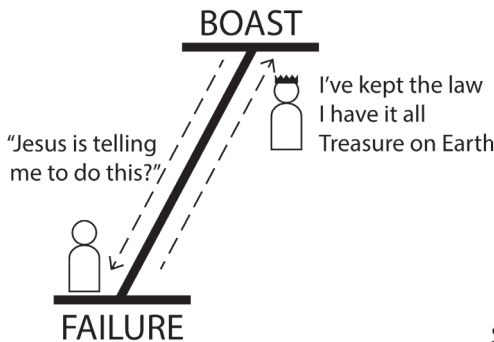
16. Contrast the truths of the rich young man with the truths Jesus offers.

Fill in the "Rich Young Man's Truths" side of the chart ahead of time, if possible. Or review them if they have the Participant Guide, then ask the students to contrast this with Jesus' loving truths. Fill in their answers on the right.

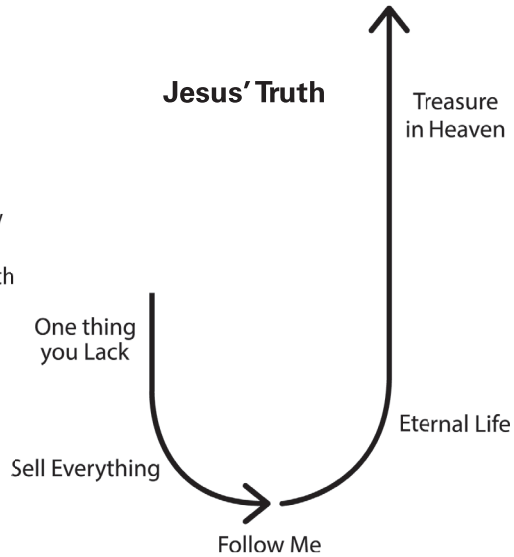
RICH YOUNG MAN'S TRUTHS	JESUS' TRUTHS
I have all I want	One thing you lack
I have a lot of possessions I really like	Go sell everything
I have kept the law	Love God above all
I want to follow myself	Follow me
I have treasures on earth	You will have treasure in Heaven

Draw:

Rich Young Man's Truth



Jesus' Truth



17. How is Jesus actually answering this man's original question: "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

This is a hard question. Use the Share paragraph below to fill in their answers.



Jesus knew the young man was lost and confused: he had embraced a false faith; he was following a bad map entitled "discover your own truth" and it wasn't working out the way his culture had promised. He came to Jesus, the Truth-Teller, for an answer to one of life's biggest questions. Jesus offers him a new map that leads to eternal life and treasures in Heaven.

Gospel Connection:

The young man doesn't realize it but Jesus is the ultimate rich young ruler who had it all but gave it all up for him. Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," was an invitation for us to do the same. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)



Historical Background: Wealth and Eternal Life

Jesus' words would have startled the rich young man.¹ Jesus had gotten into the basement of the man's life and turned on the light. In that day, it was commonly taught that if you were rich then you were blessed by God. It was considered proof of God's approval, making the wealthy the perceived prime candidates for entrance into Heaven. This was further proven by the disciples' question that immediately followed this encounter. They too were stunned, asking Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" If this guy was not qualified, then a poor fisherman like me has no chance. Jesus' answer is the foundation of the gospel: "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (Matthew 19:26). To be granted eternal life is a gift of God, not something we can earn. The Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

18. Do you think Jesus' honesty is a gift of love for this rich young man? If so, how?

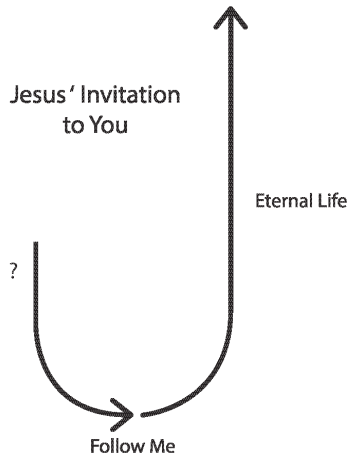
Various answers.

Students may need help in seeing honesty as a way to love someone.

They are words the rich young man needs to be confronted with to help him discover what is in his own heart. Jesus is loving him by helping him see that his security, identity and love are anchored to his wealth/possessions/stuff/his way of doing life, and not God.

Draw this J-Curve illustration to lead students through a gospel invitation or ask them to spend a moment in prayer thinking about this question:

What might make you sad to give up in order to follow Jesus?



1. "Such a possibility had never entered his mind: the thought of it was terribly startling. That he must come and follow Christ, then and there, and in order to do so, sell all that he had and give it way among the poor, and be poor himself, a beggar, that he might have treasure in heaven...and that it should come from His lips, at Whose Feet he had run to kneel, and Who held for him the keys of eternal life! And so, with clouded face he gazed down into what he lacked—within; but also gazed up in Christ on what he needed." Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: New Updated Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993), 710.

Note to Leaders about Prayer Cards: The prayer stories that develop will become one of your greatest discipling tools. It is a simple way to follow up with your students, to call them to dependence, to track God's story in their lives. Give students an index card and ask them to fill it out. Each week they will be adding to their card the prayer requests that are pertinent to the study. Sample cards are included, but feel free to encourage students to come up with their own.

Prayer Card:

<u>Following Jesus</u>	
"Teacher, we know that you are an honest man. We know that you teach the truth about God's way. You are not afraid of what other people think about you. All men are the same to you." Matthew 22:16	
<u>Date</u>	<u>Prayer</u>
	Lord, help me apprentice with Jesus as I learn how to love with honesty.