

How to Lose Friends and Influence People

Mar 10:17-34

To The Village Church, February 05, 2006

Main Idea: Becoming influential with one another, counseling well, means treating individually, loving enough to challenge, and most of all promoting following Jesus as the substitute.

Meditation:

If thou desire inordinately the things that are present, thou shalt lose those which are heavenly and eternal.

--Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

Post-Sermon Song Theme: Jesus is our answer.

Benediction:

May that which is impossible for you be yours today through Jesus Christ, eternal life.

Charge:

Go forth, surrendering all to the One Who gave Himself to give you all.

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Current Outline:

<i>I. Jesus Deals with Rich Man as an Individual</i>	<i>1</i>
A. The First Way: Entering the mindset of the accomplished	1
B. The Second Way: Applying the law of defrauding	1
C. The Third Way: Commanding to Sell what comes before Me	2
<i>II. Love Carries a Responsibility</i>	<i>3</i>
A. The expression of Jesus' love is to make the man sad	3
B. Illustration of Bob G.	3
C. Applying in the Church	3
<i>III. Christ Carries Us</i>	<i>4</i>
A. Being good doesn't bring eternal life	4
B. Salvation is from God	4
C. Jesus presses the issue of His identity	5
D. To follow Christ is to let Him die for you	6
E. There is no loss	6
F. Simon Peter, a rich man	6

I. Jesus Deals with Rich Man as an Individual

A. The First Way: Entering the mindset of the accomplished

1. Jesus deals with people as individuals.
2. What kind of man he was: High powered person. He is a New Yorker. He has books by Donald Trump on his shelf. He dresses for success. He knows what he wants. And he goes for it. He didn't mind moving to the front of the crowd to get it.
3. **V17**—So he makes a scene. It seems flamboyant, but Jesus deals with him as one sincere. Jesus is not put off by this man's determination. He is not offended at this man's importunity. He'll go with it. Jesus appreciates different types of individuals.
4. He also deals with people as individuals. You can see how Jesus deals with this man as an individual in different ways.
5. And in the process, you see how Jesus counsels people, and so how we can counsel one another. Let me show you three ways:
6. **V19**—"You know the commandments..." First, Jesus is quite comfortable stepping into his system of thought. You want something to do to inherit eternal life? That is something of an oxymoron, doing something to get a thing that you inherit, but never mind that. I'll play along: Keep the law. And that is one way to do it.
7. The Russian friend in Biostatistics—Going to keep the Sermon on the Mt.
8. But what this young zealous man ignores is that Jesus just told him you couldn't do it: v18 "No one is good." A little odd: Implying he could keep the commandments, be good, to get eternal life. But then no one is good.

B. The Second Way: Applying the law of defrauding

1. **v19**—Another way Jesus treats him as an individual is by bringing out that portion of the law that is particularly relevant to him: "He says, "Do not defraud." Now at first it might seem that Jesus is adding an extra commandment. That is not one of the 10 commandments. But look instead at what He is doing. He is applying one of the commandments, "You shall not steal," in a specific way.
2. This man is evidently a person of position. He is going to have a lot of people working for him:
 - For people who employ others, like this fellow certainly did, "You shall not steal," principally means: "Do not defraud."

- **Lev 19:13** "Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.
 - **Deu 24:14-15** Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.
 - For a person of position, that commandment, "You shall not steal," means "Are you loving your employees? How is the conducting of your business affecting your neighbor? ...or neighboring countries?"
 - Jesus is saying, "Hey, how are you treating your employees?"
3. So the Christ is 1) stepping into his mindset to help him bring him along to see its inadequacy, 2) applying the law specifically to try to prick his conscience. But this guy doesn't catch it. **V20**--He answers, "Oh, the Law? No problem. I do fine with that. In fact, I was raised in Christian home. I've always done the right thing..." So Jesus is trying to gently bring the man to conviction, about his own failings before God. Doesn't work.

C. The Third Way: Commanding to Sell what comes before Me

1. And that brings us to the third way in which Jesus Christ deals with this man as an individual. **V21**—"O.K." says Jesus. "Pretty good. One thing left. Go, sell all you have and give it to the poor. And do it for Me."
2. This is pretty steep. But what I want you to see is that it was a custom made command for this man's heart. This was his issue, his obstacle to eternal life, his idol before God. And that is why Jesus gives this man this command.
3. Not all are called to sell all they have. This has been misunderstood at times by people trying to derive an ethics from NT. God deals with us as individuals.
4. You wonder why certain things are happening in your life and not to other people. These things you are not getting and others are: Because Jesus is dealing with you individually. You say, How come all these other folks are getting this and I'm not? There will always be people around getting what you aren't.
5. Rich man was probably looking around saying, "Hey, how come he's not asking these other people to sell all their stuff?" What you need to sell are the things that are so dear to you, they are worth more than Jesus. This man needed this command. And if you come to Christ, He is custom-designing your life.

II. Love Carries a Responsibility

A. The expression of Jesus' love is to make the man sad

1. There is something here for us to learn with one another: That Love carries a responsibility.
2. **v21**--Jesus looked at him and loved him...and consequently said something that sent the man away very sad. And so must love also direct us to do at times.

B. Illustration of Bob G.

1. A friend who was owed money...
 - Double what he owes you and give it to him.
 - I just drastically reduced the number of people who are going to come to me for counseling. But I don't always say that.
 - Have to ask you to trust me. I knew this man's life. I had known him a while. He had means. And it was not going to kill him. And I knew what drove him.
 - He said, "A nice thing to do..." "No, God wants you to do this.."
2. His face fell. He went away sad...We started to drift apart and, now, we're not involved in each other's lives anymore.
3. I loved that guy. We would play guitar together. I lost a friend that night. Love carries a responsibility.

C. Applying in the Church

1. One of the ways I am very proud of you, the Village Church, as a pastor is I see you more and more understanding that you have a responsibility to your friends. That is what friendship is. That is what Jesus shows us love is: He loved him and spoke words that made him sad. They challenged him, even had the opposite effect as I'm sure Jesus wanted. He wanted the man to follow but instead he left.
2. Not talking about abuse: Separate your perceptions from the word of God.
 - Not telling someone off in anger.
 - Not a licence for an harsh personality.
 - Jesus didn't just look at him and says this—he talked with him first. He first came to the point of loving him.
3. But Jesus never said "I can't say that. I'll lose my friends." If you are a friend you have responsibility. I wasn't a pastor when I gave that advice.
4. In the end, the responsibility you bear to one another is to love, and loving each other involves saying things that lead to eternal life.

III. Christ Carries Us

Now, the thing you want to get your friends to, the issue to force with them, is the same issue that Jesus forced, the issue of His identity.

A. Being good doesn't bring eternal life

1. **V20** tells us that diligence in being good is not enough. Jesus recognized that this man recognized that there was something lacking, either in him or in the Law. If keeping the Law, to some degree, living a good life had done it for him, why would he be here kneeling before Jesus?
2. Jesus' answer says that it isn't the Law's fault. It's yours: There is one thing lacking, but it is lacking "in you".

B. Salvation is from God

1. In **V24**—"Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" Jesus broadens the discussion to how hard the Kingdom of God is to get into anyway, not just for the rich.
2. Contra New Age books...?
3. **V27** –Then it becomes impossible. So the progression of the discussion is: it is hard for rich → hard for all → impossible for man.
4. The conclusion is that no one is good enough to achieve salvation. For "Only God is good."
5. i.e., Salvation must come from God. This rich man asked the question, "What does eternal life take? How can I get it? **V27** is answering that Only through God is it possible.
6. And so we find Jesus trying to force that issue of the man's feeling about himself and Jesus.

C. Jesus presses the issue of His identity

1. And the issue hinged, once again, on Jesus' identity. Jesus told the man to sell it all in order to follow Him, to do it for Him.
2. God doesn't like to thwart people. He doesn't want people to have to give up things. There is no pleasure in that for Him. It's not good for your soul to have to forgo things you love. But He will ask thing of you if they come before Christ.
3. The question of His identity does not go away. In fact, He, Himself keeps making an issue of it.
4. Jesus starts it in **v19**. The man makes a perfectly reasonable address: "Good teacher..." There is nothing wrong with that. People call Jesus teacher all the time. "Rabbi, Rabbi." There is nothing wrong with what that man says. But Jesus picks up on the phrase, "Good teacher," and turns a harmless question into a point of contention.
5. Why? Because He keeps wanting to bring up the issue of His identity.
 - The man says, "Good teacher..." What He replies is: "Why do you call *me* good? No one is good except God alone..."¹
Hint, hint...
 - Like someone coming up to me and I want them to know that I am something more than they think: "Wise Teacher..." Wise? The men who are really wise are *seminarians*...
6. You see what He is doing, for the sake of everyone there. He is, once again, forcing the issue of His identity: He is saying, "Think about it... Who am I?"
7. MK to calm Alex about talking to the pastor: "He's just a guy." Right! But no one was around the disciples telling them—"He's just a guy." If they said that to one another in the beginning, it was replaced by the question, "Who is this guy?"

¹ This reading is contra (Baille, 126): "If we take the reply seriously, we shall surely find in it the supreme instance of that peculiar kind of humility which Christianity brought into the world. It was not self-depreciation: it was rather a complete absence of the kind of self-consciousness which makes a man think of his own degree of merit, and a dominating sense of dependence on God. The Man in whom God was incarnate would claim nothing for Himself as a Man, but ascribed all glory to God." Although there is much worthy in what He says, like not thinking about degree of merit, I don't think we can ascribe an "absence of self-consciousness" in Jesus. He makes His identity an issue all the time.

D. To follow Christ is to let Him die for you

1. **vv29-30**—It is about following Jesus: Following ME grants you eternal life. End of v30. Eternal life is about leaving all in your heart to follow Me.
2. And this is the best thing we can do in counseling our friends—it is to understand their problem in terms of Jesus' identity.
3. He is resolute about dieing at Jerusalem:
 - V32-He leads the way.
 - V33—He doesn't comfort them about that. This is going to happen. In fact, I will make it so.
4. To follow Christ is to let Him die for you.²

E. There is no loss

1. And if folks can follow Him, then He says that there is no loss. Vv29-30 say essentially that. There is no loss. You cannot lose in making decisions for Jesus, in leaving all in your heart to follow Him.
2. Jesus is so confident about this, of His Father's way.
 - If you lose a friend by loving her, God will not let you go friendless.
3. In my own life, I find God is anxious to show this: Thaddaeus, as a child, gives away a three inch gumby and the very next day, through a completely other means, gets a four foot gumby.

F. Simon Peter, a rich man

1. Simon Peter was rich.
 - a. The Romans loved their boneless sea bass, that came from the Sea of Galilee, and Peter was right in the middle of this huge export business.
 - b. Hence is concern for what happens to the rich man.
2. Act 3—"Silver and Gold I have none...but I am a rich man."

² V33—Both Jews and Gentiles will take part in killing Him. Because there will be no difference in Who He dies for.

