

<sup>16</sup> *Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”*

<sup>17</sup> *“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only one who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”*

<sup>18</sup> *“Which ones?” he inquired.*

*Jesus replied, “‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, <sup>19</sup> honor your father and mother, ‘<sup>[a]</sup> and ‘love your neighbor as yourself. ‘<sup>[b]</sup>”*

<sup>20</sup> *“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”*

<sup>21</sup> *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

<sup>22</sup> *When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

*Matthew 19:16-21 NIV*

The above scripture passage is not cited because of the reference to wealth, but because of Jesus’ answers to a man who wanted to grow in his spiritual journey and relationship to God. It is obvious, and the other gospels cite this, that this man was sincere in his request, and in the steps he had taken so far. He was an honest seeker. Jesus could have affirmed him completely, but instead gave him the answer he needed “*go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*”

This was what the man really needed to hear to grow in his walk with God. Would he accept the challenge? The Bible tells us he went away sad because the step that needed to be taken cut to the very core of his being. The crucial step would not be taken because it cost too much.

Jesus ministry has many other examples of his plain speaking which, at a glance may even seem harsh, really leads to what the person needs to grow. When the woman at the well in John’s gospel (chapter 4), is told that she is living an immoral life, she does not take offence, but becomes an “evangelist” and a Samaritan village is brought to faith.

When Jesus gets the request of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:21-28, Mk 7:24-30) she could have been highly insulted when Jesus referred to her as one of the gentile “dogs”.

But she accepts who she is and grows in faith undeterred to ask for her daughter’s healing.

Outside of Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, the religious authorities had no use for Jesus. The reason was that Jesus was giving the religious authorities what they truly needed in their spiritual journey even though for them the word was very hard.

If we take a step back to the prophets of the Old Testament, their strong language came not to discourage the people, but to move them to repentance and in loving relationship with God.

As you read this, you may nod your head in agreement, but what if Jesus' "prescription" for your spiritual health was not a word of affirmation or gratification, but the "hard" word that challenged you to the point of potentially upsetting you? Would you listen? Would you act on it?

The word of my testimony that ,when needed , some of the most "growing" times in my spiritual journey have come from close Christian brothers and sisters who have been led by God not to tell me what I wanted to hear but what I **needed to hear** . Believe me I can assure you that I didn't instantly respond with gratitude and thanksgiving from those kind of words.

Let's be clear. God is love. God loves us his children, and Jesus Christ crucified, dead and risen is the overwhelming proof of that love. But God's love, the truest love there is, doesn't want us to remain stagnant but to grow and blossom. So if Jesus met up with you like the rich young ruler, how would **you** respond?

Pr. John Van Haneghan