

Zacchaeus, the Publican

Lesson Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Focus Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Key Verse: When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Luke 19:5

LUKE 19:1-10 (NRSV UE)

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through it.

2 A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich.

3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.

4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.

5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner."

8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much."

9 Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

LUKE 19:1-10 (KJV)

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Key Terms

- **Conspirators** – People secretly planning to do evil things against a person or the state.
- **Reprisal** – An attack on a person in retaliation for an actual or imagined offense.
- **Authenticity** – A state of being real, true, or genuine.

Introduction

An unexpected encounter with a stranger can be a transforming experience. What is it about a new relationship that opens up the possibility of transformation in our lives? When Zacchaeus opens up his home to Jesus as his special guest, he is transformed

by the experience and becomes a follower of Jesus, doing more to make amends than the law required.

Telling the Bible Story

There is something remarkable at the start of the Zacchaeus story that should be of great interest to evangelists and ministry workers. Zacchaeus showed curiosity

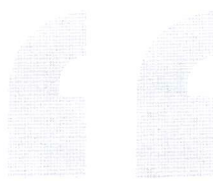
and positioned himself to see Jesus at work. Such people, when we encounter them – whether in the marketplace or as visitors to our churches – should become priorities in our outreach. Their latent interest makes them prime candidates for discipleship.

Zacchaeus' response in verse 8 was a clear admission of guilt of his sinful practices.

As a tax collector, he had no doubt been accused of ripping off people, extracting more taxes than was reasonable. In the presence of the Lord, he offered to correct that wrong. That is the first sign of a person who is ripe for salvation. This ability to admit wrong when exposed and to seek forgiveness is undoubtedly one of the traits

that made King David a man after God's heart.

Jesus' outreach to Zacchaeus was highly demonstrative. It made a strong point because of who Zacchaeus was. In Israel, he would have been a highly hated person. His job as a tax collector made him a public conspirator with the occupying



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Roman authorities. Add to that the reputation of tax collectors who unscrupulously gathered from citizens more than was reasonable, Zacchaeus was, therefore, a sinner by reputation and practice. A sinner other sinners would shun.

Yet Jesus, the purest of the pure, reached out to him, offering him custom-delivered salvation. This is what real ministry looks like. Here is John 3:16 in action.

We see Zacchaeus on the pages of our Bibles, but do we see him in our lives? Zacchaeus, in male and female bodies, visits our churches for Fun Days, concerts, and Friends and Family Day. They are curious enough to be around Christians but feel they are not worthy to join our communities formally.

They listen to us on our community walkabouts but would not join us.

Jesus shows us how to reach them. Go to them and engage them on their terms. As Jesus did with the real Zacchaeus, remind them that despite their dark deeds, salvation is still for them. Read to them Jesus' mission statement in Luke 5:22.

Their status as sinners qualifies them for Christian outreach. But that is only possible if we don't treat membership in our churches like membership in a country club where only the good and vetted are welcomed.

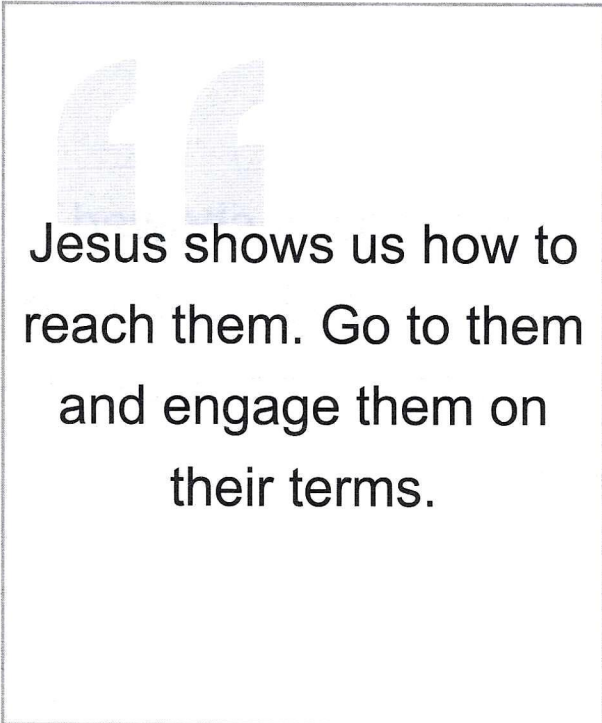
Sankofa

Zacchaeus' story points to the conversion of people like the Puerto Rican Nicky

Cruz. Before meeting Christ, Cruz was a violent gang leader in New York. This gang was infamous for its level of brutality, blatant crime, intimidation, and revenge reprisals. They showed no respect for life.

After meeting Christ through David Wilkinson, Cruz gave up that sinful, dreaded lifestyle,

and turned his life over to the lordship of Jesus. His subsequent work as an evangelist was remarkable. Maybe there are more Zacchaeus' and Nicki Cruz's out there who are ripe for the picking. What is needed is more David Wilkenson's who are prepared to go home with them, like Jesus did, to show them a road to salva-



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tion. They remain outside the church because we, in our own fears, refused to do the Jesus thing and go where they live, literally and figuratively.

Case Study

In the publication “Steps in Journey Into Life” (Norman Warren), we find an approach for leading the curious into a relationship with Jesus Christ. The steps are not earth-shaking, but they remind us of what people must grapple with before they say yes to our church invitations.

We start by recognizing that all persons, irrespective of their status or pretended status, seek meaning in life. What we offer them must not be limited to a line on our membership register, but something that addresses their private struggles. In every person is a void that must be filled. From there, we lead people to an understanding of God’s love and why it fills that void. The next step is getting people to face the reality of sin. It is not just a word we throw around to make people feel bad. It is a reality that

blocks God’s love towards us.

Then comes the hook: repentance is God’s prescribed way to break the power of sin in our lives and fill the void that drives us to sin. All of this is presented lovingly, from the point of view of the curious person. And this is where so many evangelistic efforts failed. We often seem in a hurry to fill quotas rather than see people in “the trees of their lives.”

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In many ways, this approach seems an adaptation of the famous *Roman’s Road* approach to evangelism. Nonetheless, the key thing in whatever approach we use is to engage the sinner from their point of view, offering them the peace and satisfaction they need. This is a good

time to review your approach to reaching the Zacchaeus and Nicki Cruz you will meet. Keep in mind that Jesus spent quality time addressing Zacchaeus’ concerns. What a lesson for ministry!

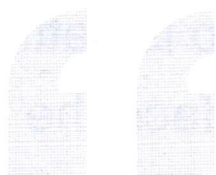
Life Application

In the Great Commission, Christ charged

us with the responsibility to make disciples. In 1 Peter 3:15, we are encouraged to always be on the alert to give a reasonable explanation of our faith, and we are to give this witness lovingly. This is an excellent point to consider how equipped you are to do these things. Unfortunately, too many in our community hold the view that evangelizing is for the (trained) evangelists. Yes, there is a need for specialist evangelists; but when we run into Zacchaeus and Nick Cruz on our streets, in the malls, and in food stores, we must be able to engage them. We must be able to share the hope and peace that is in Christ.

We are not calling you to make professional, polished, or dramatic presentations of faith.

Authenticity is your greatest weapon in those everyday situations. Assess your preparedness in this area. Where there are gaps in your knowledge or understanding, get help to fill those gaps.



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Learn the techniques of bringing Christ into casual conversation without seeming too “churchy.” Proverbs 11:30 reminds us that the person who wins souls is indeed wise. Equip yourself to make your contribution to the kingdom by speaking to the curious Zacchaeus you will meet.

Questions

1. Zacchaeus’s offer of repayment was noble. Why did Jesus not accept it?
2. In what ways do people “climb trees” today to see Jesus?
3. How much time should we spend with “Zacchaeus” to answer concerns?

Closing Devotions

Closing Hymn: “I

Need Thee Every Hour” (AMECH #327)

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, guide me to see the Zacchaeus’ who are curious about you and help me to help them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**July 20-26**

Monday	Genesis 3:14-20 (The Woman and Her Offspring)
Tuesday	Mark 3:31-35; Luke 11:27-28 (Doing the Will of God)
Wednesday	Psalms 119:97-104 (Meditating on God's Law)
Thursday	Luke 1:26-38 (Mary Affirms God's Will)
Friday	Luke 2:15-19 (Mary Contemplates What God Has Done)
Saturday	Isaiah 9:3-7 (Rejoice in the Newborn King)
Sunday	John 2:1-5 (Mary Points Others to Jesus)