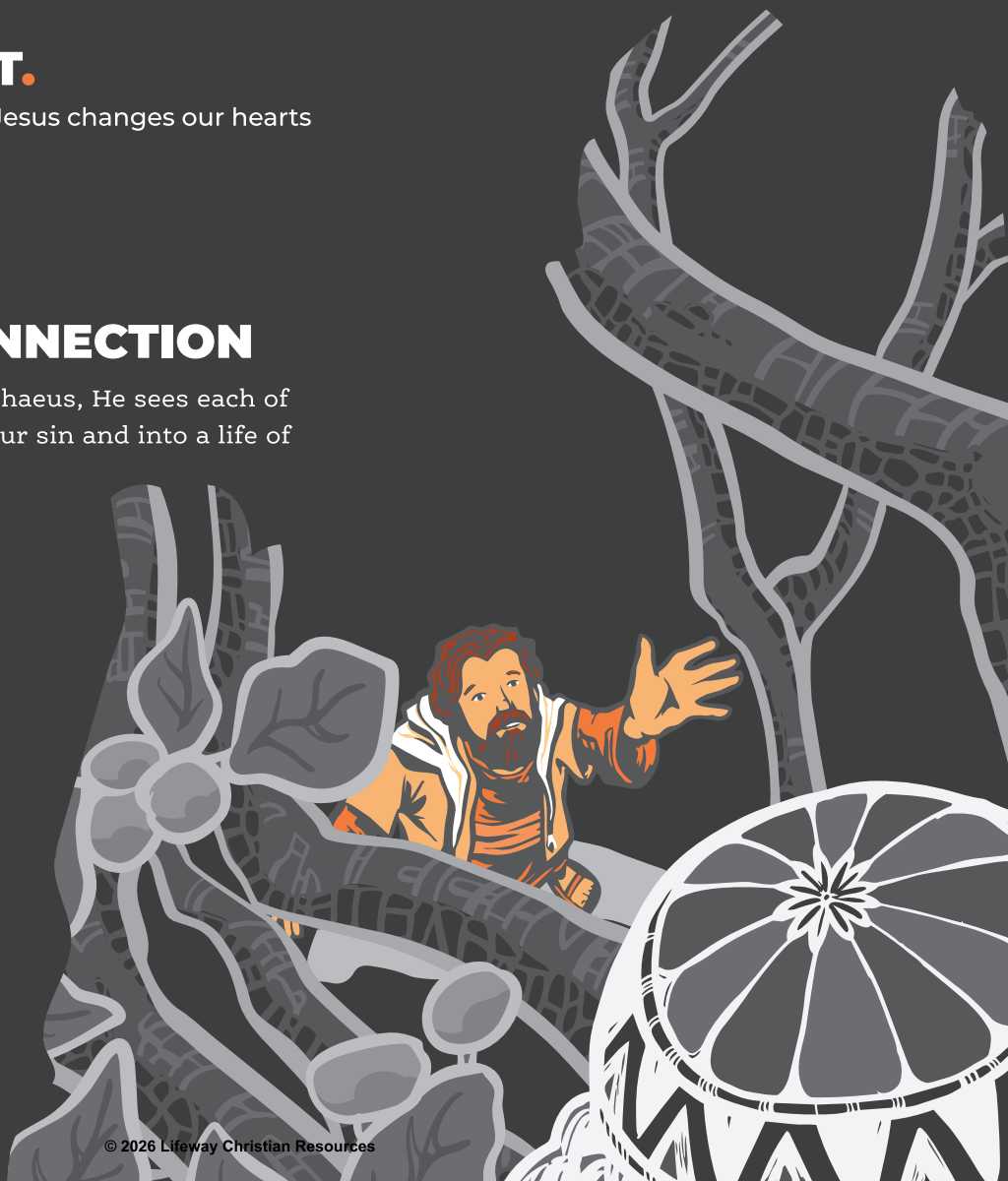
TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST

MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Just as Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He sees each of us. He calls us out of our sin and into a life of faithful obedience.



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CALLED BY NAME

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Luke 19

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

LUKE 19:1-5

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. 4 So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house."

MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

LUKE 19:6-10

6 So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. 7 All who saw it began to complain, "He's gone to stay with a sinful man." 8 But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much." 9 "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

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BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.

Leaders: You may have many students who identify with Zacchaeus on a deeply painful level; they struggle with being the outcast or with being labeled *unworthy*. What a beautiful moment to show them how much Jesus cares for them—how He invites them.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

LUKE 19:2

"Regular tax collectors were hated in Israel because they worked for the Roman government that oppressed the Jewish people. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. In all likelihood he did not receive that position by working hard. He probably rose to that rank by being more crooked than other tax collectors, who often cheated people out of their earnings."[8]

MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

LUKE 19:6-10

"Zacchaeus provides us a marvelous picture of repentance. He also provides us a marvelous picture of Luke 18:27. Here God demonstrates the 'possible' salvation in a rich man's life. God can call people from all their idols, a lifetime of sin, and the habit of abusing privilege, position, and others, and turn such persons to Himself, making them new."[9]

LUKE 19:9-10

"Despite the protests of Pharisees (5:30; 7:39; 15:2-3) or Pharisaic types (19:7), salvation came to the outcasts, who responded in repentance and faith (or who by their actions [19:8] revealed their repentance and faith). Luke never tired of this theme of the great reversal. With each example he sought to reassure his readers that salvation had come to them even though they were outcasts, i.e., Gentiles. The Son of Man did not come for the righteous but for lost people, like them. It is for sinners that Jesus has come, and there is no other way of salvation than the way of Zacchaeus, the prodigal son, and other sinners. Apart from the prayer of the tax collector ('God, have mercy on me, a sinner,' 18:13), there can be no salvation. If this offends the self-righteous, so be it. There is no other gospel, for 'the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost' (19:10)."[10]

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CONTEXT

This passage, though familiar, is one of the clearest reflections of God's heart for the lost—for *all* people. Jesus made a radical move when He interacted with a man labeled by fellow Jews as an unworthy traitor. Zacchaeus was a Jewish tax collector—a chief tax collector (v. 2). This position set him apart from most Jews because it meant working for the enemy, for Rome. In exchange for a more lavish lifestyle and financial benefits, Zacchaeus collected taxes from the Jews, inflating them further for his own profit. In essence, Zacchaeus stole from his own people, adding oppression on top of oppression. Because Zacchaeus was one of them, the betrayal cut more deeply. Of all people to seek out Jesus, Zacchaeus was the one who ran and climbed a tree, breaking all the social norms of the day. Both Jesus and Zacchaeus faced opposition from the watching crowd, and their conversation had serious implications for both of them. The moment Zacchaeus's path intersected with Jesus's path, he faced a decision: Would he surrender or would he walk "away grieving, because he had many possessions" (Matt. 19:22), like the rich young ruler who gripped tightly to earthly possessions, missing heavenly treasure?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Guilt and Shame

Guilt refers to the objective status of someone being found guilty for a wrong committed, as well as the incurring of punishment that comes with it (Matt. 5:21-22; James 2:10). Shame is the emotional pain that comes from sinful actions. Scripture teaches that humans are guilty before God and often experience deep feelings of shame.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, HELP US TO SEEK JESUS. HELP US TO SEE YOU CLEARLY AND MOVE US TO ACTION SO THAT WE CAN POINT OTHERS TO YOU. LET OUR LIVES BE COMPLETELY CHANGED BY THE TRUTH OF WHO YOU ARE AND BY THE FACT THAT YOU INVITE US, SINNERS, TO FOLLOW YOU.

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KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

What's more important—a lot of money or a lot of friends (1=Rich but lonely; 10=Friends but broke)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1
DRASTIC LENGTHS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHEN HAS YOUR HEIGHT EITHER HELPED YOU OR KEPT YOU FROM DOING SOMETHING?**
- **IF YOUR FAVORITE CELEBRITY, SINGER, OR ATHLETE WAS GOING TO BE IN TOWN, WHAT LENGTH WOULD YOU GO TO MEET HIM OR HER?**
- **WHAT ARE SOME CRAZY LENGTHS PEOPLE HAVE GONE TO SO THEY COULD BE NEAR SOMEONE THEY LOOKED UP TO?**

Some of us would go to drastic lengths to get close to people we admire, even if others think we're crazy. But imagine this person looking you in the eye and calling you by name! Today, we'll see that Jesus did so much more for Zacchaeus than he ever could have imagined. He called him by name and wanted to spend time with him, despite his life choices and career.

2
CULTURAL CONNECTION

First impressions really do matter. Think of someone you didn't have a great first impression of: Has that carried over into how you view that person now? Once we put labels on people, removing them is difficult, even if we misunderstood their character. The label leaves a sticky residue that takes a lot of time and effort to remove. If someone we've labeled has something amazing happen, we may struggle to feel he or she deserves it. We tend to have a hard time forgetting first impressions, even when we're wrong and the labels are unfair. See if you can turn this situation around and put yourself in their shoes. Would you hope others would remove an inaccurate label much sooner if circumstances had changed in your life? If you changed? Sure. So, when we realize that our first impression of someone was wrong, or when we realize the person has changed, let's remove those labels and choose to see others the way God sees them. Let's take it one step further and resist placing labels at all.

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DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

A real encounter with Jesus changes our hearts and our actions.

JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

READ LUKE 19:1-5



WHY DO YOU THINK LUKE INCLUDED ZACCHAEUS'S JOB AND SOCIAL STATUS?

Leaders: Share Context about tax collectors. Jesus ministered to all kinds of people, but the Gospel writers didn't always mention their backgrounds. Luke noted that Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector. These men were despised by fellow Jews, viewed as traitors and lumped together with "sinners." Luke communicated that Jesus calls *everyone*. Zacchaeus—and the people watching—needed to know that following Jesus came at a cost. **Zacchaeus couldn't keep functioning as he did before, especially since most of his wealth was stolen from others. His stained reputation would take time to change, but encountering Jesus changed his heart quickly.**

WHAT KEEPS US FROM MAKING AN EFFORT TO GET TO JESUS—TO SEE HIM AND KNOW HIM?

Zacchaeus's height kept him from seeing Jesus, so he took drastic steps to get a better view. Men of his social status wouldn't run or climb trees for any reason, but societal rules didn't stop Zacchaeus. Jesus had changed people's lives; if everything Zacchaeus heard was true and Jesus was who he thought He was, then maybe Zacchaeus had hope for himself. **We often care too much about what others think to make this kind of effort to be closer to Jesus. We let shame tell us that Jesus won't respond to us because we don't deserve His attention. But Jesus sees us and invites us closer.**



WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS CALLING ZACCHAEUS *BY NAME*?

Jesus knew Zacchaeus, even though they had never met. Jesus knows you by name. He knows your story (even the parts you don't want Him to know) and still seeks you out for relationship with Him. Maybe you've always had this idea that Jesus was standoffish or disappointed in you—that if He was standing in front of you, He might look past you at people who better fit a religious mold. But the Gospels show us that Jesus isn't like this at all. **We see Jesus step into people's stories right where He's needed—in their mess, in their pain, before they've had a chance to clean up their lives.** The people watching must have wondered how, of all people, Jesus knew Zacchaeus—a tax collector who made his wealth off of working for Rome, the great enemy. They must've wondered why Jesus wanted to stay at his house, but Jesus wasn't worried about their opinions. He had business with Zacchaeus and called him out by name. He does the same for us. **No matter our backgrounds, the sins we've committed, the messy family situations we're in, Jesus sees us, knows us, and calls us by name.**

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MEETING JESUS TRANSFORMS US

READ LUKE 19:6-10

HOW DID THE PEOPLE IN THE CROWD VIEW ZACCHAEUS?

The crowd labeled Zacchaeus a sinful man. Zacchaeus was a tax collector and a thief. In their eyes, he could produce nothing good. The idea that Jesus wanted to spend time with him was insane in the eyes of those watching. Zacchaeus wasn't the kind of person they expected Jesus to surround Himself with. **The crowd complained about Zacchaeus, even though they couldn't possibly know his whole story; they couldn't possibly know Zacchaeus's heart, his insecurities, his doubts and fears.** Zacchaeus's heart was open and ready for change—he intentionally looked for Jesus and did everything he could to get near Him. He was willing to let Jesus change everything about him.

WHY WAS ZACCHAEUS WILLING TO GIVE AWAY HIS MONEY SO FREELY? HOW IS HE AN EXAMPLE FOR US?

For Zacchaeus, knowing and following Jesus was worth losing wealth. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus was willing to see him as someone other than a "tax collector," so his earthly possessions lost their significance. The burden of his theft weighed heavily on him, and he wanted to make things right with people he had wronged. A relationship with Jesus mattered more than his pride and his riches. Zacchaeus could no longer keep doing what he had always done and was willing to make a change. **If we're honest, the weight of our sin is heavy. Carrying the weight of people's expectations, the weight of their judgment, or the weight of feeling like we can't change is exhausting. Jesus really does invite us to lay it all down to follow Him. As He did with Zacchaeus, Jesus really can transform us and free us from who we've always been.**

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS MEETING JESUS MADE FOR YOU?

Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus. His heart searched for Jesus, and Jesus set everything else aside to speak with a man no one else wanted anything to do with. Jesus was on mission to "seek and save the lost," and Zacchaeus was ready to be found, no matter the cost. **Here's the truth: We see no evidence in Scripture that we can follow Jesus and remain the same. In every case, those who follow Jesus are changed by Him. Those who choose not to follow Him remain the same. Knowing Jesus must make a difference in our hearts, and that difference flows into every area of our lives as evidence for others to see.**

WRAP-UP

WHEN HAVE YOU FELT STUCK BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T WANT TO LET JESUS CHANGE A PART OF YOUR LIFE? WHAT WOULD SURRENDERING IT LOOK LIKE?

The beautiful truth about the Lord is that He doesn't desire forced obedience. He desires our willing surrender. Many of us struggle to surrender certain parts of ourselves. We cling to certain pieces of our lives because we don't want those pieces to change. We're scared of what that change might bring. But knowing and following Jesus is worth changing everything in our lives. He is worth obeying because anything He calls us away from is a lesser love. Sacrificing what is valuable in the world pales in comparison to the sacrifice Jesus made for us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian who was imprisoned and killed for resisting the Nazi regime in WWII, explained it this way: "What has cost God much cannot be cheap for us."[11] Following Jesus *is* costly, but it is worth the cost. Zacchaeus saw this with his own eyes and knew he needed Jesus more than anything money could buy. **We may not see the full reward of following Jesus on this side of heaven, but we will in eternity. And we will never regret giving Him everything we have.**

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