

Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector

Listed Scriptures

Lk 19:1-10

Lesson Aim

- 1) To imitate Zacchaeus' desire and pursuit of God.
- 2) To learn that true repentance involves a change in values and behavior.

Memory Verse

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." (Phil 3:8)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Isaiah 6-10

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The Romans gathered funds for their government by farming out the collection privilege. Tax collectors earned their own living by adding a sizable sum—whatever they could get away with—to the total and keeping this money for themselves. The Jews opposed these taxes because they supported a secular government and its pagan gods. But unless the people revolted and risked Roman retaliation, they had to pay whatever was demanded. Some of their own countrymen became tax collectors, lured by the wealth such a position promised. Obviously, the people hated the tax collectors who were notorious for their dishonesty and greed. Some were also ready to betray their own countrymen for cold cash. The Gospel of Luke presents stories of several tax collectors and their dealings with Jesus Christ (see Lk 3:12; 5:27-30; 7:29; 15:1; and a parable in 18:10-13). As the chief tax collector Zacchaeus was in charge over others. Matthew had been a tax collector, but Zacchaeus was chief of his region. Matthew had been well off but Zacchaeus was

very wealthy. Yet, God accepts even these men. God desires to pour out mercy on those who confess and gives strength to live changed lives.

W A R M U P



Have you ever pursued for something so meaningful that you were willing to exchange everything for it?

Was there something in your childhood/teenage years that you treasured a lot?

What is its meaning to you now?

Why has its meaning changed or remained the same for you?

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Zacchaeus' Search For the Lord

The conversion of Zacchaeus demonstrates how the good news is for everyone. It shows that the Lord Jesus came to the world to save all sinners; regardless of sex, race, age or worldly status (Lk 5:31-32; 7:22-23). The Son of Man came to save the lost. Zacchaeus was the son of Abraham but he had lost his way and departed from God. This compelling story tells how the Lord came to seek him out. Through Zacchaeus' example we also learn of the kind of response and attitude that we should have when responding to God's calling.



A • He Grabbed Hold of the Opportunity

While the Lord was preaching on earth, news of Him and His mighty works spread throughout the land. When the people heard that He was to pass through Jericho, a large crowd flocked to see Him. Most came out of sheer curiosity. Zacchaeus, however, came with an inner desire and thirst. Throughout our lives we are given opportunities by God to do certain things such as study, honor our parents, get married, and even believe in God (Eccl 9:11). Like Zacchaeus, we should take hold of the opportunity because

opportunities may pass us by and we may never get a second chance. Some truthseekers seek the truth for decades and delay getting baptized. Suddenly they may fall sick and pass away. By then it is too late. They have missed a precious opportunity to receive salvation. Isaiah 55:6 reminds us to "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."



B • He Pursued the Lord

Zacchaeus means "pure or justified", but how conflicting the meaning of his name was with his daily actions. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector which meant that other publicans were officers under him. We hear of publicans coming to Christ (Mt 9:9-10; Lk 18:10-13) but here was the chief, a man of authority. Zacchaeus possessed what others sought—riches, power and status. But these could not satisfy his inner emptiness nor buy him joy and acceptance. Zacchaeus' desire to see the Lord stemmed from an awareness of his sinful past and hope to receive the Lord's forgiveness and salvation.



C • He Had An Earnest Desire

Although Zacchaeus longed to see the Lord, he could not because of the multitude and his short stature. His physical stature and the huge crowds were realities that Zacchaeus could not change. However, Zacchaeus' earnest desire to see the Lord Jesus propelled him to overcome these barriers. "He sought to see who Jesus was ... he ran ahead he climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him" (Lk 19:3-4). Such actions show how Zacchaeus sought the Lord with great persistence and urgency. It is no wonder that the Lord Jesus beckoned to him and chose him. The Lord loves and blesses those who are poor in spirit and who seek Him eagerly (Jer 29:13; Mt 7:7-8; Ps 42:1; Ps 119:20).



D • He Faced Problems Courageously

Zacchaeus was hated and despised by the multitude that had gathered to see the Lord Jesus. Seeing Zacchaeus amongst them might have spurred them to take revenge upon him or to sneer at him. But Zacchaeus did not fear this. He entered into the crowd and faced his obstacles head on. Because of his short stature, Zacchaeus clambered up a sycamore tree where he could get a good view. Although the Bible does not mention Zacchaeus' age, we can imagine the effort needed for a man his size to climb the tree. Zacchaeus did not worry about whether such actions were appropriate for a person his age and position. In his desire to

see the Lord, Zacchaeus was able to overcome his various difficulties with courage and wisdom.

Oftentimes when we choose to draw closer to God and seek after Him, obstacles and temptations will arise. Our flesh and Satan will hinder us. When we find that we are one of the few who have yet to receive the Holy Spirit, we are too embarrassed to go up to the front of the chapel to pray. When we make a resolve to read the Bible and pray more, our schedule becomes so packed that it seems we cannot afford the time. Such obstacles and difficulties can cause us to doubt, lose hope and eventually give up. But we need to imitate Zacchaeus who faced his problems with courage and wisdom. He identified the problems, thought of possible solutions and used what was around him to help him draw closer to the Lord. What things are preventing us from drawing close to the Lord? How can we remove these obstacles? What things around us can we use to help us? These could come in the form of a trusted RE teacher, a brother and sister in church, or our parents. Courage and wisdom are given by the Lord. It is up to us to utilize them in our pursuit of God.

Reflection:

1. How can we have an intense desire for God?
2. Zacchaeus was not afraid of losing decorum for the sake of Christ. Have you ever faced a similar situation? How did you feel?
3. What obstacles prevent you from seeing Christ? Have you overcome them? If so, how?
4. Do you know of anyone who lost a precious opportunity to believe in the Lord? Do you know of anyone who grabbed hold of the opportunity to believe and be baptized just in the nick of time?



Part 2

Zacchaeus' Repentance



A • He Received the Lord With Gladness

Passing by the sycamore tree, the Lord looked up and called out, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must stay at your house" (Lk 19:5). Notice how Zacchaeus responded to the Lord—"he made haste and came down, and he received the Lord joyfully" (19:6). Zacchaeus sets us a very good example in how we should respond to God's words. His actions (sought to see, ran, climbed, made

haste, received the Lord joyfully) demonstrate an eager and active response to God's words. How have we responded to God's words? Have we responded to God's calling and commandments in a positive and joyous way? Or are we like the rich young man who went away full of sorrow when told to go and sell all his possessions (Mt 19:16-22)?



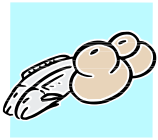
B • He Repented

Upon hearing the people's complaints that the Lord had gone to be a guest of a man who was a sinner, Zacchaeus responded immediately. Like the man who found treasures hidden in a field and sold all he had to buy that field (Mt 13:44-45), Zacchaeus willingly gave up all he possessed to obtain Christ. First, he gave away half of his possessions. This meant forsaking his wealth, comforts and old way of life to follow Jesus Christ. With the rest of his wealth, Zacchaeus promised to give back to anyone whom he had defrauded. The Old Testament law for restitution required returning the amount plus one-fifth (see Lev 5:16; Num 5:7). Zacchaeus went far beyond the law's requirements. His action demonstrates how much he wanted to repay the love of God. When we reimburse what we owe to others that is our duty. But when we give back more than what we owe it is because of Christ's love.

Zacchaeus demonstrated what true repentance is. "Repent" in Greek is *metanoia*, which means "a change of heart and life, a change of life direction." A person who repents turns from his old ways to wholeheartedly commit himself to doing the will of God. We need to repent of our past sins, transgressions in daily life, disbelief, and belief in false doctrines or religions. To show our repentance we need to be determined to change our ways and follow God's direction and commandments. Zacchaeus did not just check out the Lord, and then go on his way; he changed completely. Repentance to Zacchaeus meant a rejection of the old values on which his life had been based and a commitment to the values of Jesus Christ (Lk 3:8). He gave up what was important to him in exchange for what was important to the Lord (Phil 3:8).

Reflection:

1. What does repentance mean to you?
2. How did Zacchaeus demonstrate the meaning of true repentance?
3. What changes do you need to make in your life?



Part 3

Zacchaeus Was Chosen By the Lord

Out of the great multitude that had gathered that day, the Lord chose to be a guest only at Zacchaeus' house. What an honor and blessing this was! John 15:16 says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain" (Eph 1:4; Tit 3:5). Like Zacchaeus, we were once lost in sin and in the pleasures of the world, but Christ handpicked us and despite our unworthiness came to be a guest at our house. The Lord has come in to eat with us and we with Him (Rev 3:20). Today when we hear the calling of Jesus Christ we need to respond and invite Him into our hearts so that we can have fellowship with Him and be partakers of the salvation of God.

Reflection:

1. Have you welcomed the Lord into your heart?
2. What did it take for you to welcome Him?
3. What changes did you experience in your life afterwards?

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



Due to the nature of this lesson, the Check For Understanding questions can be found after each Bible Study section under the heading "Reflection".

LIFE APPLICATION



Opportunity Knocks

Today, we learned that besides God's choosing, another reason why Zacchaeus was able to receive salvation was because he knew how to take hold of the opportunity. In life we may have ample opportunities to do different things, but it is the Lord who provides us with these chances and gives us success in them (Gen 27:20). Ecclesiastes 9:11 says, "I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all." In the following exercise list some of the different kinds of opportunities in life and provide examples from the Bible.

Opportunity to learn (Eccl 9:10)

1. Moses had an opportunity to be instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Ac 7:19-22).
2. Paul was educated in the greatest academic centers and under the greatest teachers (Ac 22:3).
3. Daniel and his three friends learned the letters and the language of the Chaldeans (Dan 1:4, 17).
4. Peter was an uneducated, common fisherman but learned under the guidance of Christ (Ac 4:13).

Opportunity to marry (Gen 2:22)

1. Isaac met with a good opportunity from the Lord (Gen 24:12).
2. God gave Ruth an opportunity to meet Boaz (Ruth 2:1-6).

Opportunity to serve (Jn 9:4)

1. Mary seized the moment to prepare for Jesus Christ's burial (Jn 12:1-7).
2. The people offered for the building of the tabernacle (Ex 35:20-29).
3. A group of woman came to the Lord's tomb to anoint His body, but the Lord had already resurrected (Mk 16:1-6).
4. David wanted to build a temple, but had no opportunity (1 Chron 22:6-8).

Opportunity to believe in the Lord (Is 55:6)

1. The Ethiopian eunuch grabbed the chance to be baptized (Ac 8:27-36).
2. The criminal who was crucified along with the Lord Jesus believed (Lk 23:39-43).

Opportunity to do good (Prov 3:28; Gal 6:10)

1. The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37).
2. The Shunammite woman showed kindness to Elisha the prophet (2 Kgs 4:8-10).
3. Nabal refused to provide for King David (1 Sam 25:9-11).

Opportunity to listen to God's words (Eccl 5:1; Is 51:4)

1. Mary sat at the feet of the Lord to listen to His teachings (Lk 10:38-42).
2. Eutychus did not use the opportunity to listen to God's word attentively (Ac 20:9).

Opportunity to repent (2 Pet 3:9)

1. David repented immediately (2 Sam 12:1).
2. Although Jesus Christ gave Judah repeated opportunities to repent, he ignored

them all (Jn 13:10-11).

3. The rich man who had no pity on Lazarus while on earth repented too late (Lk 16:19-25).

Opportunity to preach the gospel (2 Tim 4:2)

1. Priscilla and Aquila took the opportunity to preach to Apollos (Ac 18:24-26).
2. Paul seized every opportunity to preach the gospel (Ac 25:23ff; 16:25-34; 17:16ff).
3. Jonah at first refused to preach to the city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1; 3:1-4).

Opportunity to be successful (Deut 8:17-18)

1. Isaac obeyed God's command by not going down to Egypt. God blessed him and made him a very rich man (Gen 26:12).
2. Peter had fished for an entire night and caught nothing. But upon casting his net on his right at the command of the Lord, he caught many fish (Jn 21:3-11).

Discussion Questions:

1. What is an opportunity?
2. Are there right or wrong opportunities?
3. Have you ever missed an opportunity?
4. What were your thoughts and what lessons did you learn from it?
5. Do you feel you have utilized the opportunities God has given to you?

Teaching Tips

First have students brainstorm on the different categories of opportunities that we have in life. You may wish to divide them into groups. Students can try to come up with examples of people who took hold of the opportunity as well as those who missed chances. Have students come together again for sharing and discussion.

Note to Teachers:

Before next week's lesson, make sure that students have collected all the completed surveys that should have been previously passed out to the church congregation. A more complete and accurate picture of the church situation can be obtained only when all the surveys are collected.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Matthew 10:4 says, Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Zacchaeus was such a person. With his endearing child-like faith and his intense earnestness to seek the Lord Jesus, he was welcomed into the arms of the Lord. If the Lord were to pass your way, what would you do?