

## Luke 19:1-10 | Zacchaeus

### InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

#### WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: Share one mediocre (*not* interesting) fact about yourself.

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

#### GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

#### INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

In chapter 5, we saw Jesus catch a huge number of fish at the wrong time of day in the wrong place, and then he invited fishermen to follow him and fish for people. Those men following Jesus saw him teach, heal, and free people from evil spirits, and then Jesus sent them out to do the same work. In chapter 15, we studied Jesus teaching parables about lost things. First a lost sheep, then a lost coin, and then a lost son. Jesus pointed to himself as the one who is like the shepherd who seeks and finds his sheep and the woman who seeks and finds her coin. Then in the parable about the son, there are really two sons who are lost, and the father does everything he can to get both his sons back into the family banquet with him.

Now as we enter chapter 19, Jesus has been traveling and teaching, and he is getting close to Jerusalem and the suffering and death he knows he will face. At this point, a large crowd is following him. Two definitions to note:

**Tax Collector** – The Roman Empire was occupying Israel at the time of Jesus, and they hired local Jewish people to collect their taxes. The local tax agent had to pay Rome a certain amount of money each year, but they were free to set the tax rates and keep whatever they collected beyond the amount they owed to Rome. This was how the tax collectors earned a living, yet many abused this freedom and collected so much extra that they made themselves rich. A chief tax collector was a tax agent who served as a middleman between local tax collectors and the Roman administrators.

**Sycamore-Fig Tree** – A large tree with a sturdy trunk, low branches, and large leaves. These trees grew so high and wide that they were prevented from growing in ancient Jewish towns.

You may want to reference Exodus 22:1 for more understanding (that the original readers of Luke would already have had).

### SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Luke 19:1-10 NIV

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.<sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.<sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.<sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."<sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

<sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

### DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. What might it have been like to be Zacchaeus in this town? Or to be a member of this town with Zacchaeus as your chief tax collector?
2. Why do you think Jesus singles out Zac and spends so much time with him?
3. Why does Jesus say "salvation" has come to Zac's house? What does Jesus want everyone to understand?
4. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Jesus is passing through, and people are everywhere. Zac is doing everything he can to see Jesus, but people are elbowing, stepping in front of him, keeping him out. But Jesus sees Zac and says they have to spend time together! Zac is a transformed man, ready to make things right with the people he has cheated, and this amount of wealth flowing back into the neighborhood would have transformed the whole community and all the relationships there. Jesus calls this beautiful scene "salvation."

Salvation is Jesus reconciling and restoring everyone and everything.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. Tell a story of a time you felt seen by Jesus, or describe what you want it to feel like for you to be seen by Jesus.
- B. In what ways has knowing Jesus changed the way you see yourself, your resources, or the people around you?
- C. To what extent do you stop and truly see people as Jesus sees them? How can your small group take action as a community right now to begin seeing someone the way Jesus sees them? Make a plan.

### **CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion:*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*