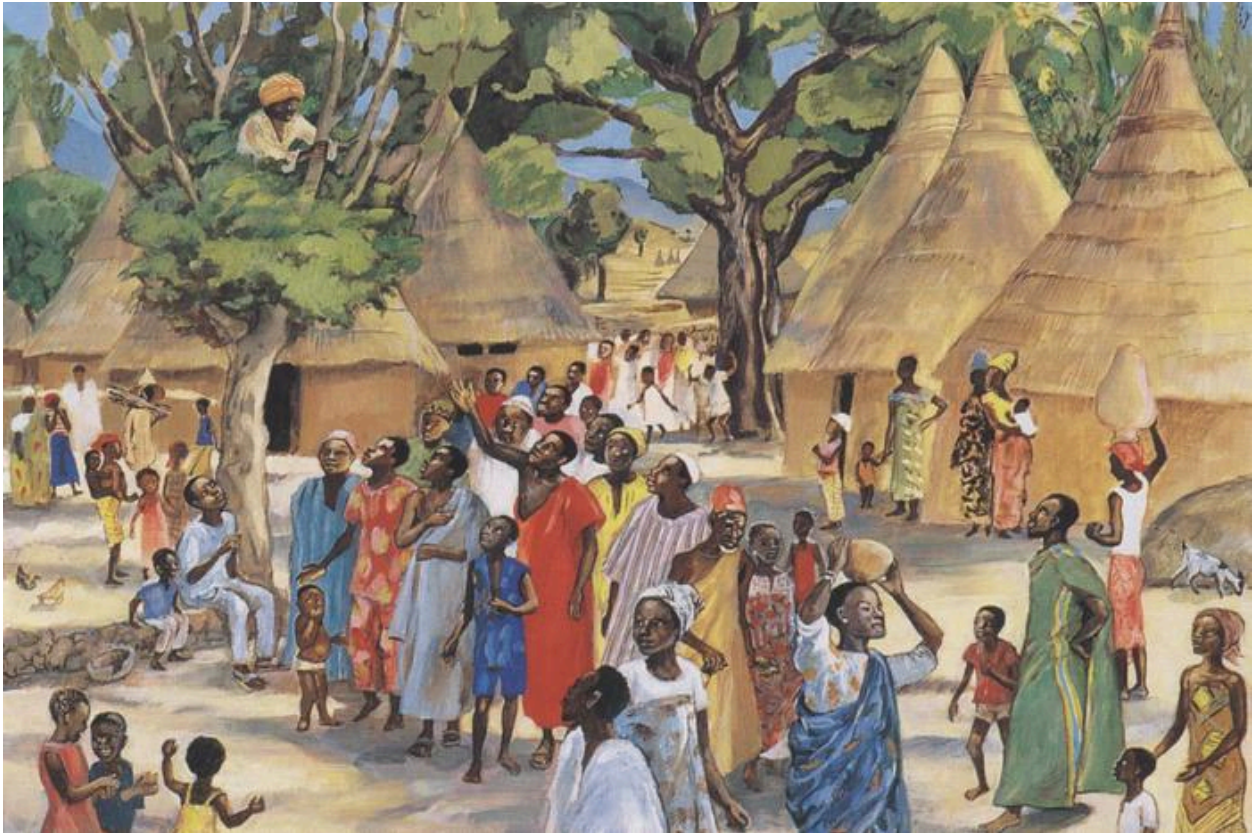


## Chapter 4

### Relationship with God: Whole Life Discipleship



Painting: Jesus Mafa (Cameroon), *Zacchaeus Welcomes Jesus*

Opening Question: Which areas of your life do you desire to invite Jesus to tend, grow, and cultivate?

#### DEBRIEF and OPENING

Share your memory verse (Luke 4:18-19) together. If folks have forgotten, remind them of grace and also of following through. Be gentle and firm!

How was last week's "Respond" step—practicing Lectio Divina?

Last week we saw that relationship with God involves living by the Spirit. This week, we see how living by the Spirit affects every aspect of how we live—not just our structured times of worship and fellowship, but also our work lives and free time. Our work, rest,

and play all fit into the larger picture of God's Kingdom. Every area of life is sacred. This means following Jesus in every aspect of life, that is, whole-life discipleship.

The Gospel of Luke records the story of a man whose meeting with Jesus resulted in a complete and amazing change in how he viewed life and how he did his work.

## HEAR THE WORD

*Context:* Luke 19 tells the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Though Jewish, Zacchaeus was a social outcast. Tax collectors were seen as betrayers of their own people because they chose to work for the Romans who occupied Israel as part of the Roman Empire. Tax collectors would often take extra profit for their own financial benefit. Jesus developed a reputation of spending time with tax collectors which Zacchaeus likely knew about.

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."

### OBSERVE (What does the passage say?)

1. Check to see that everyone understands the words in the passage and then have the group read the text aloud as the characters in the passage.

Then, let people read the text quietly to themselves. What questions does the text raise with the group?

2. Imagine that you are Zaccheus. Why do you climb the tree, and how do you feel when Jesus calls your name and invites himself to your house?

### INTERPRET (What does the passage mean?)

3. The text probably doesn't tell the entire conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus. It likely took place over a meal and gave Zacchaeus a chance to get to know Jesus. What was it about Jesus's words and actions that made Zacchaeus respond the way he did in verse 8?
4. Zacchaeus, by responding to Jesus' love and grace with a change of heart and behavior, has come into a relationship with Jesus that makes him an insider with God. Jesus' calling is to seek and save lost people like Zacchaeus by restoring them to their dignity not only as sons of Abraham but also as brothers and sisters of Jesus. Imagine that you are Zacchaeus. How would you have felt when Jesus said these words?
5. How did Zacchaeus' meeting with Jesus change his thoughts and actions about his work and his entire life?

### APPLY (What does the passage mean to me and my community?)

6. Zaccheus' issue was fear and greed. He used his accounting ability to oppress people rather than serve them. After his acceptance by Jesus, he turned and offered himself to God, even though it cost him.
  - a. What is your issue that needs offering to Jesus?
  - b. What sacrifices might you have to make in following Jesus in your work, now or later?
  - c. What cultural values of your own community/country will challenge you?

## RESPOND

### Spiritual Practice: Observing the Sabbath

Observing the Sabbath is an aspect of whole-life discipleship. It is an act of worship, trust, and surrender to the God who loves us. Just as Zacchaeus gladly welcomed Jesus into his home for a time set apart for fellowship, practicing Sabbath gives us an opportunity to welcome Jesus into our lives to rest in his presence.

Keeping the Sabbath doesn't have to last all day on Sunday or even be on Sunday. It can be as simple as taking a walk outside, reflecting God's creative spirit through painting or another art form, enjoying the company of a friend or family member, or taking special time to pray, read the Bible or other devotional books. Rest from work is central.

Q. What is one way that you can observe the Sabbath this week and when can you do it?

Share prayer requests for keeping the Sabbath and other needs and spend time praying for one another.

### Memory Verse: Luke 19:9-10

*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*

Memorize it in your heart language and English this week.

## CLOSING

Pray for one another as you have been impacted by today's study. Give God thanks for the gift of Sabbath.

Art Information: JESUS MAFA. Jesus among the teachers, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58801> [retrieved September 10, 2024]. Original source: <http://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr> (contact page: <https://www.librairie-emmanuel.fr/contact>)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Growing up as a professor's daughter, Diane Tyndall Nelsen had many opportunities to travel internationally. Through these experiences, she gained a love for making cross-cultural friendships. She currently serves among international graduate students through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and as International Student Ministry Assistant Director for Training. Her interactions with graduate students led her to explore the concept of whole-life discipleship. Diane holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Studio Art from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Divinity. Diane is passionate about seeing people come to reframe their lives in view of God's Story—His grand narrative of Scripture. Milka Hanook, a campus minister from Pakistan who works in Cleveland, Ohio, commented on the study.

## Facilitator's Notes

### Objectives of the Study

- To help participants realize that all of life is sacred—not just structured times of worship, Bible reading, small group, and church.
- To help participants identify how salvation—a relationship with Jesus—affects their work.
- To help participants think deeply about how Jesus' values either challenge or affirm the work values of their cultures.
- To help participants understand that the repentance that leads to salvation will necessarily result in behavior change.
- To help participants incorporate a practice of Sabbath into their lives.

### Notes on the Questions

Question 4: Jesus must have expressed love, compassion, and grace toward Zacchaeus. The salvation Jesus declares is something all Jews (sons of Abraham) desired. Zacchaeus has also been saved from the consequences of his sin. The "Son of Man" is a term Jesus used for himself.

Question 5: We've learned that shalom involves restoration. Not just restoration of the material, but also the ideas and attitudes of the heart. Justice falls into this category. God's perspective of shalom-seeking justice is restorative, not retributive. As living sacrifices, followers of Jesus are called to engage with matters of injustice. Just as William Wilberforce righted the communal wrong of the slave trade in England, Zacchaeus helped to right the personal wrong of his unjust taxation. We may be called to seek justice in other areas, but often, like Wilberforce and Zacchaeus, following this call may include personal and radical sacrifice. Some university students have felt led to support calls for higher pay for the people who serve them on campus: janitors and cafeteria workers for example. Others may be aware of unjust situations in their home countries which they can work to change.

Question 6: If he was giving half his possessions to the poor (there was no requirement to do this, only, according to Exodus 22:1, to pay back four times what was stolen, which Zaccheus did too), it means that his attitude toward possessions and how he wants to live has changed. Generosity can be expressed in many ways, not just with money, but with time and talents and openness to hurting people.