



Vision and Commitment 2018
A year to focus on discipleship

Every day, in
everything
&
everywhere

Discipleship Series Youth - Opening Up (Including)

Key message

Jesus takes time to be with an individual or small group, quite often going out of his way to do so. More often than not, these individuals were marginalised or despised by the rest of their society/community. Jesus befriends and identifies with them, and their lives are transformed by their meeting with him. As we seek to be disciples of Jesus we can't ignore his heart, love and passion for the individual, especially those on the side-lines or facing tough times. Who is that one person perhaps at school, college or work that we will intentionally chose to spend time with?

Key Scriptures

Luke 19:1-10

Resources

- Bible charades cards (Appendix 1) / Playdough
- Bibles - or print outs of the Scripture passages
- Pens/paper
- A device on which you can watch YouTube videos
- Sycamore leaf shaped pieces of card

Welcome

Use either of these two activities with your group to begin this session.

1. Play a game of Bible Charades. You could do this just for fun as a complete group, or split into two teams to make it more competitive.

Print cards (Appendix 1) with various well-known Bible stories on them or download the Bible Charades app on to your phone. One at a time, ask each group member to stand in front of the group, show them a Bible story from one of the slips of paper (or play the game on the phone), and then ask them to act it out, charades style, for the group. If you are playing in teams you could allow a set time limit and see how many the team can guess correctly before time is up.





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As an alternative to charades, you could try modelling the story titles from Playdough instead of acting!

2. Discuss

Name one person that you would most like to have dinner with and why?

And who would be the last person on your party invitation list?

(It could be someone famous, someone from history, someone in your community/family, or a fictional character.)

Word

a. Read Luke 19:1-10:

'As Jesus was passing through Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus, one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business (and, of course, a very rich man), tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree beside the road, to watch from there.

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name! "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick! Come down! For I am going to be a guest in your home today!"

Zacchaeus hurriedly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the crowds were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "Sir, from now on I will give half my wealth to the poor, and if I find I have overcharged anyone on his taxes, I will penalize myself by giving him back four times as much!"

Jesus told him, "This shows that salvation has come to this home today. This man was one of the lost sons of Abraham, and I, the Messiah, have come to search for and to save such souls as his." (TLB)

b. This short animation on YouTube gives a fun overview of the story of Zacchaeus:

Bibletoons Zacchaeus (3 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EU4mHfKtLBU>

c. Use any of the following thoughts as you find helpful to further unpack these Scriptures with your group.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and a dishonest one at that. The people in his community hated him; it seems he was collecting their taxes with no thought for their individual welfare, and keeping some of the money for himself. He was getting very rich. Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to town and desperately wanted to see him, but the crowds did not make way for him as they would usually do for a rich and powerful person. So he ran ahead of the crowd (rich people did not run in public!) and climbed up the sycamore tree





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to hide in its large leaves, perhaps hoping no one would see him (rich people did not climb trees!).

But Jesus spotted Zacchaeus hiding in the tree and invited himself to his house for tea. The people were not happy that Jesus did this. The hostility they felt towards Zacchaeus was then turned toward Jesus. Inviting himself to the tax-collector's home meant an offer of forgiveness, acceptance and a fresh start. Jesus loved Zacchaeus, even though he was dishonest and ostracized. Jesus saw past Zacchaeus' wrong-doings and into his heart. The Bible doesn't record the conversation that took place between Jesus and Zacchaeus over dinner but at the end of their time together Zacchaeus was a changed man. He stopped cheating others, paid back all that he owed and, most importantly, became a follower of Jesus.

Jesus had a pattern in his ministry of supporting outsiders, whether their exclusion was based on their health, their gender, their race or their job, or their past mistakes. He often deliberately went out of his way to help these people. But this usually didn't go down too well with many of the people and leaders in that community. We read that when Zacchaeus was accepted by Jesus that very acceptance was treated by the crowds as evidence against Jesus rather than evidence in favour of this tax collector. In every society, certain groups of people are considered 'untouchable'. We should not give in to the social pressure to avoid these people. Jesus loves them and they need to hear his Good news.

d. Use either of the following activities with your group as you find appropriate:

i. Split into pairs and improvise the conversation that Jesus had with Zacchaeus over dinner. What do you discover/learn from this exercise?

ii. Group Discussion:

- Describe how Zacchaeus must have felt when Jesus said he was coming to his house.
- If we were part of that crowd of people, what would we have been muttering when Jesus went home with Zacchaeus?
- In the time of Jesus, what groups of people were marginalised (e.g. Lepers, Gentiles, Women, sinners, tax collectors, people with illness/disabilities)? Can you think of specific stories from the Bible that show Jesus interacting with people like these?
- List all the specific times that Jesus met with someone and turned their life around.
- What groups of people are marginalised in our society today? Do you personally know any of these people?





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Action

1. Share the following information with your group as a great example of compassion and love for others in action:

The Salvation Army prepares to welcome a refugee family
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PfvWwH3VS4

Discuss: Can you think of local examples of other people in your community that model this same compassion?

2. Split into smaller groups and ask participants to think of some scenarios that would be a modern-day version of Zacchaeus' story. Consider: who are the people in your community/school/work place that others shun? What would Jesus say and do if he were to turn up there? Ask each small group to prepare a short drama sketch of their scenario and then perform it to the rest of the group.

Prayer

'The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost.'
(Luke 19:10 CEV)

This verse outlines Jesus' whole mission on earth and, as his disciples, it should also be ours. We have seen that Jesus is concerned not just with the big crowds of people, but with love and compassion for every individual with whom he comes into contact. Our mission is to show Jesus' love to those who we meet, day by day, especially those who others may reject. One person at a time, we can make a difference!

Read your group this well-known story:

The Story of the Starfish

A father and his son were walking along a deserted beach after a particularly high tide had washed up thousands of starfish on to the sand. The boy started picking them up and throwing them back into the water one by one.

The father quizzed his son saying 'You can't possibly save them all, there are millions, you can't possibly make a difference.'

The boy smiled, bent down and picked up another starfish and as he threw it back into the sea, he replied, 'Made a difference to that one!'

Ask the group to prayerfully reflect on the following:





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Think of one person in your school/college/workplace/community that are shunned/marginalised in some way or who simply don't know Jesus yet. What would it cost you to befriend them? What would Jesus have you do in response to their need?

Place a large sheet of paper on the floor (you could cut this out in the shape of a sycamore leaf to tie in with Zacchaeus) and ask each person to write the name(s) of the person they are thinking about.

Gather around the paper in a large huddle and pray loudly, all at the same time, for the names/situations you have written down and your role in making a positive difference in that person life.

Either of the following songs may be suitable for your time of prayer and worship:

Until the Whole World Hears - Casting Crowns

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICxIWulmsDo>

We Could Change the World - Matt Redman

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZ2Jhy7_W8Y





Appendix 1

David and Goliath
Noah and the Ark
Adam and Eve
Joshua and the battle of Jericho
Jonah and the Whale
Daniel in the Lion's Den
Jesus feeds five thousand people
Jesus and Zacchaeus
Jesus heals Jairus' daughter
Jesus and the women at the well

