

looking beyond the surface

LUKE 19:1-10

THE QUESTION

What does Jesus want us to understand about how we see and treat others?

THE POINT

Jesus sees and pursues us, giving us great worth regardless of how others perceive us.

03

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

PEOPLE

No one has the right to define who we are—our true identity comes only from God.

LET'S start

QUESTION

When deciding if you like to do something, do you typically know quickly, or does it take you some time to form an opinion? Why or why not? Give the group an example.

CONNECT

Game: Which One?

Provide students with the following scenarios and ask them to decide which option they prefer. Direct them to move to the left side of the room for option one or the right side of the room for option two.

- A new bed or a new TV for your room
- Five hundred dollars for shopping right now or a thousand dollars when you graduate from high school
- The latest gaming system or the latest tablet
- The first two years of college paid for or a guaranteed five-dollar-per-hour raise at work
- Unlimited free snacks at a movie theater for the next year or a dozen donuts once a week for free for the following year
- Meet a family relative from two hundred years ago or meet a current celebrity
- To be able to only go to school for two days one week or to leave school thirty minutes early for an entire week
- A three-day pass for a theme park or tickets to the World Series

At the end of this time together, say, “Our values change our priorities. In today’s session, we will see just how much Jesus values us, no matter what others may think.”



DID YOU KNOW?

It takes just seven seconds for your brain to form an opinion about someone.¹

LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider the following:

ITEM 3: Engage students in the session and introduce the main idea by displaying the poster.



BIBLICAL SETTING

Before Jesus entered Jericho in this passage, we had previously seen Him traveling extensively, teaching about the kingdom of heaven, and performing miracles. Jericho would be the last major city Jesus visited before entering Jerusalem, where He would be arrested, crucified, and resurrected. The story of Zacchaeus is only found in Luke’s Gospel and carries on the theme of the good news spreading to outcasts such as the blind, lepers, and, in this passage, tax collectors. This story unpacks the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ—He looks beyond the surface and pursues the lost in desperate need of His grace.

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 19:10

LET’S look

LUKE 19:1-10

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.”

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.”

LET’S talk

JESUS SEES AND PURSUES // LUKE 19:1-6

THE POINT

Jesus sees and pursues us, giving us great worth regardless of how others perceive us.

CONTENT SUMMARY

In Luke 19:1, we see Jesus pass through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. Jericho is one of the oldest walled cities in the world and isn’t too far from the Jordan River (CSB Study Bible Notes). In the following verses, Luke gives us three specific facts about Zacchaeus: He was short, wealthy, and a chief tax collector. Two of these things are connected. Since Zacchaeus was a “chief” tax collector, this tells us he was in a supervisory role over other tax collectors. He was rich because tax collectors earned most of their income by charging people more than they owed in taxes. They were not people of high regard or good reputation. To see Jesus, Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree. It is believed these trees could grow to be thirty to forty feet tall (CSB Study Bible Notes). We don’t know how far Zacchaeus went up the tree, but it was far enough to see Jesus and look over the crowd.

APPLICATION TO STUDENTS

In verse five, we see Jesus “looked up” at Zacchaeus and spoke to him. Jesus saw and pursued a wealthy, chief tax collector. This is another instance of Jesus going outside of the cultural norm to teach us about the kingdom of God. Jesus did not see a tax collector; He saw an image bearer of God. **In a culture filled with labels, Jesus sees and pursues us for who we are—a loved image bearer of great worth.** This is an essential truth, because there may be days we look in the mirror and don’t like what we see. We live in a “who’s who” world bombarded with messages of status or importance. In this passage, Jesus took it a step further by not only seeing Zacchaeus but also telling him He needed to come to his house. No matter what you do or don’t do, it never changes your value to God.



Why do you believe this passage describes important details of Zacchaeus’s life?



Why do you think we have the tendency to categorize and label people? What does this tell us about how we see people?



How does knowing how God sees us change how we should see and treat others?



LET'S talk

HOW OTHERS PERCEIVE US // LUKE 19:7-8

› CONTENT SUMMARY

In verse 7, we read how the surrounding people reacted to Jesus's interaction with Zacchaeus. The passage tells us that they complained about Jesus going to a sinner's house. Some may have been excited to be around Jesus, and then this interaction changed their excitement. Why? Because people saw Zacchaeus as society saw him. They could not imagine what Jesus would want to do with him, much less go to his house. One commentary puts it this way: "The crowd seems to think that holiness means separating from sinners and shunning them. They seem to think that if Jesus were really a prophet or a rabbi, then he should have nothing to do with the likes of Zacchaeus, a known sinner" (*Exalting Jesus in Luke Commentary*). Zacchaeus knew his reputation among the people, yet he still wanted to connect with Jesus. Connecting with Jesus changed him, and connecting with Jesus changes us!

› APPLICATION TO STUDENTS

It's important to note an implication in this passage: When we feel someone is unworthy of God, it's an insult to that person and to God. Who are we to determine a person's worth? We also see in this passage that a potentially grumbling crowd can be dangerous; another example of this would be the Israelites in the wilderness (*Exalting Jesus in Luke Commentary*). **A crucial truth to remember in this passage is that fellowship with Jesus is not always well-received.** The same may be true in our lives—we may lose friendships or reputation when saying yes to Jesus. At minimum, it may not make sense to those around us. But it is incredibly worth it to surrender to Jesus. What should have been received well by observers was shunned. Jesus changed Zacchaeus on this day, as evidenced in verse eight. An appropriate, God-glorifying response of the crowd to Zacchaeus's interaction with Jesus would have been joy over his repentance.



What does Jesus's pursuit of Zacchaeus tell us about God?



Why are we often driven by what others think about us?



How does coming to Jesus change things?



LET'S talk

OUR TRUE WORTH // LUKE 19:9-10

› CONTENT SUMMARY

In verse 5, Jesus said that it was necessary for Him to come to Zacchaeus's house. These verses reveal to us why. Zacchaeus was a changed man, as evident in his words and actions in verse 8. Jesus affirms this when He tells the people that "salvation has come to this house." This passage is a beautiful reminder of why Jesus came and how much we are loved and valued by Him. Verse 10 (this week's memory verse) tells us that Jesus, the Son of Man, came to seek and save the lost. He came for people just like Zacchaeus. He came for you and me. We are in desperate need of saving, and Jesus is the remedy. When we surrender our lives to Him, it give us new meaning and purpose.

› APPLICATION TO STUDENTS

There was not a single moment in this passage where Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and said, "Hey you, tax collector." Jesus doesn't look at us and think about us being cheaters because we were dishonest on a test, terrible people because we got a speeding ticket, or lazy because we overslept our alarm. Why? **Our value is not in what we do but who we belong to.** Jesus sees and pursues us, giving us great worth regardless of how others perceive us. We can be comforted and assured that our worth does not come from winning state championships or having the best grade-point average. Our worth is in the fact that Jesus calls us His. When Jesus draws near to us, we need to make ourselves available to Him. Why? Because "lost people are people who cannot find their way to God because of sin. They have lost their way, and they are lost to God. But the Father sent his Son to find them—not only to seek them but also to rescue them and bring them back safely home" (*Exalting Jesus in Luke Commentary*).



How would you describe to a friend his or her need for Jesus?



How are you making room for Jesus in your life?



What does Jesus coming to us show about Him?



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

No one has the right to define who we are—our true identity comes only from God.

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LET'S go

Bible Meets Life

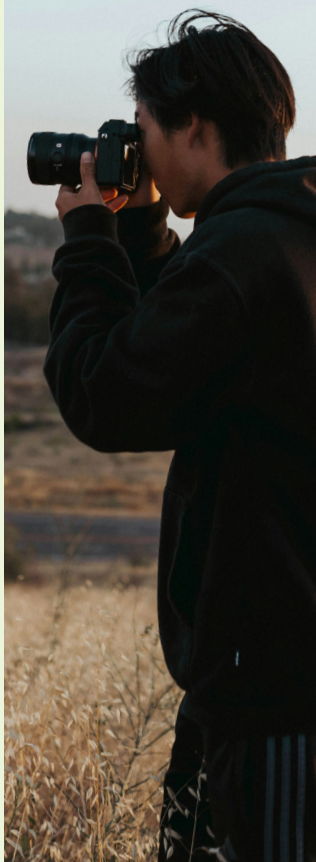
THE QUESTION ➤ What does Jesus want us to understand about how we see and treat others?

THE POINT ➤ Jesus sees and pursues us, giving us great worth regardless of how others perceive us.

No one has the right to define who we are—our true identity comes only from God. In today's session, we learned just how much Jesus values us, regardless of what others may think. This understanding is crucial in a society often shaped by false perceptions and opinions. Our grasp of who Jesus says we are influences how we see and treat other people. The Greatest Commandment (Matt. 22:37-38) reinforces this by stating that our wholehearted love for God leads us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

MOVING forward

Take a moment this week to reflect on how you perceive others. When you first meet someone, do you focus on what you consider to be his or her "flaws"? For example, if you encountered Zacchaeus, would you view him as a corrupt tax collector or as an image bearer of God? Remember, the way we see others says a lot about how we view God.



MEMORY verse

This week, let's memorize
Luke 19:10 together:

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

MAIN TAKEAWAY

What is one thing you took away from today's session?

Think about this:
How God sees you—as a loved child of God—is what matters most. People do not define your worth.