

Luke 19:1-10

TOPIC: Known by name

OBJECTIVE: Teens will discover how much Jesus loves the despised and disrespected people of this world and how—without fearing what others may think of them—they can be like Jesus to unpopular young people.

BACKGROUND/OVERVIEW: Jesus was getting so popular that everywhere he went people were fighting to get close. Days earlier he had fed 5,000 people. When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming, he was desperate to meet him. The Bible says that Zacchaeus was too short to see over the rest of the people surrounding Jesus. Determined to see Jesus, Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up in a tree.

GAME/ICEBREAKER: **Gird your loins**

Items needed:

- Four sheets to use as skirts.

Divide into two teams for a relay race from one end of a very large room to another. Have the first and second runner for each team wrap the sheet around his waist like a skirt—they'll be running in these. Make sure the skirts are long enough that they'll have trouble running (a foot past their knees is a good length.) At the starting line the first person from each team should stand on a chair and put his hand above his eyes, as though looking for Jesus. When you say, "go," that person should run to the designated point at the other side and then back to the start. While the first person is running, the second teen in line should stand on the chair and get ready to run. When the first runner returns to the starting point, he should tag the second runner and give his skirt to the third runner. This should continue until all participants have finished. The first team to finish wins.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS:

- How did you feel running in these long skirts?
- What would you think if we took a video of this relay and posted it on YouTube.com with your name on it?
- How much do you worry about what people think or say about you?
- Who are the despised and disrespected people in your school who people laugh at?

TRANSITION:

Say—

The game we just played illustrates how hard it was for Zacchaeus to run as far and as fast as he did and how motivated he must have been. He had to "gird his loins," meaning he had to pull up his skirt between his legs, tuck it into his belt, and run a

great distance to get in front of the crowd so that he could have time to climb a tree and get a glimpse of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:1-10

Ask some teens to read the passage aloud.

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

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

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

⁸ 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."

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

STUDY QUESTIONS:

- Who was Zacchaeus, and why did people dislike him?
- What do you think motivated Zacchaeus to get a look at Jesus?
- How do you think Zacchaeus must have felt when Jesus called out his name and invited himself to dinner at Zacchaeus' house?
- When Jesus talked to Zacchaeus, what was the reaction of the religious people towards Jesus?
- What was Jesus' response to those men and Zacchaeus, and how do you think it must have made Zacchaeus feel?

TALKING POINTS:

Say—

The life of a short sinner

Zacchaeus was short, despised, and rich. He got his revenge for all the bad treatment he received from the popular crowd by collecting taxes for the hated Roman government. He had money, power, possessions—everything except friends and peace in his heart. Something motivated Zacchaeus to get a look at Jesus when he came to town. You heard the story. He got more than he expected—Zach got a face-to-face moment

with Jesus. If you'd been there that day, would it have surprised you that Jesus picked this guy out of the crowd?

The reaction of the religious people

The comments of Jesus' followers show us they didn't place much value in Zacchaeus. To religious people Zacchaeus was a well-known sinner. How often are church people judgmental? There are many unpopular young people—often they don't dress or act like the popular kids, and sometimes they are hostile. But we need to remember that they are likely looking for love, and they won't get any from us if we judge them. If Jesus were to show up in your school this week, would you be surprised to see which teens he would spend time with?

The interaction with Jesus

We can learn a lot by watching Jesus with Zacchaeus. Jesus knew his name and used it to call him down from the tree. He made eye contact with Zach and spoke directly to him. Jesus used his need for dinner as an opportunity to treat Zacchaeus like a friend. Spending time with Jesus and feeling loved spurred Zacchaeus to admit his theft and corruption and make a promise to repay the people he had swindled and invest his money in helping people. Meeting Jesus set him free and changed his life. Who in your school or neighborhood needs to see and experience Jesus' love? Are you afraid to spend time with these people because of how your friends treat losers? When you follow Jesus he takes you to people he loves, and sometimes those people may seem like the lowest of the low. Are you willing to follow Jesus to the people he wants you to love?

REAL-LIFE CONNECTION: Jesus in your school

Ask—

- What opportunities is God giving you to connect with teens who are despised and disrespected?
- Visualize walking through your school with Jesus. What would you want him to see? Where would you take him? Where would he take you?
- Picture yourself standing with Jesus and someone from your school who is less popular than you are. Do you feel Jesus' love? Isn't he equally generous to both of you? Appearance, achievement, talent, money, and friends don't influence what Jesus thinks of you or your new friend. You're loved equally because your need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God is just the same.
- Walk through your school this week with Jesus (in Spirit) looking for the people who need God's love.

MEDIA: Bullies today

Check out the ABC News Report with Diane Sawyer on teen bullying (9:08). This video can be found on www.youtube.com. Use the search words *Diane Sawyer Bullying*. A young teen committed suicide after being teased and rejected by his classmates. This powerful story illustrates what happens when teens ridicule unpopular kids instead of showing them Christ's love. Use this video at the end of the Talking Points and emphasize that what happened to Zachaeus is still happening today in every school. We can apply the lessons of Jesus to the people in our school to save the lives of people.