

Joyous Faith

Teaching Tips

May 29, 2016

Bible Study Guide 13

Words You Should Know

A. Press (Luke 19:3) *ochlos* (Gk.)—A throng of people, a disorganized crowd



B. Lost (v. 10) *apollumi* (Gk.)—To be perished; ruined, destroyed, rendered useless.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Getting Back On Track. Everybody experiences a loss of direction in their lives and an inability to make necessary changes and new plans. How can they remedy this loss of direction? After Zacchaeus gladly welcomed Jesus with great faith and repentance, Jesus declared that His own mission was to seek and save the lost.

A. Pray for clarity and application, for you and your students.

B. Thoroughly study the companion lesson in the *Precepts for Living*® Personal Study Guide.

C. Read the Focal Verses in multiple translations.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Introduce today's lesson title and Aim for Change. Pray for changed hearts.

B. Have students read the Keep in Mind verse and In Focus story.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Have students read the Focal Verses (aloud or silently), encouraging them to keep in mind the information presented in Background and The People, Places, and Times.

B. Discuss The People, Places and Times; Background; In Depth; and Search the Scriptures sections.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. As a class, consider the questions in Discuss the Meaning.

B. Read Lesson in Our Society and discuss ways that we see the effects of lack of faith in our churches and individual lives.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Read Make It Happen and re-read the Aim for Change aloud.

B. Pray with students that they will trust God with the circumstances they listed at the beginning of class.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Joyous Faith

Song: "I Still Have Joy"

Devotional Reading: [Isaiah 44:23–26](#)



Bible Background • [LUKE 19:1–10](#)



Printed Text • [LUKE 19:1–10](#) | Devotional Reading • [ISAIAH 44:23–26](#)



Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: REMEMBER the details of the encounter of Zacchaeus with Jesus; BELIEVE that they can make necessary dramatic changes in their lives with God's help; and REPENT of their shortcomings and then to commit to living godly lives.



In Focus

"What are you doing for lunch?"

Tiana clicked on the email from Yazmin, the new office clerk. Typing rapidly, she responded, "Nothing. Want to go somewhere to grab a bite?"

Yazmin fired back a quick "OK," and Tiana responded with a time to meet at the elevator.

For Tiana, the lunch invite was a pleasant surprise. She had been training Yazmin for four months, but the younger co-worker had brushed aside offers to eat lunch together since Tiana had shared that she played in a praise and worship band. Back then, Tiana was clearly uncomfortable talking about religion or faith.

Today, determined to keep the lunch on a light note, Tiana thought about some safe topics they could talk about. She had plenty of entertaining stories about her many nieces and nephews, so she'd likely mention those. Also, since Yazmin had once mentioned she was considering an online degree program, Tiana could share her experience with that.

Grabbing her purse, Tiana walked to the elevator just as Yazmin was holding the door open. Before the doors closed, Yazmin asked, "So Tiana, when is your next gig?"

The "Zacchaeuses" of the world are waiting to meet Jesus. We play a role in that introduction when we live our faith joyously.

Keep in Mind

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)).



Focal Verses

KJV

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

NLT

1 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.

2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich.

3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd.

4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.

7 But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.

The People, Places, and Times

Sycamore tree. A type of fig tree, this variety of tree was known for its distinctive branches, leaves, and fruit. Plentiful in both Old Testament and New Testament times, it boasted branches strong enough for a person to climb and broad leaves that provided ample shade along the many roads where it was planted. Yielding fruit a few times a year, the tree provided a reliable source of food for the poor and offered a cheaper source of wood than other tree varieties, such as cedar.

Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a rich Jew who worked as a high-level tax collector, or publican. Because of his position, he could extort excessive taxes from other Jews. The source of his wealth may have been money collected from the poor. He proved meeting Jesus was a life-changing event by volunteering to give half of his goods to the poor and restore the fortunes of people he may have falsely accused. “Jesus responded, ‘Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham’” ([Luke 19:9, NLT](#)).

Background

The Israelites and Jews were expected to love their neighbors and strangers as they loved themselves ([Leviticus 19:18](#), [Matthew 5:43](#); [Luke 10:25–37](#)). Thus, in both Old and New Testament times, hospitality was a way of life, practiced and extended to friends and family. However, in the broadest interpretation of the term, it also conveyed showing hospitality to strangers, treating them as guests of honor, and meeting their basic needs for a meal, foot bath, place to rest or sleep, or protection from hostile residents ([Genesis 19:1–11](#)). Entertainment could also be provided, but varied based on the host’s financial resources. Under normal circumstances, the homeowner extended invitations.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He accepted hospitality from His disciples (e.g., [Matthew 8:14](#)), Pharisees ([Luke 7:36](#)), and known “sinners” (i.e., [Matthew 9:9–11](#)). In today’s lesson, however, Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus’ home. Given hospitality mores then, refusal was not an option. Furthermore, as a rich man, Zacchaeus would have had the resources to host Jesus at a moment’s notice.

On the other hand, as a wealthy person and sinner, Zacchaeus may have had wiggle room for refusing to host Jesus. None of these factors appear to have influenced him. Rather, from his joyous response, Zacchaeus was clearly delighted to be called and chosen to host Jesus. That acceptance paved the way for Zacchaeus to accept a greater invitation—salvation—and sparked his public declaration to make restitution for past sins.

At-A-Glance

1. Against All Odds ([Luke 19:1–4](#))
2. Call and Response (vv. 5–6)
3. Public Declarations (vv. 7–10)

In Depth

1. Against All Odds ([Luke 19:1–4](#))

Anyone can change, and getting back on track after a loss of direction is possible—with God’s help. Those encouraging facts undergird the story of Zacchaeus’ conversion. Zacchaeus was rich yet despised because of his occupation and the way he conducted business affairs. Nonetheless, something within him prompted a desire to “see Jesus who he was” (v. 3, KJV).

Zacchaeus’ spiritual interest would have to overcome three major obstacles: 1) a reputation as a sinner; 2) the crowd; and 3) his height. Against these odds, he found a way to satisfy his curiosity and was rewarded with a personal meeting with Jesus.

Opposition abounds for everyone seeking a change of spiritual direction. Multiple obstacles stand in the path of righteousness. Zacchaeus was determined to overcome every obstacle that thwarts converting to Christianity and growing in Christ. Zacchaeus was not satisfied with a mere glimpse of Jesus, and no one seeking to make necessary life changes should be either.

2. Call and Response (vv. 5–6)

Does God know where we are any given moment? Can He reach us, even when others can't due to sin, irreconcilable differences, or distance? Will God notice our effort to change, as Jesus noticed Zacchaeus (and as the father did his son's in the parable of the prodigal son, [Luke 15:11–32](#))? Today's passage answers each of these questions with a resounding yes.

Rather than simply walk under the tree and continue His journey, Jesus looked up (v. 5). His was a divine call to a sinner, inviting Zacchaeus on a faith journey. In response, "Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy" (v. 6, NLT).

3. Public Declarations (vv. 7–10)

Zacchaeus repented of his sin and volunteered to make amends. His character and attitude contrast with those of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the parable Jesus told in [Luke 18:9–14](#). The Pharisee's self-righteousness prevented him from seeing his need to get back on track spiritually. The tax collector humbled himself before God, admitting his faults, and was justified. Conversely, Zacchaeus' public declaration revealed his gratitude for Jesus' intervention in his life and also his joy of salvation. These, in turn, provided a forum for Jesus to declare His own mission—to seek and save the lost (v. 10). As Christians, we showcase Jesus' mission by our joyous faith.

Sin separates us from God. Knowing this, many people delay making a faith decision because they want to "clean up" their lives first, but this misunderstands the Scriptures. According to [1 John 4:19](#), "We love him, because he first loved us." Because He loves us, we can pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" ([Psalm 51:10, KJV](#)). We then can get back on track, publicly declaring our joyous faith ([Romans 10:10](#)).

Search the Scriptures

1. Why did Zacchaeus pick that particular sycamore tree, and what does it say about his knowledge of Jesus' activities ([Luke 19:4](#))?
2. How did Jesus respond to Zacchaeus' public declaration act of repentance (vv. 8–10)?

Discuss the Meaning

Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus. At the time, he was a sinner, yet the inability to make necessary changes and new plans often plagues Christians. Sometimes as Christians, we must make dramatic changes with God's help to get back on track spiritually. How can Zacchaeus' example help you make needed changes?

Lesson in Our Society

Ascertaining whether someone is interested in the Gospel is not always easy. However, their actions may speak louder than their words. If someone is taking a risk to speak with us regarding our faith, then it indicates they are curious about our Savior—even if they won't come to church with us. Zacchaeus was in a tree—not in the temple. That fact provides ample support for openly sharing our faith wherever we find spiritual seekers.

Make It Happen

The inability to make necessary changes and new plans plagues sinners and Christians alike. Ask God for the courage and help to make a dramatic change in a specific area. Then take a specific step—apologize to a loved one, make arrangements to repay a debt, enroll in an addiction recovery program, return to Bible study, etc.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

Luke 19:1–10

This story of the rich, short Zacchaeus is unique to Luke; it does not occur in any of the other Gospels. It serves Luke's purposes well to have it in his Gospel, which often takes sides with the poor against the rich. In the previous chapter, Jesus had an encounter with a rich young ruler who, when told to sell everything he has to follow Jesus, walked away sad (18:18–27). Jesus concluded that brief dialogue saying, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" (18:24, NLT). As if to qualify that episode, Luke now talks about a rich man who actually received salvation. Luke thus shows that despite his critique of wealth, rich people who help people are among the outcasts whom Jesus came to save. Tradition has it that Zacchaeus—saved on this day—went on to become the first bishop of Caesarea in Palestine.

The story takes place toward the end of Jesus' life on earth—at the end of Luke's travel narratives. Jesus was on His final trip to Jerusalem, reaching the city by the end of this chapter, where He would be crucified in the following few days. At the close of the preceding chapter, as He drew near Jericho, Jesus had healed the blind Bartimaeus (18:35–43; cf. [Matthew 20:29–34](#), [Mark 10:46–52](#)). He passed through Jericho, even though there were many other ways—probably just to meet Zacchaeus, as this is the only incident recorded in the city. Jericho itself was a rich city located about seventeen miles from Jerusalem and six miles from the Jordan River. It was known for its palms and balsam, but it was also located on a significant trade route from Perea to Judaea and Egypt. The balm that came from Gilead on the other side of the Jordan was transported through Jericho into all parts of the world. Thus, Jericho was an important center of trade. It had an important toll-house and Zacchaeus was at the head of Jericho's customs department. We come to this story understanding two important facts: (1) Jesus is a friend of tax collectors and sinners ([Luke 5:30](#), [7:34](#)), even having a former publican among His disciples ([Matthew 9:9](#); [Luke 5:27–32](#)) and (2) it is very hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God ([Luke 18:24–25](#)).

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

The first verse serves as a connector, providing the context of Zacchaeus' story and linking it with what happened in the preceding chapter where Jesus healed the blind man, Bartimaeus, just outside Jericho. Now He has gone into the city and is passing through. He is still surrounded by the entourage of His disciples and the large crowds who have been following Him, as well as those who had sought to prevent Bartimaeus from seeing Jesus (18:39). In the city lived a wealthy tax collector named Zacchaeus, the Greek form of a Hebrew name Zakkay (or Zaccai—an abbreviation of Zacharia), which means in the abbreviated form "pure" or "innocent." The full form means "The Lord has remembered." At the beginning of the story, Zacchaeus is anything but pure and innocent. As a Jewish tax collector, he was a betrayer of his own people. Tax collectors were hated and marginalized by their people, not only because taxes are generally uncomfortable, but also because the tax collectors served the Roman government that colonized them. In addition, tax collectors made their profit through extortion, as they were permitted to collect more than the Romans exacted and keep the surplus. That may explain John the Baptist's admonition to the tax collectors who asked how they could get right with God. He told them to collect no more than what is appointed for them ([Luke 3:13](#)). Thus, generally, if you were a rich tax collector, you were a thief. Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector, and he is unscrupulous just like other tax collectors.

But Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus—who He was. We do not know how Zacchaeus came to know about Jesus. Maybe he had heard the news about the miracles, or just wondered who this crowd-pulling Rabbi was. Had he heard that a publican like himself was among the chosen disciples of the Teacher whom the people were receiving as the Son of David? Had someone told him of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican? Had the fame of the miracle at the entrance into Jericho made him eager to see the Miracle Worker? Further, we are not told why Zacchaeus made the effort to see who Jesus was. Possibly he was really looking to change his life. Maybe he was tired of being

marginalized and was trying to make things right by giving away half of his possessions to the poor and restoring fourfold to anyone he had cheated. Or was he trying to get his life in right order, and found it hard to imagine how he could maintain his style of living if he did that? Whatever his condition, because he was a thieving tax collector, Jesus had come to seek the lost like him.

Zacchaeus was unable to see Jesus over the crowd because he was too short. Despite his wealth and political power, he could not penetrate the crowd. Just like in the preceding chapter, the crowd became a barrier to someone who wanted to see Jesus. Part of the problem was that as a tax collector, he was a social outcast. He would not freely mingle with the multitudes, especially where he was known. In the eyes of his community, Zacchaeus' smallness was not just physical, but moral as well. He sought to gain some elevation to help him see Jesus. Thus, he ran before the crowd, and in spite of the dignity that went with his prestigious position in society, he dismissed the shame and, in a childlike manner, climbed a sycamore fig. Only mentioned here in the Scriptures, it was a large oak-like evergreen tree that was easy to climb. It is not mentioned whether this was Zacchaeus' way of hiding as well. Was he hoping not to be noticed by Jesus or the crowd? Of course, a man of his status would not have wanted to be seen in a tree.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

The good thing is that Jesus knew he was in the tree, knew his name. We are not told how He knew; it may have been supernatural knowledge (as in the case of Nathanael, [John 1:47](#)), but He may also have heard it from the people around. There is no reason to assume that the other people did not see Zacchaeus in the tree. Jesus called him to "hurry and come down." There was no need to waste time. He had been seeking to see Jesus, but here, it was Jesus looking at him and calling him down. Jesus takes the greater initiative to befriend another tax collector here when He invites Himself to Zacchaeus' house, "for today, I must stay at your house." Here, the story changes. The one who was seeking becomes the one sought, even though he is also shunned by society. As seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jericho was among the cities devoted to the priests in Jesus' time (it wasn't one originally given to the Levites in Moses' time but later during the Greco-Roman period, [Luke 10:30–31](#)). Therefore, there may have been many priests' houses in the city where Jesus could have stayed, but instead, He chose to stay with a tax collector loathed by the Jews. Zacchaeus did as he was told, and he welcomed Jesus to his house joyfully. Having Jesus in his house was significant as it symbolized forgiveness. The whole incident turns out to be an honor that Zacchaeus could not have expected. John Nolland adds that "The language of welcome evokes that of the mission charges (10:8–9) and its import is underlined in the language of joy for the kingdom of God has come to this man, and he has embraced it. [Thus] he is no longer the outsider he was in vv. 3–4."

At this point, the crowd begins to grumble that Jesus is again making Himself the guest of "sinners." In Luke's words, "all the people who saw this began to murmur." "All" here might suggest that not only the Pharisees murmured, but even some of the other Jews and Gentiles who were present. In addition, this was a priestly city, which may have made it religiously segmented. Whatever the case, this murmuring may be expected, because in their minds, the tax collector was a sinner (and Zacchaeus chief among them) who should be shunned by the moral majority; to stay in such a sinner's house was tantamount to sharing in his sin. In general, it was believed that to accept hospitality from someone whose wealth was acquired in dubious ways is to become a partner in their crimes. In being the Good Shepherd, Jesus put Himself in questionable circumstances.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Zacchaeus is here speaking to Jesus, but he seems to be responding to the grumbling crowd. (Jesus, then, in turn addresses the crowd in the following verse.) He goes on to state, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the

poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” His statement suggests that he was publicly repenting of his bad past. This was his grateful response to the initiative that Jesus took to see him. However, it is also Zacchaeus’ declaration to assure the crowd that he is now a changed person. He was not a sinner anymore, and therefore, the accusations against Jesus lodging with a sinner were not valid.

His promise to give away half his riches and pay back fourfold to all he defrauded is amazing. The Law did not require the repentant sinner to give half his property to the poor, nor restore fourfold, except in the case of theft. Where a person voluntarily confessed, the law required restitution of only a fifth above the principle. Roman law required fourfold restitution only under certain circumstances, like in a wrongful accusation in court. However, Zacchaeus was so touched by the events of the day that he promises a degree of restitution far beyond normal. While some may read the promises in a futuristic sense, that he will give away his property, others read it in the present tense—suggesting that Zacchaeus is already giving away his property to the poor. Such a reading, however, downplays the central theme of the story, that salvation is available even to the outcast who responds to God’s call (v. 9). Instead of being a salvation story, it becomes a vindication story, which does not sit well with the rest of the story.

Jesus responds to Zacchaeus, “Today, salvation has come to this house.” However, the following statement sounds like Jesus was addressing the crowd about Zacchaeus: “For he too is a son of Abraham.” The mention of Zacchaeus’ house—or household—is in line with Luke’s motif of the salvation of households in Acts (10:2, 11:14, 16:15, 31, 18:8). With that motif, Luke implies that the members of the household were saved too. The wider significance of this saying is that this house which was shunned as a sinner’s house has now been transformed. Further, this transformation will not happen in the future—it has already happened, because Zacchaeus was a Jew and a son of Abraham, even though he was a tax collector. More than that, Jesus’ words seem to say that since Zacchaeus has embraced the kingdom of God, he has become a spiritual son of Abraham who belongs among His followers.

The final statement in this story is uttered by Jesus. By “Son of Man,” Jesus is talking about Himself (v. 10). He uses similar language to what He said at 5:32: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (KJV). However, the image is similar to the language of [Ezekiel 34](#), where God and David gather the scattered sheep back to the fold. In a nutshell, Jesus is explaining why He was friends with sinners and tax collectors like Zacchaeus—to seek and save the lost. The church today ought to follow in Jesus’ footsteps to extend the kingdom to those rejected in society. This applies even to those Christians who backslide and lose direction. Jesus came to seek them too, and the church must join Him in this search.

Say It Correctly

Publican. **PUH**-bli-kin.

Sycamore. **SIH**-ko-mor.

Mores. **MORE**-aze.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Singing Faith

([Isaiah 44:23-26](#))

TUESDAY

Dancing Faith

([Jeremiah 31:11–14](#))

WEDNESDAY

Proclaimed Faith

([Psalm 19:1–4, 14](#))



THURSDAY

Fruitful Faith

([Galatians 5:19–26](#))



FRIDAY

Sending Faith

([3 John 2–8](#))



SATURDAY

Connected Faith

([John 15:1–11](#))



SUNDAY

Joyous Faith

([Luke 19:1–10](#))

