



First Person Week Nine

Opening Prayer: God, we want to hear from you and to grow in friendship. Help us to connect with what you have for us today.

Talk It Over:

As we close up this series, what ideas about Jesus have you needed to hear or experience the most? Here is a quick recap:

- Mark reminded us of the power of Jesus.
- Matthew us the wisdom of Jesus.
- Luke reminded us the love of Jesus.

Read Luke 19:1-5 (New Living Translation)

While Zacchaeus made his fortune by taking people's money to wine, dine, and to build himself an incredible home, we see that he still clearly was interested in seeing Jesus. Simultaneously, we saw that Jesus was aware and interested in Zacchaeus. Jesus pursues seekers and Zacchaeus was a seeker. □ Jesus not only acknowledged Zacchaeus, he extended friendship to Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus responded with excitement and joy. And while it's understandable why Zacchaeus didn't have many friends, Jesus saw a man that needed love and he saw a lonely man who needed a friend. Jesus understood that Zacchaeus was rich in experience, but relationally poor.

- Share about a time you were seeking Jesus. What led you to seek Jesus and how did he show up?
- Have you ever experienced loneliness or had that feeling of being rich in experience but poor in relationship? Share about that experience with your group.
- Tell about a time you experienced God's love in a meaningful way.

Read Luke 19:8-9 (New Living Translation)

Jesus hadn't said anything to Zacchaeus about his terrible habits with money and people, but here's what Luke 19 is teaching us: When people spend time with Jesus, priorities and focus change. Jesus didn't have to convince Zacchaeus that he was a thief, that he needed to payback all the money that he had stolen, or that there was a better way to live. Jesus was generous with his love and Zacchaeus was generous with his response. When we spend time with Jesus, we learn how Jesus invites us to spend our time, talent and treasure. When we come to grips with all that Jesus is offering us, we change our priorities and focus.

- How has Jesus changed your priorities? What was this process like for you?
- In what ways is Jesus changing your priorities or focus this season?
- In what ways do you want Jesus to change your priorities or focus more?

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Read Luke 19:6 and Philippians 1:6 (New Living Translation)

Being a Jesus follower doesn't mean you won't face daily, normal life struggles. Our old habits and hurts will try to capture us again, and new challenges and temptations will sidetrack us. Healing, freedom, wholeness are daily choices we surrender and work towards with Jesus' help. Day after day, Jesus looks to meet us in the realities of life and move us towards progress and change. In the story of Zacchaeus, the religious leaders had labeled Zacchaeus, but Jesus saw that there was more to Zacchaeus and his past didn't need to ruin his future.

If we were honest, most of us could easily note something from our past that follows us or has followed us because we picked, responded, chose, or did something we later wish we hadn't. The consequences can be emotional, relational, financial, or physical. Most of us know the feeling of facing an "If Only" struggle of life and wanting forgiveness, a restarts, or a re-do.

- If you are comfortable, share about a "if only" moment in your life. Where are you in the process at this point? Are you feeling stuck, seeing progress, or do you feel you have come out the other side? What has contributed to feeling stuck or what has helped you move forward? How would you like Jesus to show up in your "if only" or how have you seen Jesus show up despite the "if only"?
- Looking at your internal life —your character, heart, and mind— share a couple areas you are grateful God has transformed. What gifts has this interior transformation brought you?
- Looking at your internal life —your character, heart, and mind— share a couple areas you are wanting God to transform in more bold ways. What gifts do you believe this interior transformation will bring you?
- While growth and progress are real things God invites us into, we aren't going to magically be perfect. We are still regular people. How do you give yourself and others grace in the midst of the imperfections you see in yourself and others?

Closing Prayer:

God, I believe you're interested in transforming us with your love. Help us to seek and encounter you so we can experience more healing, freedom and wholeness.