

## **Finding the Lost – Jesus and Zacchaeus**

### **A bible study on Luke 19:1-10**

Opening: Leader opens in prayer.

#### **1. Gathering (each member of the group can choose one of the following):**

- Have you ever been physically lost? What was the experience like?
- OR: Tell the group about your memories of a favourite dinner party. Who were the guests? Why did you have an enjoyable time?
- OR: share highs and lows for the past week with your group members.

#### **2. Wrestling with God's Word**

**Read Luke 19:1-10.**

What are your reactions to this story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus?

What challenges or surprises you?

Which of the characters do you find yourself most identifying with – Zacchaeus? The people who grumble at what Jesus does? Another guest of Zacchaeus? A disciple? Someone who's been 'ripped off' by Zacchaeus in the past? Jesus himself? Why do you identify with this person?

From the text itself, in what ways has Zacchaeus become 'lost' even while he is rich and 'has everything'? In what ways is Zacchaeus impoverished?

Zacchaeus is described as a 'chief tax collector' who is 'rich.' The 'chief tax collectors' were Jewish citizens who *subcontracted* to the Roman Empire for the gathering of the annual 'head tax' or 'occupation tribute.' They paid a large sum of money to the Roman Empire for the right to be able to tax their own fellow Jewish citizens and collect not only the annual tribute but as much extra revenue as they could make from their fellow Jews. In a subsistence agrarian society such as first century Israel, people did not have much, if any, disposable income, so even saving up for the 'head tax' was difficult.

How do the people around Zacchaeus therefore see him? Are they justified in this?

Why do you think the people around Zacchaeus grumble about Jesus going to be his guest? What would be a contemporary equivalent? How scandalous would it be today if Jesus went for an extravagant dinner (paid for by money collected from poor people) with a gambling magnate or a drug dealer?

In Luke's gospel, it is often *money* that seems to lead people astray, to get them more and more deeply 'lost.'

Read these cross reference passages and discuss how money can cause people to become 'lost.'

**Luke 18:18-27**

**Luke 12:13-21**

**Read Luke 19:5-10.**

In what way(s) does Zacchaeus get 'found' by Jesus?



- For Zacchaeus, money was one of the major issues that led him into lostness. It was also the way that he expressed his life as one of the people Jesus had found. His repentance in the area of money sprang out of the sense of identity, intimacy and adequacy Jesus had given him. How would repentance express itself in the areas which you identified in the dot point above? How would you live as one of the 'found ones' in your identity as a child of God?
- Ponder for yourself (don't necessarily share with the group, unless you are willing): In what area of your life do you currently feel (or have you recently felt) somewhat 'lost'? In this lostness, how is Jesus 'seeking and saving' you? How does Jesus' gracious self-invitation into your life 'find' you? How does his scandalous grace and forgiveness through his death and resurrection 'save' you? Why is Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus good news for *you*?
- Are there people you know who, like Zacchaeus, may appear to 'have it all' but actually are 'lost'? What do you think Jesus wants to do about that? How might Jesus be wanting to use you as part of his mission to 'find' them?

AS you come to the end of this bible study, what do you hear God saying?

What are you going to do about it?

### **LSF – LOVE one another, SERVE the world, FOLLOW Jesus**

How does this study on 'Finding the Lost' invite you and equip you for the life of Loving One Another? -Serving the World? -Following Jesus?

What *could* your group do together (that you couldn't do alone) to practice these aspects of life in the next month or in the coming year?

In your group, plan a non-Bible-study get together to Love, Serve or Follow.

***CLOSING: end with prayer: spend time thanking God that Jesus came to seek and save what was lost, not based on merit or worthiness, but on his grace. Thank God for the ways in which Jesus fulfills the human need for intimacy, adequacy, and identity. Pray for those who are 'lost.' Pray for Jesus' transformation of the places in your life where you are 'lost.'***

***'Pray for one another!'***