

# A Changed Man

LES. 9

## STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Read a retelling of the story of Zacchaeus.
  - ☐ *The Rock*
  - ☐ Pencils or pens
  - ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers

## STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Students fill in a Bible study in *The Rock*.
  - ☐ Bible
  - ☐ *The Rock*
  - ☐ Paper
  - ☐ Pencils or pens
  - ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and markers

## STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Examine a poster to understand what repentance means.
- Discuss how Jesus changes lives.
- *Optional:* Create a skit about a modern-day Zacchaeus.
  - ☐ Bible
  - ☐ *The Rock*
  - ☐ Paper
  - ☐ Pencils or pens
  - ☐ “Repentance” poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

## STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Ask students how Jesus changed their lives.
- Reassure Christians that spiritual maturity is a lifelong process.
  - ☐ “Repentance” poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

## Memory Verse

... not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

—Philippians 2:4

## Bible Basis:

Zacchaeus meets Christ and changes his ways (Luke 19:1–10).

## Bible Truth:

Repentance includes turning from old, sinful habits and priorities.

## Lesson Aim:

That your students turn from a preoccupation with selfish interests to wholehearted involvement in God’s interests.

## Understanding the Bible

Today’s Bible story takes place in Jericho, called by archaeologists the oldest city on earth. It was a winter resort city, much like Palm Springs, California. Jericho had a good deal of Roman architecture because Herod the Great had done considerable building there and copied Roman style. Jericho contained Herod’s winter palace.

Just as Joshua in the Old Testament began his conquest of Palestine at Jericho, so the last Joshua (“Jesus” is the Greek form of “Joshua”) began His spiritual conquest from Jericho, moving onward to His crucifixion and resurrection at Jerusalem, observes archaeologist James Kelso (*An Archaeologist Looks at the Gospels*).

Zacchaeus was “a chief tax collector” (Luke 19:2). These tax collectors worked for the Roman government. Alfred Plummer calls Zacchaeus “Commissioner of Taxes” (*St. Luke*). That probably means he supervised the rank-and-file tax collectors at Jericho, just as Matthew did up north at Capernaum. Tax collectors were hated, not just because they collected the taxes exacted by the Roman government—that would have been bad enough—but also because they often extorted far more than what was actually due. This was in fact what Zacchaeus did.

Zacchaeus proved he was truly repentant when he

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☐ indicates items you will need to prepare before class

## Understanding the Bible —cont'd

returned “four times” (19:8) his takings. Leon Morris stated, “Where voluntary restitution was made, the Law required no more than the original amount plus one-fifth (Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:7)” (*The Gospel According to St. Luke*).

Repentance includes actual behavioral change (see Luke 3:8-14), which is the evidence of our response to the grace of God.

## Tips

### classroom

Today's Bible study takes an unconventional approach to the story of Zacchaeus. In order to get students to understand just how much he changed as a result of meeting Jesus, the Bible study in *The Rock* asks students to analyze Zacchaeus psychologically—how do they account for the change in this self-admitted thief and extortionist?

This study uses humor, exaggeration, stereotyping, and anachronism (defined on page 67) to make a serious point about the life-transforming grace of God. The intent of fictionalizing a Bible story—and even using sarcasm—is not to make light of the Bible story, but to drive home a spiritual truth students might otherwise gloss over.

Jesus is still in the business of calling people to follow Him, with the result of radically changed lives.

## PRESESSION ACTIVITY



### King Self

• **Objective:** To help students talk about the hazards of self-centered behavior.

Tell the students as they arrive that each of them is the host of a talk show called “Me, My, and I.” Explain that the object of the show is to come across as selfish as possible, without being too obvious. Give each youth a few seconds to discuss the format of his or her show. Would there be any guests? If so, who?

Let students run through a two-minute “show” complete with guests. Have the student host hog all of the conversation and treat the “guest” rudely. If you like, you can demonstrate the role of the obnoxious host.

Then ask your class if they would actually want to watch such a show or be on it. Why or why not? What are the dangers of self-preoccupation?

## Understanding Your Students

We must admit that young people seem selfish because they are selfish. At the core of human sin is self-centeredness. It is observable that young adolescents seem to be as selfish as any class of citizens on the planet. Why?

1. Insecurity. Youth are so unsure about themselves that they may try to get the upper hand before someone else. The Golden Rule is rewritten: “Do unto others before they do unto you.”

2. Fear of change. Young people are a lot quicker to say “We never did it that way before,” because in the middle of radical physical, emotional, mental, and social change, they’re looking for stability.

3. Puberty. Adolescence plays havoc with

your students’ social skills. If at 11 years she was the most amiable of companions, why at 12 is she so unlikable? It may be as simple as this: she’s going through puberty.

4. Role confusion. When kids waffle from “I-wanna-be-on-your-lap” moods to “get-away-I-hate-you” rages, they seem extremely selfish. Most youngsters experience these mood swings as a part of puberty. They can’t decide just who they are: Child? Adult? Child/Adult? What’s more, they can’t decide just who they want to be.

Are young people selfish? You bet. But it’s not always premeditated and with ill intent. Sometimes, at least, it’s just plain growing pains.



# STEP 1

Life Need  
5–10 minutes

## Lesson Aim:

That your students turn from a preoccupation with selfish interests to wholehearted involvement in God's interests.

**Objective:** That your students identify with someone in the story of Zacchaeus.

### Materials:

□ *The Rock*

Remember the story of Zacchaeus, the man who climbed the tree to see Jesus? We're going to look at that story in our Bible study today, but first let's read a retelling of it from Zacchaeus's point of view.

Pass out this week's issue of *The Rock* and look at the feature, "Go Climb a Tree."

This story is told through Zacchaeus's eyes, but there's another group involved too—the crowd. At some times in our lives we may feel like Zacchaeus the Shorty or Zacchaeus the Sinner. Other times we may feel like the crowd—jealous of the attention someone else has received or cheated out of what belongs to us.

As we read the story, listen for two things. First, when we come to a part that you can relate to, put a mark by it. It should remind you of something that happened to you or something that you've felt too. Then, put a "Z" or a "C" in that place to show whether you felt more like Zacchaeus or the crowd at that particular point.

Many youth in your class may identify more with the crowd in this story than with Zacchaeus if they have been brought up in the church. They may sometimes feel a little jealous of the attention others receive in church. As their teacher, you can help them in two ways. First, your "good" students are fortunate that they've been spared some of the pain that comes from an obviously sinful lifestyle. However, you need to help them see that they are no better than anybody else. They, too, need God's forgiveness and grace. They also need to be reassured that they are just as important to God and to the church as someone who is dramatically saved.

Now, read the story as the class follows along. Read slow enough so they can think about themselves as they listen. When you have finished, discuss the story.

▶ **At what points in the story might some of you identify with Zacchaeus? Why?**

▶ **At what points might someone identify with the crowd? Why?**

No matter who you identified with more, this story has something to say to both kinds of people. And what it says is that Jesus loves you! Let's look at the story more closely.



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# STEP 2

## Bible Learning

15–20 minutes

### Bible Basis:

Zacchaeus meets Christ and changes his ways (Luke 19:1-10).

**Objective:** That your students do a cartoon Bible study to discover why Zacchaeus changed so radically.

#### Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

This is a familiar story, but sometimes those are the hardest to understand. We're going to do this cartoon Bible study in order to look at Zacchaeus with fresh eyes and see if we can figure out why he changed so dramatically—and what that can tell us about our relationship with God.

Turn to the Bible study, "Out of His Tree," in *The Rock* and read the first part together. This week's lesson starts out humorously in order to help youth see the contrast between the before and after of Zacchaeus's life.



#### ■ From *THE ROCK*—Out of His Tree

Remember Zacchaeus, the little guy in the tree? He was a real crook until he met Jesus. Boy, did he change!

Suppose he'd gone to a psychiatrist about his problems. Imagine his going to that famous doctor, Shrink'em Floyd.

Read the first cartoon frame that sets up this imaginary scene. Young people love humor, exaggeration, and sarcasm, so you can play on this to help them see the Bible study in a different light. The technique used here is called anachronism, which means putting modern elements into an old story, or the opposite. In this case it's done intentionally to make a point.

#### The Real Story

Of course, there were no psychiatrists in those days. Here's the real story based on Luke 19:1-10. Read the passage and complete this cartoon Bible study to find out just what made Zacchaeus change his ways.

- ▶ 1. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus? *Allow students to speculate about this. It may have been mere curiosity, or he may have felt a real spiritual hunger.*
- ▶ 2. Surprise! Jesus actually wants to eat dinner with this little cheat. Draw expressions on the faces of the people in the crowd when they saw this. Then write a caption to describe this scene in Luke 19:5-7. *(The people were probably shocked and angry. Some captions might be, "Hey, wait a minute! Why would Jesus want to eat with that guy?" or "What does Jesus think He's doing? That guy's a crook.")*

- ▶ **Why do you think they felt that way?** *(They were probably jealous. Here they were—decent, religious people, and of all the people Jesus could have chosen to stay with, He picked this thief, this sinner!)*

- ▶ **How do you think Zacchaeus felt? Why?** *(He must have felt very grateful, and probably surprised. He knew he was not liked or respected because he had cheated people.)*



## TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Luke 19:1-10

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup>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."

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

<sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

- ▶ 3. This is a switch! Read verse 8 and fill in Zacchaeus's speech balloon to explain why he gave all that money away.

When people meet Christ and understand God's love and forgiveness, they change—drastically. It's like a reflex action; it's the natural (or supernatural) response to the love of God. The change may not be as obvious on the outside as it was with Zacchaeus, but it's just as deep. It's a change in the way one looks at oneself, others, and the whole world.

- ▶ 4. Draw your own picture to show what people must have thought of the new Zacchaeus. *Have students draw a picture on their own paper. Their drawings will probably show that people were surprised. Some may show the people happy and grateful. Others may show them a bit suspicious. Accept any answers and encourage students to explain their drawings.*

- ▶ What are the key verses in this passage? *Underline them in the Bible text. Most students will probably pick Luke 19:9-10.*

Jesus said something very similar about another tax collector, Matthew, in Luke 5:31-32. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

- ▶ Out of all the people in that crowd, why do you think Jesus wanted to stay at Zacchaeus's place? *Let students speculate. It may have been simply because Jesus was moved by Zacchaeus's faith. Or Jesus knew Zacchaeus's need and was ready to respond.*

- ▶ Did the fact that Jesus chose to stay with Zacchaeus mean that He didn't care about the others? Why or why not? How could they, too, have gotten attention from Jesus? *Let students speculate.*

It wasn't that Jesus loved the others any less. The people in the crowd that day were just as lost as Zacchaeus and just as in need of salvation. All they needed to do was realize their need and admit it, and Jesus would have been more than willing to shower them, too, with His love and joy. Just look at what happened to Zacchaeus.

Good News! Jesus loves everyone! Zacchaeus was not a nice person. When everybody else hated him (with good reason), Jesus loved him. Zacchaeus discovered someone who would meet his deepest needs. Who needs money when you've got the real thing?

Imagine you're the famous Dr. Floyd. Write your report describing Short—er, Zacchaeus.

Have volunteers read their answers.

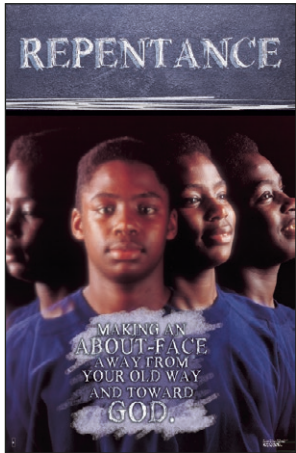
When Zacchaeus saw how much Jesus loved him, even though he'd been a crook, his heart changed. Now the love of God flowed up in him and out to everyone else. He felt like giving instead of grabbing! Zacchaeus repented.



# STEP 3

## Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)



**Objective:** That your students discuss the meaning of true repentance.

### Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ “Repentance” poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Display the “Repentance” poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*.

- ▶ **To repent means to make a complete turnaround. How did Zacchaeus demonstrate true repentance?** *(He changed from being selfish and a cheater into a loving, giving follower of Jesus.)*
- ▶ **What ways have you seen people change when they met Jesus and repented?** *Allow for a variety of answers here and be prepared to share your own testimony if appropriate. Remind students that a conversion does not have to be outwardly dramatic. It does mean a total change of heart.*

Read the memory verse, Philippians 2:4, from your Bibles or from page 8 of *The Rock*.

- ▶ **How does this verse relate to Zacchaeus before and after he met Jesus?** *(Before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was only concerned about himself. But after he met Jesus he became concerned about other people and about how his previous behavior hurt them.)*
- ▶ **How do you think this verse relates to the crowd?** *(They were just as self-centered as Zacchaeus had been. They were more concerned about outward appearances and their own reputations than in following Jesus.)*

Have students write ways people today, especially young people, are preoccupied with their own interests instead of caring about others. These could be bad things such as sinful habits, or they could be good things that are simply more important to your students than God and get in the way of serving others.

- ▶ **What are some of the ways a person who has repented will change?** *(When a person repents and finds forgiveness in Christ, he or she becomes concerned with the things that concern God.)*

### OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have the time and your students like acting, create a skit about a modern-day Zacchaeus. Your modern-day Zacchaeus should have a lifestyle that is typical of today, and his problem may not necessarily be greed. Whatever his problem, have your class show what a radical difference Jesus can make in a person’s life today.



# STEP 4

Life Response  
(5–10 minutes)

## Bible Truth:

Repentance includes turning from old, sinful habits and priorities.

**Objective:** That your students open themselves to God's love so they can be transformed.

### Materials:

- "Repentance" poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Look again at the "Repentance" poster from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. **No matter who we are, God loves all of us. He wants all of us to come to Him.**

**Zacchaeus changed because he met Jesus. Have you met Jesus? And if so, how have you changed?**

Give students time to think. This whole month students have had the opportunity to accept Jesus as Savior. Perhaps some have already. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is speaking to someone today. You can use the helps on the inside back cover of this commentary if anyone wants to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord today. No matter what decision your students need to make today, use this lesson as a review of their spiritual lives, and rejoice with them over the changes God has worked in them so far. Help them understand that, although repentance is a total about-face, we all sort of slip backward from time to time. Maturity in Christ is a lifelong process.

Close class in prayer, thanking God for His love poured out on us through Jesus. Thank Him also for the changes He works in our lives as we experience His generous love for us.

