



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

It's Personal / Week 3

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## SERIES SUMMARY

A 5-week series about Zacchaeus.

- WEEK 1: It's personal because Jesus knows your name.
  - WEEK 2: It's personal because Jesus knows what matters to you.
  - WEEK 3: It's personal because Jesus understands your story.
  - WEEK 4: It's personal because Jesus loves you no matter what.
  - WEEK 5: It's personal because Jesus knows your potential.
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## SCRIPTURE

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly (Luke 19:5-6 NIV).*

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- In the movie *Black Panther*, we learn not just about the main character, but also about his home.
- The writers of *Black Panther* knew that in order to understand the character, we need to understand where he comes from.

### TENSION

- We might feel like we know others' full stories because we know some things about them.
- We can know a lot about a person but not really know them.
- Everybody has a backstory, and there's often more to the story than we can see.

- If we really want to understand someone, we need to know where they come from and more about their backstory.
- The reality is that we rarely consider the backstories of other people, and because of that, we don't ever really personally know them.

## TRUTH

- Jesus gives us a great example to follow when it comes to making things personal with others. In the book of Luke, we read about a tax collector who had a bad reputation in his community. When Jesus came to his city, He noticed Zacchaeus up in a tree, called him by name, and invited Himself to his house. Jesus wanted to hang out with Zacchaeus at his home so that He could understand where Zacchaeus came from; so He could learn about his backstory. (Luke 19:5-6)
- There's something about where we live that says a lot about who we are.
- Even though Jesus already knew everything about Zacchaeus, He still decided to take a step into his world to get to know him. Jesus made it personal by getting to know Zacchaeus' story.
- Like how Jesus stepped into Zacchaeus' world to get to know him better, God stepped into all of our lives when He sent His Son, Jesus, to Earth.
- God stepped into our world to understand where we come from, show us how much He cares, and to understand our stories in a real and personal way.
- It's personal because Jesus understands your story.

## APPLICATION

- We can make it personal by:
  - Becoming known ourselves by inviting Jesus into our story.
  - Inviting someone we know and trust to get to know our story better.
  - Sharing our story with others so they feel comfortable sharing with us.

## LANDING

- If we get to know the stories of the people in our lives, we become someone who really cares, someone they trust, and someone who wants to know people in a personal way.
  - It's personal because Jesus understands your story.
  - What's one thing most people don't really know about me?
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## THINK ABOUT THIS

Remember that everyone's backstory is different. Some students may open up about things you already know, some may open up about things that are difficult or have been secrets up until this point, and some may not open up at all. It's important that you create a safe space for this conversation both in your ministry and in any follow up conversations you have individually. Be prepared for students to share things that may require follow up on a personal level. And if most of your students don't share a lot of their backstory with you or in Small Group, that's okay! You don't want to push them to share what they aren't ready to talk about yet. It's okay if all you do this week is create a safe space in your ministry for your students so that they feel comfortable to share in the future when they're ready.

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## INTERACTIVE 1: THE BACKSTORY

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use a movie character and clip to explain that we understand more about people when we not only know who they are, but also where they come from.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- An example of a movie character whose backstory explains more about who they are. (We used *Black Panther* in the script, but we encourage you to pick a character and movie that will resonate with your students. Ideas: Miles Morales from *Spider-Man*, Moana, Harry Potter, Elsa from *Frozen*, Rey from *Star Wars*.)
  - A clip from the movie you've selected
  - A computer and screen large enough for students to watch the clip
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## INTERACTIVE 2: ZACCHAEUS' STORY

### OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use props (a ladder covered in leaves and a table with chairs) to help you tell the story of Zacchaeus from the book of Luke.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- A step ladder covered in leaves or vines and placed on stage
  - A small table and at least two chairs placed on stage
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# TEACHING SCRIPT

It's Personal / Week 3

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## BOTTOM LINE

IT'S PERSONAL BECAUSE JESUS UNDERSTANDS YOUR STORY.

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## INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

### INTERACTIVE: The Backstory

*This is where you'll use a movie character and clip to explain that we understand more about people when we not only know who they are, but also where they come from. We included the example of Black Panther in this script; however, we encourage you to pick a character and movie that will resonate with your students and adjust the script accordingly. Some ideas: Miles Morales from Spider-Man, Moana, Harry Potter, Elsa from Frozen, Rey from Star Wars)*

I think we can all agree that superhero movies are pretty big nowadays. Between Marvel and DC, we have enough movies, video games, and spin-off shows to keep us entertained for a long time.

My favorite? Probably *Black Panther*! When that movie was first released, we were introduced to a hero with an incredible story. In a matter of a couple of hours, it felt like the whole world was saying, “Wakanda Forever!” [Show a brief clip from *Black Panther* that highlights both Wakanda and the character of Black Panther.]

Now, before I saw this movie, I didn't know a thing about Wakanda, and I don't think I was the only one! That's why it's so great that the whole movie starts by telling the story of not just the character of Black Panther, but also his home, Wakanda. I think that's because the writers knew that in order to understand who Black Panther is, we had to understand where he comes from.

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## TENSION

3 MINUTES

Did you know that the same thing is true for us?

Just think about this: **How many people in our schools, in our neighborhoods, on our teams, or even in this room right now do we assume we know?**

We might feel confident that we know the stories of some people just because we know some things about them. Like their name, or what they're good at, or what they're into when it comes to clothes, music, or friends. We think we know the full picture of who a person is because of what we can see. The way they act, the way they live, who their friends are, and more. That tells us all we need to know, right?

Well, not exactly. See, we can know a lot *about* a person, but not *really know* them. Just like in *Black Panther*, there's a *really* good chance there is more to the stories of the people around us than we see or know.

Because here's what I know is true: **Everybody has a backstory.** In each and every person we think we know, there's more to their story than we can see. And if we really want to know someone, we have to understand where they come from. We have to see more than just what's on the outside. We have to understand the people, experiences, beliefs, and more that make them who they are.

Now I think you probably know what I mean because *you* have a backstory. You know that in your own life, there's more to the story, and you want the people around you to recognize that, too. Maybe you got angry and yelled at a sibling this week. You found yourself thinking, "*She'd understand if she knew about the friend drama going on right now.*" Or maybe you turned an assignment in late and thought, "*My teacher would be more understanding if she knew the power got shut off at our house this week.*" Maybe you stopped texting a friend back and thought, "*They have no idea how depressed I am. If they did, they'd know why I'm not responding.*"

See what I mean? That stuff going on that you wish other people would consider? That's your backstory. It's what you're dealing with. It's where you're coming from right now. And if you're like me, you wish people would try to understand a little more of it from time to time.

But I think the question for all of us is this: Do we give this same kind of grace and consideration to other people? I know I sometimes don't! The reality is, **we rarely consider the backstories of other people.** We don't often stop to consider where they're coming from. And because of that, we don't ever really personally *know* them.

So, **how do you and I begin to see the backstory?** How do we make an effort to understand where people are coming from? How do we make it personal?

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## TRUTH

4 MINUTES

Thankfully, Jesus gives us a great example to follow!

Over the past couple of weeks, we've been looking at a cool story from Jesus' life. A couple of thousand years ago, He was traveling in ancient Israel and came across the town that was home to a well-known bad guy. I know we talked about superheroes earlier, but this guy was more of a super-villain in his community. His name was **Zacchaeus**, and he was a tax collector, which basically meant he cheated his neighbors out of money just so that he could keep his wealth and status.

### **INTERACTIVE: Zacchaeus' Story**

*This is where you'll use props (a ladder covered in leaves and a table and chairs) to help you tell the story of Zacchaeus from the book of Luke.*

Even though his reputation was rough, when he heard Jesus was in town, Zacchaeus went out and made an effort to see Him. He wanted to catch a glimpse of Jesus so much that he climbed a tree just to see if he could spot Him in the crowd of people. [*Climb the ladder.*]

What was crazy is that out of the entire crowd, Jesus noticed Zacchaeus up in that tree. And not only that, Jesus walked right over, called Zacchaeus by name, and told him to get out of that tree. [*Climb down from the ladder.*] Why? Well, for a reason NO ONE expected: to hang out. Yes, that's right, Jesus wanted to hang out with Zacchaeus. To spend time with him. To get to know him. And not just anywhere! Jesus wanted to go to Zacchaeus' home. [*Walk over to the table and sit in one of the chairs.*] The place he came from.

Take a look:

***When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly (Luke 19:5-6 NIV).***

I realize Jesus inviting Himself over to Zacchaeus' house may seem a little strange to us. But it would have been absolutely wild in this culture 2,000 years ago. Zacchaeus was not a good dude, and everyone knew that. Jesus knew it, too. But Jesus wasn't satisfied with only knowing *about* Zacchaeus; He wanted to take the step of going right to where he lived [*motion to the table and chairs you're sitting at.*] He wanted to really get to know Zacchaeus.

See, there is something about where we live that says a lot about who we are. Where we live is *usually* the place where we're most comfortable. It's the place where our guard comes down, and we can be who we really are. Can you imagine Jesus coming over to Zacchaeus' house, and Zacchaeus taking his sandals off, putting on his BBQ apron, and kicking back with Jesus? [*Show that you're relaxing at the table. Try something like leaning back in the chair and putting your feet on the table.*] Now, I'm not sure that's exactly how it went down, but one thing is clear: Jesus wanted to make it personal. Sure, He already knew everything about Zacchaeus, but He still decided to take a step into his world to get to know him.

***Jesus made it personal with Zacchaeus when he took a step to understand where Zacchaeus lived. [Stand up, motion to the table, and continue your talk standing.]*** Visiting Zacchaeus' home meant that Jesus would get to know him in a very personal way. Jesus would get a glimpse into an important part of Zacchaeus' backstory. Of course, Jesus already knew his backstory, because He is Jesus! But that visit showed Zacchaeus that he was accepted, story and all.

See, where we live isn't just a physical address; it's a place that gives others a glimpse into our personal circumstances, situations, and day-to-day lives. **Where we live is a part of our backstory; it's the part most people don't typically get to see.**

And what's cool is that what Jesus did for Zacchaeus was an example of something that Jesus does for you and me, too. While He may have walked into just one man's house that day, it gives us a small glimpse into the way God stepped into all of our lives when He chose to send His Son, Jesus, to Earth.

The God who created the universe stepped into our world to understand where we come from. To show us how much He cares. To understand our stories in a real and personal way.

### **It's personal because Jesus understands your story.**

He knows our stories because He knows where we live and what it's like to walk in our shoes. [*Motion to the table and chairs.*] He doesn't just see and understand a little bit about us. He knows us because He knows our whole story. And He loves us no matter what!

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## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

### **It's personal because Jesus understands your story.**

If the way we treat other people is going to be personal, then we have to choose to understand their stories, just like Jesus does for us.

So, where do we start?

Well, before we get to know others, we might just need to *become known* ourselves.

For some of us, our first step might be to **acknowledge that Jesus wants to know you personally.** In fact, He already knows you better than you know yourself, but you might need to invite Him into your story. He wants to be a part of your life in a real, personal way. You can talk with your Small Group Leader or a friend you trust about what it means to follow Jesus and experience life the way that He says is best for you.

Then, it might be time to **let someone else into your story.** Your step might be to share more of your story with someone else. Not just some random person or a stranger, but someone who really cares about you. Someone you trust who is already a big part of your life. A great place to start is with your Small Group. What if you started to share a little bit more about where you come from? What if you told them a little bit about what your life is *really* like? What if you opened up to share more of your backstory? It could be the step that helps them know and care about you personally in a way they couldn't before.

Maybe you're in a place where you want to make it personal with others, the way Jesus did for you! You can do this by giving someone the gift of going second. In other words, you can be the first one to share. You can choose to share a little bit of your own backstory so that other people know it's safe to share some of theirs with you. When you share a little about what you're living with right now, it can give someone the courage to do the same.

And when someone does share their story with you, make sure you **choose to listen and ask questions to learn more.** When you show someone you care by listening and wanting to know more, you show them just how personal getting to know their story is for you.

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## LANDING

1 MINUTE

Just imagine if getting to know the stories of your classmates, teammates, and neighbors was something you took personally. You'd start seeing people for who they *really* are instead of who you think they are. You'd become known as a person who really cares. A person they can trust. A person who wants to know people in a real and personal way.

You actually have an opportunity to do just that in your Small Group! It's a place to ask questions, listen, and get to know their whole story. And you can share your story with them in return!

So remember, **it's personal because Jesus understands your story.** And as you get ready to share a little more of your story with your Small Group today, I want you to think about this: **What's one thing most people don't really know about me?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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