

It's Personal / Week 4



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

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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

*All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner" (Luke 19: 7 NIV).*

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- A lot of times we hope that learning something new will come easy to us, only to be disappointed with the struggle it causes.
- Tell a personal story about a time when you tried to learn something new but ultimately struggled to actually master it.
- When we struggle like this, it can make us feel like we're not enough. And that feels really personal.

### TENSION

- Big or small, we've all had reasons to feel like we're not enough.
- Maybe we feel like we're not enough because . . .
  - We've messed up, made mistakes, or have done things we aren't proud of.
  - We haven't done enough or worked hard enough.
- When we feel like we don't measure up, it can lead us to ask a lot of questions about whether the people in our lives and even Jesus still love us, accept us, and support us no matter what.

### TRUTH

- In Luke, we read about how, among a crowd of people, Jesus noticed Zacchaeus in a tree, called out to him, invited Himself to his house, and made things personal with him.
- The crowd thought that because of Zacchaeus' profession and decisions, he wasn't worthy of Jesus' attention. (Luke 19:7) But Jesus knew everything Zacchaeus had done and still made it personal with him. Jesus chose to connect with Zacchaeus regardless of his past actions.
- Just like with Zacchaeus, Jesus makes it personal with us because He loves us no matter what.
- We are enough, just as we are. There are no mistakes that will separate us from Jesus' love and no choices we can make to earn His love.
- Jesus loves us no matter what, and nothing we do or don't do will change that.

### APPLICATION

- We can start believing that we are enough and that Jesus loves us in a personal way by:
  - Naming what we feel is separating us from Jesus and talking to Him about it.
  - Thinking about how we see and treat people around us and asking Jesus to help us see others the way He sees them.
- Like Jesus does for us, we are also called to make it personal with others by treating them with love and acceptance no matter what.

### LANDING

- It's personal because Jesus loves you no matter what.
- Your Small Group also loves and accepts you for you who you are. It's a place where you can get personal with others who trust and care about each other.
- Do I really believe that God loves me no matter what?

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## THINK ABOUT THIS

This is a crucial message in this series! It's a great opportunity for students to be vulnerable as they reflect on the things they think may keep them from God's unconditional love. If they do open up, your role isn't to judge or condemn. It's simply to listen and reinforce that God loves them no matter what. In addition, you may have students who struggle with the idea of saying they "love" other people. Why? Because they think concretely! To them, love is usually a term that applies to dating relationships, in family, or only in movies and TV shows. To avoid this hurdle in the conversation, clarify what you mean by love in this context. It's a great chance to normalize this vocabulary for your middle schoolers.

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## INTERACTIVE: 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 4

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## BOTTOM LINE

IT'S PERSONAL BECAUSE JESUS LOVES YOU NO MATTER WHAT.

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## INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Have you ever wanted to learn something new? Maybe an instrument, or a sport, or a new dance on TikTok? Whatever it was, you probably thought you'd just practice a few times, and then BOOM! You'd have it down, right? Well, if you're anything like me, the reality of actually learning a new skill isn't that easy.

### TELL A PERSONAL STORY:

*Tell a story from your life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .*

- Talk about a time you tried to learn something new, but ultimately struggled to actually get it.
- Maybe it was a sport, or an activity, or a subject in school.
- Whatever it was, the goal is to illustrate how not being able to learn or master this thing made you feel like you weren't good enough in some small way.

Maybe you can relate! Even if what you were trying to learn or do was different, if you struggled with it, then you know the feeling I'm talking about. You know what it feels like to not think you're enough. And for a lot of us, **when we feel like we're not enough, it feels really personal.**

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## TENSION

3 MINUTES

At some point, I'm sure we've all felt this way. Like we just weren't good enough, or smart enough, or cool enough, or just plain *enough*. Unfortunately, I think that's a pretty relatable feeling. Because big or small, we all probably have reasons to not feel like we're enough.

Maybe some of us feel like this **because of things we've done**. We've messed up. We've made mistakes. We've done things we're not proud of. Maybe you cheated on a test, or lied to your parents, or spread rumors about the new girl, or called kids at school a name you know is offensive. Maybe you've thought about trying drugs and alcohol or snuck out to go to that party. Or maybe you gave in to some pressure from your boyfriend or girlfriend to take things further than you wanted to. And while some people in your life may know about some of these things you've struggled with, there are other things that no one knows about. Things you've done that you've hidden because you don't want others to see you the way you see yourself. You don't want them to know you're not enough.

Or maybe, you've struggled with this feeling in a different way. Some of us feel like we're not enough **because we haven't done enough**. Maybe you feel like you're not a good enough daughter or son, athlete, musician, friend, sibling, or student. Why? Because even though you're working so hard to be good at all those things, you still feel like somehow you aren't doing enough. You're still not "good enough" for your friends, your coach, your parents, or maybe even Jesus. When it comes to faith, you feel like you haven't prayed enough, or read your Bible enough, or shown up at church enough, or done enough "right" things to be good enough for Jesus.

See what I mean? Whether it's because of what we've done or haven't done, we all have reasons to feel like we're not enough. And that feeling can leave us with a lot of questions.

*Will my friends still be my friends if they find out what I've done?  
Will my family understand why this happened?  
Will the people in my Small Group think of me the same way?  
Will my coach ever think I'm enough to start in the big game?  
Will my teacher ever give me that grade I'm trying to earn?*

And what about Jesus? You may wonder . . .

*Does He still love me?  
Even if I've messed up, or haven't prayed enough, or haven't made enough good choices?  
Can I really be forgiven for what I've done?  
Can Jesus love and forgive me for not being enough? For not doing enough?*

If you're struggling through questions like these, let me assure you that you're not alone. And the story we're going to dive back into today is one that will help us see exactly how Jesus feels about us no matter how we feel about ourselves.

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## TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Today, we're going to look again at a moment in the life of a guy named of **Zacchaeus**. And like us, I think he was struggling with a similar feeling.

See, Zacchaeus was a tax collector. And back then, tax collectors were generally hated because they were stealing from people to become rich themselves. So that meant Zacchaeus had a bit of a reputation. Because of the things he'd done, others around him definitely didn't see him as good enough!

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

*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.*

But on this particular day in Zacchaeus' life, things changed. Because on this day, Jesus was coming through town. And like most people back then, Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus. He knew of all the cool, amazing things Jesus had done, and he wanted a chance to get close to Jesus. So Zacchaeus went down to where the crowds had gathered, and since he was short, he climbed a tree to get a better look. *[Climb the ladder.]*

Now, I can't know for sure, but I have to wonder if Zacchaeus climbed that tree not only because of his height, but also because he knew what other people thought of him. Maybe he thought that with all his mistakes and mess ups, the crowd would think he wasn't good enough to be close to Jesus. Maybe he felt they wouldn't welcome him there.

Well, what I do know is that when Jesus noticed Zacchaeus in that tree, He called out to him. He went over to Zacchaeus, called him by name, and asked to be a guest in his house that very day. *[Climb down from the ladder and sit at the table.]* Crazy and unexpected, right? Well, take a look at the way the people responded:

***All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner" (Luke 19: 7 NIV).***

So basically, the people around Zacchaeus said, *"There's no way this guy is good enough to have Jesus in his home. He's done so many bad things!"* Now keep in mind, these were the kind of people who felt like they'd definitely done "enough." They thought they'd done all the right things. That they were the people Jesus should have looked at and chosen.

And honestly, it would have been easy for Zacchaeus to feel like he wasn't good enough for this invitation either. *[Motion to the table and chairs.]* I mean, he had a lot of reasons to think that! He had done a lot of wrong to a lot of people, probably even to a lot of people in that crowd.

But Jesus knew all of that. **He knew everything Zacchaeus had done, and He still made it personal.** Out of all the people in the crowd, Jesus chose Zacchaeus.

And in that moment, Jesus did for Zacchaeus what He does for each one of us. He breaks the barrier. All the shame, and guilt, and regret, and fear, and mistakes we think might separate us from Jesus actually have no power to keep us from Him at all. Jesus walks right through them and chooses to make it personal with us. Why? Because He loves us!

**See, it's personal because Jesus loves you no matter what.**

And that means just as you are, you're enough. There's no mistake you can make that will separate you from His love. There's no choice you need to make to earn His love. He loves you no matter what, and nothing you do or don't do will change that.

It was true for Zacchaeus, and the same is true for you and me. Jesus sees everything we've done and ever will do. The good, the bad, and the ugly. And He still chooses us. He still loves us.

**It's personal because Jesus loves you no matter what.**

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## APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

So how do we start to believe this is true? That we are enough? That Jesus loves us in a real and personal way just as we are?

Maybe the best place to start is by naming it. **Name what you feel is separating you from God.** Maybe you're experiencing shame or guilt over something you did wrong, like a bad choice or a mistake. Or maybe you messed up in way that no one knows about, but you feel like it's keeping you from Jesus. Maybe for you, you feel like you haven't done enough of something, and that's keeping you from Jesus. You haven't spent much time praying, or reading your Bible, or showing up at church. And you feel like it's getting between you and Jesus.

Whatever it is, name it. Confess it. Call it out. Identify what you feel is separating you from Jesus and tell Him about it. **Ask for His help understanding and accepting His love for you just as you are.** Pray that He will show you that nothing can separate you from His love.

Then, **think about how you see or treat the people around you.** Do you see them like they're not enough? Do you treat them like they don't deserve Jesus' love? Do you see kids at church and think, "*They don't belong here because of what they've done*"? **Ask Jesus to show you where you're not seeing others the way He sees them, and pray that He will help you change your heart.**

Remember, what Jesus did for us is the same thing He does for others. He makes it personal. He loves no matter what. And He calls us to do the same. He asks us to make it personal for others by treating them with love and acceptance no matter what.

That could look like sitting with the new girl at lunch, or inviting a quieter kid in your class to do something with you after school. Maybe it looks like showing kindness to someone who has hurt you in the past, or simply listening to a friend share about the mistakes they've made. Whatever it is, take a step to make it personal for others by showing them love and acceptance no matter what.

Because that's what Jesus did for us!

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## LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **it's personal because Jesus loves you no matter what.** And one reason we have Small Groups here at *[name of ministry]* is to reflect Jesus' love. Your Small Group loves and accepts you for who you are, no matter what. It's a safe place where you can get personal with others who trust and care about you.

So, as you head to your Small Group, I want you to think about this question: **Do I really believe that God loves me no matter what?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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