



Daily Devotionals: With Jesus One-On-One | January 30, 2022

Day One – Devotion

Read Luke 19:1-10.

This week we're looking at Jesus' one-on-one encounter with a man named Zacchaeus. This encounter is loaded with moments of honesty, compassion, purpose, shame, and redemption... and we're going to explore it all this week. But today, let's focus on the initial encounter itself.

Re-read Luke 19:1-4.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but something was in his way... people! Zacchaeus was short! He didn't let excuses keep him from doing what he knew he should do, he did whatever it took to get a glimpse of the man from Nazareth.

It's amazing that Jesus intrigued Zacchaeus so much, isn't it? Zacchaeus is a Jewish man, yes, but he lived life based on the exploitation of others and was estranged from his kin for doing so. Jesus, in contrast, was a mysterious man known for both rebuking those in power for taking advantage of others and abusing their authority, while also calling others to grace, redemption, love, and healing.

Obviously, Zacchaeus was curious. Obviously, something ached within him. Obviously, something in him, said, "I've got to get a look at Jesus."

He could have utilized every excuse at his disposal to not draw near to Jesus that day – what he had done that morning, what he was planning on doing later that day. He perhaps had insecurities – about his height, his past, his present, and his future. He could have rationalized his way out of ever even getting close to Jesus. But he didn't.

What hinders you from seeing Jesus? There may be some legitimate excuses you could use: "I'm super busy," or "I feel shame from past mistakes," or "I doubt God cares," or "I've been hurt before and I don't want to be let down again," or "I want to see Jesus, I just don't know how."

Friend, you're reading this devotional, so it's safe to assume you want *some kind* of encounter with Jesus. What's standing in your way of growing in your walk with God? What "tree" are you willing to climb to see the one who can help you find meaning and purpose?

Today, we'll end with this: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (**James 4:8**).



Questions for Reflection:

- Write down any excuses you use for not encountering Jesus more often in your day-to-day life.
- Write down ways these hindrances might be overcome based on what you know of God in scripture.
- Spend some time confessing any past excuses that have kept you from walking daily with God. Thank him for his presence with you and ask for strength and courage to do whatever you can to grow with Jesus today.

As you finish, take 5-10 minutes of prayerful communion with the Lord. Clear away any distractions. Find a place of solitude. Set a timer on your phone and then put it away. Quiet yourself. And set your mind and heart upon the Lord.



Day Two – Bible Study Breakdown

Let's begin today by continuing to consider Zacchaeus' one-on-one encounter with Jesus. **Re-read Luke 19:1-10.**

Yesterday we met Zacchaeus, a man who wanted so desperately to see Jesus, he climbed into a tree to watch as Jesus passed through a town called Jericho.

Let's get a bit of context of this man and where he lived.

If you met someone who worked for the IRS, you might have some questions as to how they got into that line of work and what exactly they do for the government. But unless you're currently being audited, meeting them wouldn't illicit the negative visceral response that encountering a tax collector in Jesus' day would have caused.

Frankly, tax collectors in Jesus' day were considered thieves and scum. Tax collectors often acted with no mercy or consideration, taking more money than was required by law to pad their own pockets. What's worse is that tax collectors were often Jews who worked for the ruling Roman government. They were cheating their own people – making them financially comfortable but outcasts from society.

Can you imagine the sort of vitriol Zacchaeus faced from his own kin? Certainly, a man who betrayed his own people and extorted them would understandably be an outcast, a social exile.

Yesterday we read that Zacchaeus was not just a tax collector, but rather a "chief tax collector". He had climbed some ranks. He was good at his job. He was in upper management, leading other men in robbing and cheating their own people. Not good.

This is a man who, looked down upon by his old friends and family, probably padded his heart with money and power. He overcame his shame and guilt by distracting himself with his position and prominence.

Because not only was he doing well himself, but he was excelling in a city like Jericho. Jericho was a major trade center on the route between Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Syria. It was centrally located and in prime position to be a city of influence.

But despite Zacchaeus' padded wallet and calloused heart, there was still an ache. Something was missing. There was a God-shaped hole so big that he did all that he could to be one-on-one with Jesus, the itinerant, poor Rabbi from Nazareth. Zacchaeus surely wondered, "Would Jesus have time for me?"



Here's one of the many things I love about this story: **verse 5 of Luke 19** says, "When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.'"

Did you notice Jesus called Zacchaeus *by his name*? Sure, this could indicate Jesus' familiarity with the high officials of Jericho, but more likely, this is an example of Jesus' divine knowledge. Jesus knew what kind of life Zacchaeus lived but still saw him as a person of value.

"So, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly."

That's what the text says of Zacchaeus' reaction. Of course, the people grumbled. But once Jesus got to Zacchaeus' home, a change occurred. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus saw him, was attentive to him, and loved him.

"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.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham'" (**Luke 19:8-9**).

Jesus initiates a relationship with the seeking Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus' experience with Jesus changes everything *in an instant*. He repents. He changes his life and priorities. He gives back to those he extorted four times the amount (which if you read **Numbers 5:7** was astronomically higher than what he owed!).

But that's what being one-on-one with Jesus does to a person. It changes them. Jesus restores your identity ("This man, too, is a son of Abraham"), and we give up everything to live life in in conjunction with the Kingdom of God.

Questions for Reflection:

- What similarities do you see between Zacchaeus' life and your own life?
- If Jesus asked to come into your home, how would you want to spend that time? How would it make you feel? What sort of changes to your life, like Zacchaeus, would you make if Jesus was hanging out with you every day?
- Why do you think Zacchaeus went above and beyond in paying back the people he extorted? What does that restitution have to do with his restored identity and new life in the Kingdom of God? What areas of your own life have been radically changed because of your restored identity in Christ and life in the Kingdom of God?



Day 3 – Scripture Survey

Jesus' one-on-one interaction with Zacchaeus caused him to be outrageously generous to the poor.

For today's Scripture Survey, we're looking at some of the ways Jesus talks about wealth, generosity, and giving to the poor. One aspect of Zacchaeus' story that is often overlooked is how he did more than just pay back those he wronged. As the text says in **Luke 19:8**, Zacchaeus said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give *half of my possessions* to the *poor*."

Read the following texts from Luke and ask yourself these two questions:

- What does this say about God's heart for the poor and lowly?
- What does this warn me about money and wealth?

Luke 4:16-21

Luke 6:17-26

Luke 12:32-34

Luke 16:19-31

Luke 18:18-25

Once you've finished reading and reflecting on these questions, ask yourself, "What is God perhaps inviting me to do as a result of this passage?" Share your response.



Day Four – Story

We've heard the story: Jesus was passing through the influential town of Jericho. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so he ran ahead and climbed a tree.

Read Luke 19:5.

Imagine the shame Zacchaeus felt as people began to whisper to each other, "Jesus wants to hang out with *HIM*?" Remember, Zacchaeus was a crook and a thief. He extorted his friends and family for his own financial gain. No wonder people disliked him and shamed him!

Have you ever experienced a time when, like Zacchaeus, you did something you knew was wrong and people found out? Think back and write out how you felt and what you experienced.

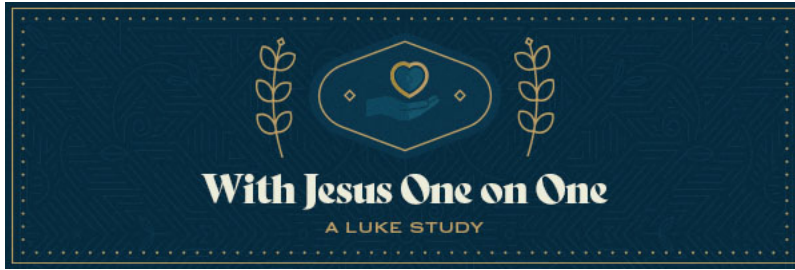
Ed Welch, author of a book called "Shame Interrupted" has an interesting insight. He wrote:

There's a difference between shame and guilt. Guilt's message is, "I did something bad," and I need forgiveness. Shame's message is, "I am bad," which requires an identity shift and relational connection. Sin leaves both guilt and shame in its wake, and shame is what lingers even after forgiveness has been sought and granted. Shame feels like it's welded onto you, but guilt feels like something outside of you.

This is what makes Jesus inviting himself to Zacchaeus' home so special. Jesus makes the relational connection with Zacchaeus *first*. He doesn't start by forgiving Zacchaeus of his sin. Instead, Jesus says, "I want to be in relationship with you." Jesus jumps right through the guilt and begins to help heal the deep wound of Zacchaeus' shame.

It's one thing to believe your sins have been forgiven. It's another thing to believe there is a divine love that wants to break through the shame and linger in your heart. Scientific research in the last 15 years has found a direct link between shame and reoccurring cycles of depression and anxiety.

Friend, Jesus loves you enough to break the cycle of shame of past sins in your life.



Questions for Reflection:

- If you struggle with shame from past choices, how does this encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus give you hope?
- What's your biggest area fear when it comes to Jesus' desire and ability to remove your shame?

Meditate on **Romans 5:1-5**. Read this passage as a prayer of thanks to God for what he has done for those who have put their faith in Him.



Day Five - Application

We left off yesterday with Jesus breaking through the guilt and shame Zacchaeus felt as the crowd whispered around him. Knowing Zacchaeus' past, Jesus essentially said, "Come down from that tree, I'm coming over and we're going to hang out!"

Look at how Zacchaeus responds. **Read Luke 19:8-10.**

As a father, I've encountered something I call, "I'm sorry, but not really." This is when a child says they're sorry because they think that's what you want to hear, but they're not genuinely sorry. Sometimes "I'm sorry" is said half-heartedly, or even sarcastically, but as a parent you know it's not sincere. It takes time to teach your children that parents appreciate a sincere apology, but what they want even more is to see a decision to live differently.

The Bible has a word for this: repentance. To repent means to stop walking in a particular direction (in this case, away from God's moral design for our lives) and literally turn and walk towards him.

Isn't it amazing that Zacchaeus, overcome by divine love, does a complete 180 and decides to give away half his wealth and make restitutions for anyone he's wronged? That, my friend, is life transformation that only happens when we come face to face with God's love.

There's an astounding revelation about God made in **Romans 2:4** where the apostle Paul writes, "...God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance." The reason God shows us mercy and kindness is that we would see it and it would cause us to make a change.

- Are there actions and attitudes you've asked God to forgive, but have little to no intention of changing?
- What actions and attitudes do you need to repent of? Not just ask forgiveness for, but actually stop doing.
- What are you willing to do (seek help, intentional accountability, share your struggle with a trusted friend) to change the direction of your life to walk towards God?
- As a result of your reading and reflection this week, what's God inviting you into as a tangible representation of walking towards Him?

Spend time asking God for courage to show you next steps, and thanking him for his kindness, forgiveness, and love.