

# DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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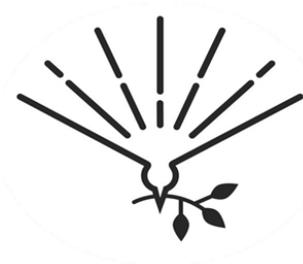


## Chasing Hope: How Ordinary People Make Extraordinary Disciples

### Session 4 - The Scoundrel: Matthew and Zacchaeus

#### Scoundrels – Day 1

1. This week we'll be learning about how and why two men who were leading unsavory lives decided to follow Jesus. Because of their chosen profession (tax collectors), Matthew and Zacchaeus were among the most-hated men in their country, but that didn't stop Jesus from extending them an invitation. People were shocked to see Jesus hanging out with the likes of Matthew and Zacchaeus. Who do you think are the modern-day "tax collectors" - the people who are believed to be the least holy, least desirable people in our culture? Complete the following sentence: These days, I think most people would be surprised to see Jesus Christ hanging out with...
2. Throughout the entire Bible, God had a soft spot in His heart for scoundrels of all kinds. Read the following passage, and write a brief explanation of what happened in each passage:
  - a. Genesis 12:10-16
  - b. Exodus 2:11-15
  - c. Acts 7:54-8:1 (Remember, Saul = Apostle Paul)
3. Can you think of any other unlikely or unsavory characters who God called to serve Him in the Bible?



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4. What do you think God saw in scoundrels like these?

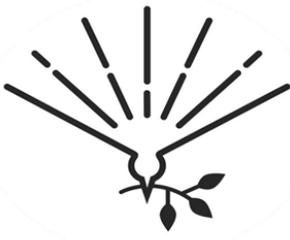
## Introducing Matthew – Day 2

There are some good reasons why Hebrew tax collectors were so despised by other Hebrew people. They were working on behalf of the Roman government to keep take money from Jewish families and send it along to Rome. Read this excerpt from a Bible commentary about how tax collectors were perceived in first century Judea:

*Poll and land taxes were collected by imperial officers. But the authority to collect taxes on exports, imports and goods taken through a country by merchants was purchased at public auction. The right to collect such taxes went to the highest bidders. When they collected taxes, they made a profit from tax receipts that exceeded the amount of their bid. These men, known as publicani, farmed out to subcontractors the right to collect taxes in certain portions of their territory. The subcontractors, in turn, were in charge of other men who personally collected the taxes.*

Matthew and Zacchaeus were both “publicani”, greedy sell-outs who made life miserable for everyone. Socially speaking, they were on par with prostitutes. But that didn’t stop Jesus from going after Matthew.

1. Read Matthew 9:9. Because Matthew was the tax collector (“publicani”, see the quote above) of Capernaum, the town where Jesus lived, it’s very likely and Matthew and Jesus knew each other well. **What surprises you most about this passage - that Jesus called Matthew, or that Matthew responded and followed him? Why?**
  
2. Read Matthew 9:10-11. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, a bunch of tax collectors and other sinners showed up. **Why do you think they stopped by?**



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3. In Jewish culture, sharing a table and a meal with someone implied deep friendship and acceptance. That could be why the Pharisees (i.e., religious leaders) were so triggered when they saw Jesus hanging out with a houseful of heathens. **Who are the types of people today with whom “good Christians” are not permitted to break bread in the public eye?**
4. Read Matthew 9:12-13. **What was Jesus’ response to the Pharisees’ criticism? What does this passage tell you about Jesus’ mission on earth, and what does that mean for Christians today?**

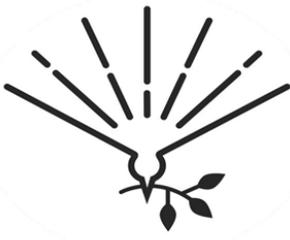
## Introducing Zacchaeus - Day - 3

If you’re like most Christians, your knowledge about Zacchaeus extends no farther than the classic song we all sang at Vacation Bible School:

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he,  
So he climbed up in a sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see  
And when the Savior passed that way, he looked up in the tree,  
And said, “Zacchaeus, you come down!  
For I’m going to your house today, for I’m going to your house today!”*

Some of you are gonna have that song stuck in your head all day now. Sorry about that. It’s important that we understand this fascinating encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus, which took place in Jericho, where Jesus was passing through on his way to Jerusalem, where he would soon be crucified.

1. Read Luke 19:1-10. **What subtle details in this story stand out to you and why?**

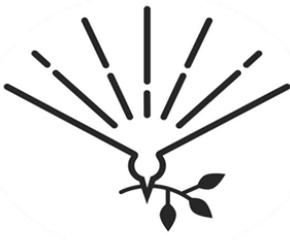


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2. Like Matthew, Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector (*publicani*) and was very wealthy, since he was in charge of hiring and overseeing a host of other tax collectors. **Given his profession and the level of his success, what do you think his reputation was around Jericho?**
3. The passage describes Zacchaeus as being too short to see over the crowd, but he wanted so badly to see Jesus that he climbed a tree just to get a look at him. **What does that tell you about Zacchaeus?**
4. After their initial (and pretty hilarious) exchange, Jesus invited himself over to Zacchaeus' house. He did the same thing with Matthew, if you recall. **Knowing who these guys were, and what people thought of them, what does it tell you about Jesus that he pursued them so aggressively?**
5. Something to consider: Jesus and his 12 disciples (not to mention the unknown number of other followers) needed a place to rest in Jericho before completing their journey to Jerusalem, which was 17 uphill miles away. Not many people in Jericho would have had the means or the square footage to accommodate Jesus and his followers. **What does that tell you about people of means and the Kingdom of God?**



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## “To Seek and Save the Lost” - Day 4

Both of these men represent “the sick” Jesus came to heal (Matthew 9:12) and “the lost” he came to save (Luke 19:10). Let’s take a closer look at this critical component of Jesus’ mission.

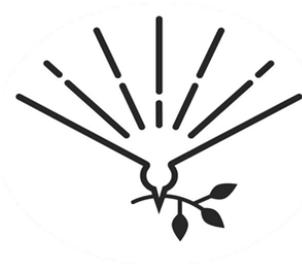
In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories that illustrate the various states of the lostness of humankind and his unstoppable passion to find those who are lost, no matter how they got there.

Read Luke 15:1-7. Again, in verse 2, the religious leaders were complaining about how much time he’s spending with irreligious people. As a response to their grumbling, he told a story about a shepherd who has a hundred sheep, but lost one. **How does a sheep get lost? Be as specific as you can.**

Read Luke 15:8-10. Next, Jesus told a story about a lost coin. Basically the same story, right? Look closer to distinguish the first story from the second. **How does a coin get lost?**

Read Luke 15:11-24. Finally, Jesus told a third story along the same lines - this one slightly more elaborate than the other two. **Contrasted with how a sheep or a coin, how might a son (or daughter) get lost?**

In each of these stories, the response of the Shepherd, the Woman, and the Father was the same. **Who do these figures represent, and how would you summarize their efforts to find the lost sheep, coin, and son?**



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At the end of the third story, Jesus added a postscript about the lost son's older brother, who felt angry and dejected about his father's kindness toward his no-good brother (Luke 15:25-32).

**What was Jesus saying with this conclusion to the Prodigal story, and to whom?**

## The Beauty of Brokenness - Day 5

- 1. Why do you think God called so many "scoundrels" not only to believe in Him, but to be leaders, kings, Bible authors, evangelists, and church-planters?**
- 2. Have you ever been defined or branded by something negative - a pattern of behavior, a string of broken relationships, or some other kind of sin? What was it, and how did it affect you to be branded as such?**
- 3. How have you seen God take your past and turn it around for His glory?**
- 4. How have the sins of your past set you up for extraordinary service to Jesus? Just like Jesus used Matthew's and Zacchaeus's connection to draw even more tax collectors and sinners to himself, who might Jesus bring to salvation by way of your influence with others?**
- 5. Is there still some part of your life - past or present - that casts a shadow over the light of Christ in you? Keeping in mind Jesus' interactions with Matthew and Zacchaeus, what do you think Jesus wants you to do about it?**