

Studies in Generosity

Part 7: The Fuel for Generosity

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TALKING WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide



A publication of **the Disciple**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

- 1 What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- 2 Pastor Doug noted that folks would have been scandalized by the fact that Jesus ate with Zacchaeus. When was a time that you felt offended that **"he"** (fill in the blank: *"that convicted pedophile", "that owner of the local Hooters", "that tattooed and pierced person with the rainbow lapel pin"...*) showed up at church or began attending your small group? Would you tell us about it?
- 3 What does that tell you **about them**? What does it tell you **about yourself**?
- 4 Without naming names, tell us about a person you **now** respect who **had** a scandalous **past**.
- 5 Let's do some "compare and contrast" between Zacchaeus and the Rich Young Ruler...

	Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)	Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-30)
How rich was he?		
How eagerly/respectfully did he come?		
Jesus' demands on him and his response?		
What explains the difference in responses?		
Did he spend eternity in heaven or hell?		
Others' reaction to the outcome?		
My "take away" from this encounter is...		

- 6 Read Matthew 7:17-29 and let's look "behind the scenes" at Zacchaeus and the Rich Young Ruler. Zacchaeus produced "good fruit", so Jesus calls him "a good tree". Mr. RYR produced "bad fruit", so Jesus calls him "a bad tree". Yet Zacchaeus and RYR both were sinners (as we all are). Explain.
- 7 Zacchaeus clearly found the "fuel" for generosity (Luke 19:8), while Mr. RYR did not (Luke 18:23). Jesus said that "a good tree **cannot** produce bad fruit nor **can** a bad tree produce good" (Matthew 7:18). Why do you think these impossibilities exist? What role does the human heart play in all this?
- 8 So, how does a sinner's heart become "good"? 9 Is your heart now good? How do you know?

- 1 Don't spend too much time on this generic "starter question"—there's a lot of meaty, soul-reflection in the remaining questions. Just use it to get the ball rolling on the discussion.
- 2 You likely will need to "prime the pump", so be prepared with your own answer to this question. Do realize, and point out to your group, that typically we don't verbalize our shock or offense—at least not publically. Later on, to our "friend group" we'll say, *"Did you see...I can't believe that...!"* In other words, don't look for an extraordinary event in which you "made a federal case", just run-of-the-mill "holier than thou" grumbling will do for an example of this phenomenon.
- 3 It's hard to know what it tells you about them, but possibilities include:
 - They were deeply convicted about their sin and need for a Savior.
 - They felt slightly bad about their sin and wanted to add "religious good works" to their resume.
 - They're there because someone else twisted their arm (or, they like someone who attends).
 What it tells us about ourselves is easier to ascertain! Possibilities include:
 - We are as yet unconverted, and still believe in our own righteousness.
 - We are converted, but ignorant that we are guilty of everything we judge others for (Romans 2:1).
- 4 Make sure you come with an example, but wait a sec to see if anyone else volunteers. Remember that, if we understand sin accurately, each one of us was a scandalous sinner.
- 5
 - How rich? They both were fabulously wealthy.
 - How eagerly/respectfully? Equally: Zac ignored the shame and climbed a tree to see Jesus. RYR ran up and knelt before Jesus.
 - Jesus' demands? Totally different: Jesus required RYR to give up all his wealth, but he refused. Jesus required nothing of Zac, yet he voluntarily gave it away.
 - Why the difference? It all comes down to repentance at a heart level. One had it; one didn't. What explains *that* difference? The sovereign work of God in the heart. See John 6:37, 44 & 65.
 - Heaven or Hell? Zac clearly was saved. Unless RYR later had a change of heart, he's now in Hell.
 - Others' reaction? Folks were shocked that Jesus loved and saved a scoundrel like Zaccaeus. Folks were shocked that "as fine a man as RYR was" rarely ever gets saved.
 - Be ready with your own "take away". Use it to prime the pump, if necessary.
- 6 Every human (excluding Jesus*) is a sinner, so the question is: "In **which** of these sinners is God at work? In **which** of them has God 'given them a new heart'?" (See new covenant truths in **Digging Deeper**.) **God** is the one who transforms sinners into saints. Saints are good trees, which produce good fruit. [**★Remember— Jesus is a *true* human. He's *also* divine. He's *more* than human, but *not* less than.**]
- 7 **Every** human (including Jesus) operates according to his nature. This is why Jesus disobey God, and why unconverted sinners cannot please God (see Romans 8:5-8). Once a sinner is converted, he receives a new heart, a new nature, and God is at work within him to will and to work for God's good pleasure (see Philippians 2:13). Believers obey God from the heart (see Ephesians 6:6).
- 8 We come to God in repentance and faith. We abandon all hope in our own goodness, and ask for mercy.
- 9 Professions of faith are not necessarily genuine. See Matthew 7:21-23. 1 John was written in order to help people assess whether or not they are saved. See 1 John 5:13. The book of 1 John gives several tests, including: [1] Do we love believers? [2] Do we obey God? [3] Do we hold to historic Christian doctrine regarding the person of Christ?

Sermon Summary

Key Text: Luke 19:1-10

Today's message is the final in a series on the broad topic of generosity. What we have discovered is that God wants us to imitate Him and be radically generous in every area of our lives! Zaccheus' story tells us what fuels God-honoring generosity:

I. The Necessity of Conversion Zaccheus had the good fortune of living in Jericho—a very wealthy city. It was a great place to be a tax collector. But Zaccheus paid a price for his wealth. As a tax collector, he would have been among the most hated men in Israel. Because he worked for the Roman government, he was considered a traitor. So Zaccheus was rich, but rejected. He was a social and religious outcast who brought shame upon his family. Zaccheus was wealthy, but miserable. Having sold his soul for money, he discovered that all the wealth in the world could not satisfy the deep longings of his heart. He wanted mercy and forgiveness, and Jesus knew it. He needed a new start, the kind that only genuine spiritual conversion can bring about.

II. The Circumstances of Conversion A crowd was not a safe place to be for a small, hated man like Zaccheus, but he was determined to see Jesus, so he climbed a tree. He must have looked rather silly as he perched there on a branch—but he really didn't care what other people thought. He was determined to see the man he had heard so much about. He must have thought that somehow Jesus could ease the pain and guilt that he felt. Although Jesus had never met Zaccheus, being God incarnate, he knew his name; he knew his sin and he knew the misery of heart it had brought him. Jesus stopped, looked up in this tree, and spotted that hated tax collector. And with compassion he said, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." This is no normal house call. This is a divine appointment! Zaccheus wasted no time scurrying down from the tree, and invited Jesus to lunch. The crowd milled around outside, grumbling that Jesus had become the guest of a despised tax collector. The problem with this crowd, and quite frankly, the problem with us, is that we can see everyone else's sin so clearly, but we can't see our own. In the crowd's mind Zaccheus was a sinner and they were not. They also thought that Jesus should have known better than to associate with someone like him. They assumed that God is not interested in sinners, that he wants nothing to do with them. But God loves sinners and actively seeks us out.

III. The Key to Conversion Zaccheus recognized what the crowd did not—that he was a sinner in need of God's grace—and he received what the crowd did not: forgiveness of sin. Salvation came to Zaccheus' house because **Jesus** came to his house. Salvation can only be found in Jesus! That day Zaccheus became a brand new person with a brand new status and a brand new identity!

IV. The Results of Conversion Zaccheus sought to make restitution—and doubled what the Law required. Good works, restitution, and generosity of spirit are by-products of a life touched by the grace of God in Christ. There are so many things we can learn from Zacchaeus' story. Here are a few...

- Material success does not satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart.
- It is never too late to turn to God.
- If you are a sinner, you are a ripe candidate for God's grace!
- Generosity of Spirit is fueled by our understanding of the enormity of God's grace towards us.

And Zacchaeus' spiritual transformation was not superficial or short-lived: according to church tradition, he became an elder in the church at Caesarea, appointed by the Apostle Peter himself! That divine appointment Zacchaeus had with Jesus changed his life forever!

Do you see yourself as God sees you: a sinner who has broken God's moral law and who, as a result, stands guilty before a Holy God? Have you humbled yourself, admitted that there is nothing you can do, no restitution you could make, to make things right with God? Have you placed your trust in Jesus as your sin bearer?



Think for a moment about Jesus' story of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15). There are three characters: [1] a scandalously selfish younger son, [2] a forgiving and generous father, and [3] an always obedient older son. Most parents weep over prodigals, and rejoice over compliant children.

But the older son wasn't in fact "always obedient". When the father begs him to rejoice at his brother's safe return and to come into the feast, he angrily refuses!

Who is the "older son"? He is the self-righteous Pharisees (Luke 15:1-3). The feast represents heaven, the father is God, and the younger son is repentant sinners. Repentant sinners get into heaven—no matter how wicked (v. 30). Proud, self-righteous people don't—no matter how compliant they may appear.

Are you satisfied with "compliant kids" because they're easy for you to parent? Or, are you aiming for saved kids, who make it to heaven? What do you think?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Zacchaeus found salvation "because he is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9).

You too can be a "son of Abraham":

"In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham came to the Gentiles...

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham...

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

(Galatians 3:14, 7, 29)

Monday— Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

- What was the weakness of the old covenant (v. 31-32)? (See Exodus 19:5 and Jeremiah 11:7-8.)
- How does the new covenant differ from the old (v. 33-34)?

Tuesday— Read Jeremiah 31:31-34

- Circle the word "they" in v. 32 and "I" in v. 33-34. (Did you find all five occurrences?)
- Contrast the performance of the Jews with that of God.

Wednesday— Read Jeremiah 32:37-42

- Again, circle every reference to God ("I", "Me", "My", etc.) and every reference to God's redeemed people ("them", "they", etc.).
- What do you observe about...
 - why they were in that predicament? Who drove them there? Why did he do it?
 - who is active in their restoration? Who is a passive recipient of restoration?
 - what behavioral changes result from this restoration in the lives of those who are rescued?

Thursday— Read Ezekiel 11:19-20

- Who does what in the new covenant?
- What is the result in the lives of those rescued?

Friday— Read Ezekiel 36:22-36

- This is an extensive, detailed passage. Make a list of everything that...
 - makes sense to you.
 - confuses you.
 - intrigues you.
 - offends you.

Saturday— Reread Ezekiel 36:22-36

- What is God's compelling motive for restoring his people? How does that strike you?
- What all does God have to do in order to restore his people? What do we have to do?
- Who gets the glory from this restoration? Who benefits from this restoration?
- How evident is this restoration? How durable is this restoration?
- Have you experienced this? Are you a "son of Abraham"?