



ENTER God's presence

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

– Psalm 19:7-9

Heavenly Father, everything you have prepared for us is good. As we gather around your word, prepare us to receive all that you have again for us today. Fill us to overflowing with you Holy Spirit so that even when enemies surround us we will know your presence with us. Amen.



SHARE life together

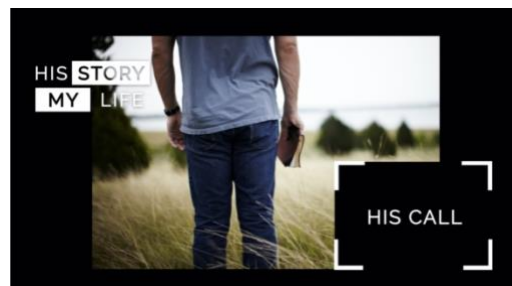
1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Can you share a time when God showed up in your life in a suprising way?**
4. **Share a time from you life when it was difficult for you to see God.**

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Small, insignificant, ignored, misunderstood and of little importance? Have you ever felt like you don't measure up or are not enough? Do you sometimes feel like you are constantly trying to prove yourself, not just to others, but to yourself and maybe even to God? Do you feel stunted in your growth, that life has cut you down to size? If you do, then your story mirrors that of many in the world who feel like they don't belong and don't have a place, who are crying out to be accepted and noticed. Whatever you see in yourself, or feel about yourself today Jesus wants you to know that he wants to be a part of your story. He will not pass you by. Today the story of Jesus intersects with your life, writing a new chapter in your story, so don't miss his call.

Week beginning:
Sunday 11th October 2020

Worship series:

His Story...Your Life



VERSE for the week

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

- Luke 19:10



REMEMBER this week

Whatever has made you short in stature, whatever has cut you down in life, Jesus sees more in you that you see in yourself. He comes and makes himself at home in your life and calls you into a new life filled with acceptance and love.



LISTEN attentively

Read Luke 19:1-9

5. **What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
6. **What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
7. **Tax collectors in Bible times were often considered traitors and cheats. If the story of Zacchaeus was set in our time and culture, what job could Zacchaeus have had that would be viewed in a similar way to a tax collector was back then?**

At a very basic level, the entirety of Scripture is the story of God's interaction with his creation, particularly with humanity. This week's story from Luke's gospel, is a story of a particular encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus yet it reflects many truths about our own relationship and interactions with Jesus. Zacchaeus was not a popular man, he was physically short so people physically looked down on him, but his role as a tax collector and the corrupt way in which he was known to carry out his office also meant people looked down at him for other reasons too. As far as his community was concerned, Zacchaeus was an outsider; not someone who anyone would choose to associate with, especially if they valued their own reputation. Whether it is because of his own awareness of his outsider status, or maybe out of a sense of caution around people of power and authority due to his questionable methods of tax collection, Zacchaeus doesn't approach Jesus, all he wanted was to 'see who Jesus was' (v3). Yet as he climbs the tree in order to see Jesus, Jesus himself approaches Zacchaeus and calls to him with an invitation, an invitation to come down and to *be with* Jesus, not just to look at him from a distance. Jesus calls Zacchaeus the outsider, into a relationship of love and acceptance.

8. **Have you ever felt like an outsider? How did it affect the way you viewed or valued yourself?**

Sometimes the situation in our own lives can make us feel as though we are not worthy to come to Jesus. Perhaps we are dealing with a sense of shame about something we have done or which has been done to us? Maybe the world around you has told you that you are worthless and you have begun to believe that? Maybe you have failed at something that you thought you should be able to do and now feel like a failure? There are just so many ways that we can be made to feel like outsiders or failures. But the joy and the miracle is that despite all of this Jesus sees us and calls to us. Jesus knew where Zacchaeus was, he did not look for him among the crowd, Jesus saw him in the tree. Jesus knows when we have wandered off or been forced to the edges. He knows where to find us and he comes to us. He knows we often have trouble coming to him and so he comes to find us, calling out to us every step of the way, inviting us back into his arms, calling us back from the outside and into his love and mercy.

9. **Zacchaeus didn't go to Jesus seeking acceptance, Jesus came to him and offered it. When have you been aware of Jesus reaching out, or calling out, to you in your life?**



GROW deeper

Have a look at John 20:30-31

Sometimes we can be reluctant to share the stories of our experiences of God with others. Perhaps we are afraid of what others might say? Look at the reaction of those around Zacchaeus when Jesus stepped into his life. Many couldn't believe that Jesus would hang out with a guy like Zacchaeus. Maybe our stories seem too outrageous or too personal to share. Sometimes we can be unsure if it was actually an encounter with God or just some kind of experience our subconscious mind imagined for us. But the changes these encounters bring are usually undeniable. Zacchaeus, a little man who was known to cheat and skim the cream off the taxes he collected, became an honest and generous man after hosting Jesus in his house for the evening. John, the gospel writer reminds us why it is important to share these stories even when we might find it scary or intimidating to do so. We share the stories of our interactions and encounters with Jesus because they help us and others to hold onto the truth of who Jesus is and recognise his continuing presence and activity in the world today. Like the story of Zacchaeus helps us to see how Jesus calls out to us, so our lives, when they intersect with God's story can be a tool which helps others to see Jesus at work.

10. **Share one story from your life which you believe could communicate and demonstrate God's love and care for you and others.**

11. We could read the story of Zacchaeus and say, “Isn’t it lucky that Jesus saw him up in the tree!” How often do you think you attribute the work of God in your life to luck or coincidence?

John and the other gospel writers made various editorial decisions about which stories of Jesus they told or recounted in each of their gospel accounts. That doesn’t make any of them better or worse, it makes each of them a unique insight into the way Jesus interacted with those around him. Each story, recorded by a different hand offers unique insight and revelations into the nature and character of Jesus, who reveals to us the nature and character of God. Yet they all had a common purpose, to provide a witness to the life of Jesus that would help others to recognise him as God’s promised Messiah. The writing of Scripture, the canon of the Bible may be complete and end with the words of Revelation chapter 22, but the story of God’s interaction with his people is not done. God is still at work in and through his people today. There are always new stories of what God has done in the lives of his people. We might need more practice at identifying them and sharing them from our own lives, but rest assured, that God is constantly calling out to you, drawing you deeper into his love and his continuing story of relationship with humanity. He wants to call you to closer to him and deeper into his story of salvation. God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has always been the main character of the story; it is His story after all. But he has supporting roles for all his people, and it seems he has a particularly large soft spot for outsiders and unlikely heroes. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, John the Baptist, the 12 Apostles, all were outsiders in one way or another.

12. How does the idea of being called into the unfolding story of God’s interaction with humanity make you feel?



LIVE purposefully

Sometimes we can hear the testimonies of others who have had incredible conversion experiences or encountered miraculous signs and wonders from God and feel intimidated about sharing our own stories of God at work in our own lives. We can feel like they are somehow less impressive or impacting. Yet when it comes to evangelism or sharing faith with others, your own life with God is a unique part of the story that God has given you to share. Yes, we need to ensure that as people come to faith we introduce them and familiarise them with the story as recorded in scripture, but God does not just call us into a past event, God calls each of us into a real, insider relationship with him for today. If we do not share this reality with people as we share the gospel, then we are only giving half the picture.

13. In your devotional time this week, pray to God, asking him to help you write down an account of where his story has clearly intersected with you life. If you are having trouble, start with the story which provides the answer to this question, “Why are you a Christian?”

14. Keep an eye out for God at work in your life this week. Pay attention to those things you might normally call luck or coincidence. Keep a list to share with your LifeGroup next time.



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his unfolding story of love and redemption
- Thank Jesus for the call he gives to each of us to be members of his body and part of his story.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see more clearly the places where God breaks through into your life and to share those stories with others.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], Jesus sees you and loves you. Amen.