

# Forgiven Series

## Lesson 2—Zaccheaus: Letting Go of Sin

### OVERVIEW

Bible Passages: Luke 19:1-10

Key Verse: Psalm 103:12—“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Items Needed: *A rock for each student, lots of paper*

### BEFORE CLASS

**Preparation:** *Your preparation will determine what direction your class will go.*

- Consider the forgiveness you have experienced in Christ.
- Consider times in your life when you have been tempted to hold onto sin.
- Consider the depth of gratitude for forgiveness that your life exhibits on a daily basis.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Contact students who missed Sunday School last week.
- Pray for each student by name.

### CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

*The first time a student is absent, give them a call. Following the second absence, send them a postcard. The third week they are absent, pay them a visit.*

*Think about it: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.”*

*Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.*

## OPENING ACTIVITY

### Activity: Paper Wads

As students enter the room, give each of them two things:

- (1) **A rock.** Tell them that they are supposed to tightly grip the rock in one of their hands the entire lesson. They can't put it in their pocket or set it down—they have to hold onto it and they can't loosen their grip.
- (2) **A small stack of about 10 pieces of paper.** Tell them to individually wad up each sheet of paper. While they wad the paper up, verbally give them the following quiz.

### Activity: Trivia Quiz

- (1) *On the dart board what number is opposite number 1?* (The number 19)
- (2) *What sport uses stones and a house?* (Curling)
- (3) *In the Bible, who deceived an escaping captain, telling him he would be safe in her tent, then, after giving him a drink of milk, murdered him?* (Jael—Judges 4:17-21)
- (4) *In the Bible, which queen met her death by being thrown out a window and trampled by horses?* (Jezebel—2 Kings 9:30-33)
- (5) *What musical instrument was sold in a 1990 auction for 1.6 million dollars?* (A Stradivarius violin.)

- *What would your score have been? Perfect?*

All Correct = 100%  
Missed One = 80%  
Missed Two = 60%  
Missed Three = 40%  
Missed Four = 20%  
Missed Five = 0%

SAY: No one is perfect. We've all missed questions. We've all made mistakes.

- *What do you think the difference is between a mistake and a sin?* (A mistake could be a wrong answer on a test, like the one above, or accidentally getting whole milk when your mom wanted you to get 2% milk. But that's not sin. Sin is an act of rebellion against God and His standards for living.)
- *Do you think people ever try to rationalize sins by calling them "mistakes" instead of what they really are—an act of rebellion against God?*

- *What are some other ways people try to rationalize their sins?* (Examples: It's not that bad. It's just a "small" sin. I had no other choice. It's just a "white" lie. It was an accident. Etc.)

## KEY VERSE

### Activity: Paper Push

**SAY:** When you came into this room, I gave you some paper. It was clean and neat but you've taken it and made a mess out of it. Now it's crumpled and wadded up. Each of these pieces of paper represents a sin you've committed at some point in your life.

- *What are some bad choices you have made?*
- *How do you feel about these choices? Do you ever find yourself bragging about bad things you've done in the past or do you feel embarrassed or ashamed because of them?*

**SAY:** This paper represents sin and Man's nature to rebel against God. Now we are going to use this paper in an illustration to show you what to do with sin.

**EXPLAIN THE ACTIVITY:** Draw an imaginary line down the middle of the class (or if you desire, put a piece of masking tape down the center). The purpose of this activity is to get as much of the paper as you can off your side onto the other side. You can roll it, push it, or throw it. At the end of thirty seconds, whichever side has the least number of paper wads wins.

**IMPORTANT:** Remind them that even though they are holding onto a rock to be sure not to accidentally throw it.

At the end of the game, announce the winning side and have the students put the paper wads in the trash can.

- *How is this activity like trying to get rid of sin?*
- SAY:** In the same way that you tried to get the paper as far away from you as you could, God wants you to stay as far away from sin as you can. But, also, in the same way that you couldn't get rid of the paper simply by throwing it across the room. There is nothing you can do to get rid of your own sin. It will always come back to you. It will always remain. That's the reason you need a Savior—Someone who can completely remove your sins.

### Read Psalm 103:12.

- While turning there, **ASK:** *What is the easiest way to find Psalms in the Bible?* (By turning to the middle.)
- *How far is the east from the west?*
- *Is there any greater distance than from east to west?* (Think about it: If you fly north and keep going north across the globe, you will eventually find yourself going south. But if you fly east

across the globe, you'll never find yourself going west. You could fly east for the rest of your life and never go west.)

- *What does it mean that God has forgiven our transgressions as “far as the east from the west”?*

**SAY:** The depth and scope of God's forgiveness is greater than we could ever imagine. When God forgives our sins, He completely removes them, so far that no matter how far in life you travel, you will never come across them again—They are completely gone.

- *So what does a person have to do to be forgiven?*

- *Is simply asking God to forgive you enough? (You cannot earn God's forgiveness by working or doing good deeds, but you have to be willing to turn from your sins. If you ask God to forgive you but you're not willing to repent, then you don't really desire to be forgiven. Your prayer for forgiveness is just lip-service or a way to trying to sidestep guilt. Real forgiveness always follows real repentance.)*

- *Answer this to yourself: Are there any sins in my life that I haven't let go of? Any sins that I haven't been forgiven for?*

**SAY:** To be forgiven, a person must be willing:

- (1) To turn from their sin.
- (2) To specifically confess their sin to God (To “confess” means to “agree with” God that what you did was wrong.)
- (3) To be willing to do whatever God might instruct you to do to make matters right with people you might have wronged.

## **BIBLE LESSON**

### **Read Luke 19:1-10.**

While turning there, **ASK:** *What are the Gospels?* (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—where the life of Jesus is found.)

- *What is the easiest way to find the Gospels in the Bible if you don't already know where they are?* (Turn to the middle of the Bible and you'll be in or near Psalms. Then turn to the middle again on the New Testament side. This will put you in or near the Gospels.)

After reading the Scripture passage, **ASK:**

- *What was Zaccheaus' reputation?* (He was a tax collector during a time when Israel was occupied by Roman authorities. The Romans believed “who's better to get money from a Jew than another Jew?” Therefore they used their own people to collect taxes. This meant that tax collectors were traitors. But to make matters worse, the Romans would tell the tax collectors how much money to collect. Anything they collected above that amount was theirs, so they could charge whatever they wanted and the Roman Empire would back them up. Thus, tax collectors were also thieves. They were

considered to be the worst and most unclean sinners and Zaccheaus was a “chief” tax collector. Religious leaders called them pariah-dogs (pariah meaning “outcast”) and would many times spit at them or not even look at them as if they didn’t even exist. Pharisees taught that God rejoiced when a tax collected was thrown into hell.)

**SAY:** Zaccheaus had a reputation on the basis of the job he held.

- *What do you think gives you your reputation?* (i.e., sports, intelligence, kindness, etc.)
  - *What kind of reputation did you have at your school this past year?*
  - *Are you happy with this reputation?*
- *How do you think Zaccheaus felt when Jesus looked at him, spoke to him, and said He would stay at His house?* (He was glad but he was also convicted of the wrongs he had done.)
  - *Are there people in your life that might be glad if you spoke to them or offered to spend time with them? Do you think your reputation would draw them into a closer walk with God?*
- *What did Zaccheaus do to offer restitution for the wrongs he had done?* (He gave to the poor half of his possessions and paid back four times the amount of what he had cheated from others.)
- *What is restitution?* (Webster defines restitution as, “an act of restoring or a condition of being restored...a making good of or giving an equivalent for some injury.”\*)
- *What is the difference between restitution and forgiveness?* (Forgiveness only comes from God. No act or restoring matters can take your sins away, but trying to make matters right with those you have hurt is many times the response or result after one has been forgiven.)
- *What might you need to do after asking Jesus to forgive you to make matters right with others?* (You might need to ask forgiveness from someone you’ve hurt or give back something you’ve stolen, etc.)

## **WRAP IT UP**

### **Final Thoughts**

- *How did it feel to hold the rock for so long?*
- *How did it hinder completing certain tasks? Did it make it harder to wad up the paper? Does your hand hurt yet? Are you tired of holding onto it?*

- *How is holding onto this rock like holding onto sin?*

**SAY:** None of you will hold onto this rock all day long because that's not what you want. In life you have to decide what you want:

- *Do you really want a close relationship with Jesus?*
- *Is there a sin you are still holding onto?*
- *If so, do you see the pain and trouble you will experience by letting sin hold you back from Christ?*
- *If you are holding onto sin, what will it take to make you let go?*

**Have a volunteer read Proverbs 20:30.**

- *What does this mean?* (It means that sometimes it takes painful experiences before we are willing to change our ways.)

**Have a volunteer read Hebrews 12:6-8.**

- *What does this mean?* (It means that if you claim to be a Christian but you can live comfortably in sin without God's discipline, you are not a child of God's. In other words, if you're happy with your sin and not willing to let go, you'd better go back and re-examine your salvation experience. Was it real? Did you fully surrender to Christ?)

**SAY:** God loves you. He is patient and merciful but sin is serious business. God has no tolerance for sin of any kind and right now you are either right with God or wrong with Him. There's no middle road. Choose today to get rid of your sin and if you need to talk with someone, we are always here for you.

## **A Moment of Silence**

Give students a moment of silence to prayerfully examine their hearts and to ask God if there is anything in their lives that doesn't belong. Then, if they are willing, have them silently repeat after you as you pray the following prayers: (Pause at each slash mark.)

*(Have everyone bow their heads and close their eyes)*

**SAY:** If you know you've been doing wrong things and you're ready to let go of your sin, silently pray the following after me:

*Dear Lord Jesus, /*

*I'm tired of wavering. / I hate my sin. / Please forgive me. /  
Clean me. / Make me new again. / I repent / and turn from  
every wrong thing / in my life. / I am completely yours / and  
I'll do / whatever you want me to do / If I need to apologize  
to someone / I'll do it. / If you want me to make / a public  
recommitment of my life, / I'll do it. / I'll follow you / in  
everything. /*

*In Jesus' Name—Amen*

**SAY:** If you know you've been doing wrong things and you're *NOT* willing to let go—you're still holding onto sin for some reason but you know you need to let go, then I challenge you to silently pray the following after me:

*Dear Lord Jesus, /*

*I'm in sin / and I don't want to let go. / I'm in rebellion  
against You / and I pray / that You will press Your hand  
against me. / That you will discipline me / and drive all  
desire for this sin from me. / Make my sin disgusting / in my  
sight / until I despise it. / Do whatever it takes / to rip this  
evil from me / that I may be right with You / and follow You  
/ and not miss out / on Your great plans for me.*

*In Jesus' Name—Amen*

## **Prayer Time**

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

\* Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition, (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2003), 1062.