



GROWTH

JESUS IS GOD WHO CAN FORGIVE YOUR SINS AND GIVE YOU

The **BIG IDEA:**

Jesus just wants to know me and have a relationship with me; he's not looking for me to do anything for him. In response to His love for me and relationship with me, I will want to know him by reading the Bible and praying and will want to overflow by telling others about Jesus and meeting with other followers of Christ.

The **PROBLEM:**

Like the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 18:18, everything in us as people wants to know what "we need to do" to get eternal life. We want to earn a relationship with Christ, not receive it. But the standards are impossible.

Our **RESPONSE:**

All we can do is receive Jesus' love, compassion, and pursuit. As we do, we will want to respond with love toward Jesus and others.

The **IMAGE:**

A wheel has often been used as an illustration of how a new believer can begin walking with God. The four spokes represent: prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, and evangelism. These are important actions to take, but the more important part is the center of the wheel, representing intimacy with Christ. The actions should be a natural overflow of our intimacy with God, not tasks

done in hopes of making ourselves more acceptable to Him.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC:

Living things grow naturally. Our relationship with God is one of those living things. But sometimes we feel confused about how to grow in our relationship with him. Or we may think it happens by fulfilling certain religious obligations. So it's important to understand that growth happens when we experience Jesus and respond to his love. Those responses include reading his word, connecting with him in prayer, telling others about him, and meeting with other followers of Christ.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

What I want the group to know and understand:

Jesus sees us, knows us by name, and pursues a relationship with us without condition. As we know and experience this we will overflow with wanting to know and obey Him.

What I want the group to experience: Jesus seeing, knowing, and pursuing us.

How I want the group to respond: like Zacchaeus by wanting to know and follow Jesus and by extending his extravagant grace to others. This will include reading His Word, praying, telling others about Jesus, and meeting with other followers of



LAUNCH:

If you could meet any famous person, who would it be and why?

EXPLORE:

1. Read Luke 19:1-10. What does Jesus do and say to Zacchaeus?

Jesus looks up and sees Zacchaeus and tells him to come down from the tree because he wants to stay at his house. Notice that Jesus never focuses on Zacchaeus' wrong behavior.

2. Knowing that Zacchaeus was a tax collector which made him among the most despised people in Jesus' day, what would you have expected Jesus to say or do?

Allow the group to discuss.

3. How does Zacchaeus respond? What does he do and what does he say in response? Why do you think that is?

He receives Jesus gladly and says he'll make restoration for past actions. Jesus notices Zacchaeus in the crowd and invites him into a relationship. Zacchaeus feels known and loved.

4. What is the crowd's response to all of this? Why do you think it's different than Zacchaeus' response? Whom are you more like--the crowd or Zacchaeus?

The crowd grumbled because Jesus had gone to be the guest of a sinful person. Perhaps it's different because they weren't experiencing a personal relationship with Jesus, not experiencing his love and care for them. They were at a distance in their relationship with Jesus and only focused on judging outward behavior. When I believe and receive Jesus' love for me, I respond like Zacchaeus. When I don't, I act like the crowd.

APPLY:

5. Imagine Jesus was passing through town, came down your main street and stopped to see you, called out your name as you sat in the tree, and wanted to go hang out with you. What would you think or feel? How would you really respond to Him? Why?

Allow the group to discuss.

6. Tell of a time when you experienced Jesus knowing what you were going through and being there for you. How did you respond toward Him after this? If you were in that tree, what do you think Jesus would say to you or what would you want Jesus to say to you?

Allow the group to discuss.

7. As Jesus calls us by name and pursues knowing us, it warms our hearts to want to know Him, too. We want to talk to Him through prayer, read about Him in the Bible, tell others about Him, and meet with other believers. We begin to act and respond like Jesus towards others. Which of these is something you would like to learn more about and apply?

Allow the group to discuss. Explain the image of the wheel. Our relationship with Jesus is at the center, and the spokes are reading the Bible, praying, telling others about Jesus, and gathering with other followers of Jesus. When we like Jesus experience a relationship with him in which he knows and loves us, we will want to know him more by reading the Bible, communicating with Him in prayer, telling others about Him, and joining with other followers of Christ at a church and elsewhere.

8. What motivates you to read, pray, tell, gather with other believers?

Allow the group to discuss.