

**Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**  
**March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)**

- What is one country that you would like to visit? Why?

**Bible Study Questions**

1. Pastor Michael made the statement that for most Americans, God is a figment of their imagination. The God that they worship has been manufactured by what they want in a God. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
  - What are some of the different kinds of Gods that Americans are good at inventing?
  - Have there been times in your life that you have picked and chosen in creating the kind of God that you serve?
2. What is it so important for us to have the correct view of God?
3. Read Luke 19:1-9
  - What do you notice in this story?
  - What about Zacchaeus would have made him an unlikely person for Jesus to honor?
  - Put yourself in Zacchaeus' place. How would you have responded when Jesus invited himself over for lunch?
  - Describe what you imagine the next day would be like for Zacchaeus after having encountered Jesus.
4. Jesus repeatedly received people just as they were. All that was required was that they would come to him (Matthew 11:28). Why is this hard for many of us to understand? Why do we feel a need to earn God's love?
  - Is this aspect of God's character difficult or easy for you to accept?

5. Jesus refused to leave Zacchaeus as he was but transformed him. Ditttrich Bonhoeffer often talked about a "cheap grace" in which we accept forgiveness but no life transformation. It is a cheap grace because it costs us nothing but intellectual assent. Costly grace though is different. *"Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his son."*
  - Have you ever thought about grace that way?
  - Why is cheap grace so attractive to us? How do we combat the idea of cheap grace?
  - Is there a part of your life, in which you have been content and are holding back from God's work?

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## He Receives You as You Are, but Won't Leave You There

- I. **We tend to create a personally packaged God who is a figment of our imagination:** 80 percent of the American people claim to believe in God. Yet many imagine God to be whoever they want God to be. Some want a God who will be angry at the people that make them angry, some want a grandfather who affirms their choices, while others want a God who leaves them alone to be the masters of their own fate. Each of these are figments of their imagination.
- II. **What matters is that worship a God who reflects who he actually is:** Tozer once made the statement that what we think when we think of God is the most important thing about us. This is true because we become like what we worship. Someday, we will each stand before the real God and not the God that we imagine him to be. We need to make sure that our view of God is based on reality. That will be our focus over the next month.
- III. **Zaccheus**
  - **Disqualified by his lifestyle:** Zaccheus was a chief tax collector. This meant that he was despised by the people for working with the Romans. He also lived a lavish lifestyle that had been the result of cheating everyday Jewish people.
  - **Disqualified by his circumstances:** We are told that he was short. This likely would have caused him to be looked over as a young man. It may explain his decision to become a tax collector seeking to “prove” himself through wealth.

## IV. Jesus response to Zaccheus

- **Does not wait for him to clean up his act, but met him where he was:** When Jesus first encounters Zac, he honors him by stating that he would eat in his home. Jesus doesn't wait around for him to clean up his life. Today, we often think that we need to earn God's approval. Yet God did not wait for us, but took the initiative of sending Jesus into our world. Jesus wants us to respond to him regardless of the condition of our lives.
- **Does not leave him in a place of brokenness, but moves him toward wholeness:** After encountering Jesus, Zac announces that he will give away half of his wealth and reimburse those of whom he has cheated. This is a dramatic lifestyle change. He goes from being a self centered cheat, to one who is committing his possessions to care for the poor. Jesus has transformed him. In the same way. Jesus is not interested in merely forgiving our sins. He wants to free us from the brokenness of sin and transform us to be like him. Far too many Christians are content to hold onto a broken sinful life.

## Conclusion

We don't know what happens next for Zaccheus, but we can imagine the following day. Zac isn't accepted by the community, but that doesn't matter. He emerges a new man knowing that he has been received by God. He is now a man with a mission to love people as Jesus has. That same joy is available to us all.