

DRAMATIZED  
**Bible stories**  
ON THE TOPIC OF  
**ATTITUDES TOWARDS WEALTH**

---

**My Pal "Short Stack"**

---

# Topic Overview

## An Introduction to Attitudes Towards Wealth

The Bible talks a lot about wealth and money. In these lessons on Attitudes Towards Wealth we will learn and discuss what is a healthy attitude towards money and wealth and what is a dangerous attitude to have. There are clearly instances in the Bible where God has bestowed wealth to individuals. Abraham, Isaac, Job, Solomon, David, and Joseph (the son of Jacob) are some of the more popular individuals.

Before we dig into our lessons let us consider the following questions. It is up to your group leader to decide to talk about these now or to just be thinking about these over the next few weeks.

- 1) Are there dangers associated with being wealthy? If so, what are they?
- 2) Is money the root of evil? Explain your answer.
- 3) Can you name any non-Christians that are wealthy?

What is their general attitude towards life and others?

Do they appear to be happy?

- 4) Can you name any Christians that are wealthy?

If yes, how do you think they maintain a balance between serving God and managing their wealth?

Do they appear generous?

# Before The Story

- 1) If an important high profile celebrity or politician were to visit your community, who do you think they would stop and visit?
  
- 2) Why do you think they would visit that person or group?
  
- 3) If you knew that one of your favorite celebrities would be in your neighborhood and passing by on foot, greeting people as he or she passed by, what would you do to try and get their attention?
  
- 4) In your opinion do people of similar occupations hang out with each other? For example musicians with musicians, businessmen with businessmen. Why or why not?

# The Story

## My Pal "Short Stack"

Based on Luke 19:1-10

So I have this pal, right? He's totally loaded. I mean, this guy is so rich he has everything anyone could ever want. Or, at least he used to have all that stuff. And, well, he used to be rich. You see, he had this sweet job where he just sat back and collected money from people and there wasn't much anyone could do about it.

It goes like this – some Roman big wig comes into Jericho one day, says he looking for someone to collect “tribute”, which we all know is code for taxes. The way it works is, if you're interested in that job you go and tell the big wig how much you think you can collect for him. But there's a kicker to that deal. If you get the job you have pay all the money you bid to this guy... Win the job - fork over the cash... Yup, pay it all in advance. It's a pretty safe bet that not a lot of people are applying for this job.

So my pal, Short Stack – that's his nickname on accounta he's so short, gets an appointment with the Roman guy and wins the bid. He front-loads a huge wad of dough to this guy who “gives” him the job. Now it's up to Short Stack to get the money from all the people living in his region. The thing is, his region is so big he can't collect all the money himself so he hires a bunch of guys to do the collecting for him.

He kinda does the same type of interview thing that the Roman guy did to him. So these other lesser wanna-be tax collector guys “interview” with Zack – you know Short Stack Zack, to apply for those positions. Now these guys have no idea what Short Stack actually paid out to this Roman guy – and Short Stack ain't gonna tell them. That way there's a good chance he can make some extra moolah off the top. Turns out, there's enough of these guys that really want to work for Short Stack so they bid high for their jobs. They all promised him large amounts of money if he would give them these plush positions.

So Short Stack ends up making a bundle on this deal. As the years pass it's pretty easy for Short Stack to keep his job with the Roman guy. He's getting loaded and even passing a little extra dough to the Roman guy on the side just to make sure he gets to keep his job.

Did I mention Short Stack was one of them Jewish fellows? Man, I tell ya, the Jews really hated Short Stack. I mean, here's this Jewish guy collecting taxes for the Romans who the Jews hated. And it weren't like he was just doin' it – he had a whole bunch a guys collecting lots of taxes and given it all to him. That's how he got to be so rich. He was kinda steeling from his own people. They all knew he was doin' it – but since Short Stack

never actually told anybody how much the Roman taxes were, there weren't nobody that could prove he was stealin' from them. Easy Street, man, that's where Short Stack lived.

At least until this one day when there was this big da-do in town. Some guy was passing through – I think his name was Jesus or somethin' like that. He had this entourage of guys that followed him around, and then this bunch of ladies, and then a bunch of other people and then there were just all these local people that had gathered around to see him. I mean, people were linin' up along the side of the streets like it was some sorta parade or something.

Well Short Stack couldn't see none of what was happenin' on accounta his size and all. He tried to see from the back row – but nope, that didn't work. He tried to push to the front – but nope, that didn't work. So he starts runnin' ahead. Totally not cool. Grown men don't run and especially men of his importance and stature. Then he climbs up in this Sycamore tree. This had to be way out of Short Stack's comfort zone. Ya know what I mean?

“Dude – you're not a little kid! Get down from that tree – you're embarrassing yourself!” I says to him. But he won't hear none of it from me and he just sits there peering over everyone's head trying to see the Jesus guy. As the crowds around this guy get closer they start shoving me back out of the way. It's like I wasn't even there! Everyone wants to see this guy. Then the crowd stops moving. Then Jesus starts looking around at everyone. When he gets to Short Stack he makes eye contact and stops looking around. It's still pretty noisy though. But I hear the Jesus guy, who neither of us have ever met before, yell out, “Yo, Zack! Get down out of the tree right now! I'm comin' over to stay at your house!”

I swear, Short Stack - I mean Zacchaeus - didn't climb out of the tree. He was so dumbstruck by what just happened that he literally fell out of the tree straight to the ground. I helped him up and I was like, “Dude, I'm coming too, right?”

So as if these Jews weren't mad enough at Zacchaeus for being a Chief Tax Collector and stealing from them and all, they were really ticked off that Jesus was going to HIS house. Everyone knows the correct thing for this Jesus fellow to do would have been to invite himself to someone's house that was important. In fact, the more important people thought Jesus was the more important the person's house would be he visited. It would be kind of like Jesus was giving his stamp of approval for the lifestyle of the person's house he visited.

I could hear people in the crowd mumbling. They were sayin' stuff like:

“Really? All the good people in this town and you go to a sinner's house?”

“How good of a Messiah could that guy be if he's going to Zack's house?”

“Does this guy even know who or what Zacchaeus is? There’s no way that if he knew he would go there to eat.”

...So we’re all over at Zack’s house eatin’. I was at the other end of the table so I didn’t hear all of what they were talkin’ about but all of a sudden Zack stands up and makes a declaration.

“Look, Lord,” he says, “Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay them back 4 times as much.”

Whoa, where’d that come from?

“Yo, Short Stack, is that really you?” I yell over to him.

“Yeah, man – it’s me. I’m a new man now!”

Then Jesus says, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

All I could think of was, “What if Zacchaeus didn’t go out of his comfort zone to try to see Jesus?”

# After The Story

- 1) Do you believe that Zacchaeus was a successful individual before he met Jesus? Why or why not?
  
- 2) How do you measure success in someone's life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus because Jesus seemed to be someone of importance?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) In Zacchaeus's day it was very undignified for a man with his social status to run, let alone climb a tree. Why do you think Zacchaeus was willing to make a fool of himself just to get a glimpse of Jesus as he passed by?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) If you were a high ranking official (political or religious) figure in the community how would you feel when Jesus chose Zacchaeus's house to attend for dinner? Why?

- 6) According to the Bible Zacchaeus was a wealthy man and he built much of his wealth stealing (over charging) from those he collected taxes. In fact, he was labeled as a sinner. How do you think he felt when Jesus stopped, looked at him, and invited himself, and everyone with him, to Zacchaeus house for dinner?
  
- 7) Does the Bible mention that it was a problem for Zacchaeus to be wealthy? How did you come your conclusion?
  
- 8) We don't know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus that day. We only know how he responded. Do you believe Zacchaeus would still be a wealthy man after he kept his promises? Why or why not?
  
- 9) Based on this story, do you believe it is a sin to be wealthy? Can a rich man enter into the Kingdom of Heaven? How do we know this?
  
- 10) What do you think changed that day in Zacchaeus's life?



# Topic Review

Intended to be used after reading the following three lessons:  
Camels and Needles, When Less is More, and My Pal “Short Stack”.

1) Which of the three stories had the biggest impact on you? Why?

2) At the beginning of this series we mention wealthy people from the Bible, but they were all from the Old Testament. Does the Bible mention any wealthy Christians in the New Testament?

If you answered “no”, why don’t you think there are any wealthy Christians in the New Testament?

If you answered “yes”, can you name any? What makes you think they were wealthy?

3) Are there changes you need to make in your life so that your attitude towards wealth stays in check?

If so what are they?

How can you accomplish those changes?

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Topic Overview

### An Introduction to Attitudes Towards Wealth

Typically throughout this book most of the questions will be answered. While I may not have answered them in the introduction, the key questions will be answered before the end of the book.

More Biblically educated Christians may already know the answers to some of the questions in the introduction or even many of the questions relating to the different dramatizations. What we really want throughout this book is to allow for some self-discovery. Don't feed your students all the answers, allow them to struggle with them, especially the more difficult questions.

Figuring out a solution on your own holds a higher rate of information retention than just being told an answer. Hopefully we have included enough information, including backgrounds and context to help even the more educated students to have their own "ah ha!" moments.

It may also be a good idea to leave a question or two unanswered until your next meeting time. This allows students time to process what they have learned and try to figure out how to apply that information on their own. Just say something simple like "Let's think about this question some more and get back to it next week."

For those of you that can't stand having questions unanswered - this is for you... Don't share the answers to the first two questions with your students yet. They will come up again in later lessons.

- 1) A wealthy person can begin to rely on their ability to gain wealth for themselves. They can begin to think their success is based on what they are doing and not what God is allowing them to do. They stop relying on God because they have relied on themselves.

Greed and pride are also two very difficult habits or personality traits to overcome.

- 2) Money is not the root of evil. The love of money is. Money in and of itself is not a good or bad thing - it's just an object. It is how the wealth is viewed that can lead to a poor character flaw in an individual.

The answers to the next two questions are sharable with your students. These are just some starting names. To make the list more relevant to your group you may want to add more or different names.

- 3) At the time of the writing of this book names might include Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, various music artists, movie stars, or professional athletes.
- 4) At the time of the writing of this book names might include Billy Graham (evangelist), Chris Pratt (actor), Tom Hanks (actor), Faith Hill (musician), Chuck Norris (actor), and Carrie Underwood (musician, actress).

A quick Google search on “Christian celebrities” should allow you to find people most relevant to students in your group.

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Before The Story

- 1) Answers may vary but your student may have answers like the mayor, the governor, or perhaps you live in a neighborhood that already has a celebrity so maybe that is who they would visit. The answers to this question will also give you some idea of who your students think is important in your community.
- 2) If your students have not already answered this while answering question 1, have them answer it now. The answers to this question will give you some insight as to what your students think are important qualities to look up to or aspire to be like.
- 3) Depending on how each individual student regards celebrity status will depend on what they would do. Some would stand by the side of the road to meet the celebrity while other might just stay home. If a student says they would just stay home ask them if there is someone they would be willing to leave their house to meet if they were in town. Again, this will give you an insight as to the kinds of people your students look up to.
- 4) Allow your students to discuss their answers. Their answers are not so important as there is no right or wrong answer. Do not tell your students this but this question is here to prepare the students for the fact that in our story, in Jesus day, people generally hung around their own kind. Priests hung around priests, tax collectors with tax collectors and so on. People of a similar rank in society may have also mingled but certainly priests and tax collectors never did.

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## After The Story

- 1) The answers for this will vary depending how your students feel success should be defined. Some might say he was successful because he was rich and because he did his job well. Other's might say he was not successful because he was not well liked and he stole from other people in order to make himself rich.
- 2) The answers to this question will help you assess where some of your student may be spiritually depending on if success is based on the amount of money in the bank, or fame of an individual or the quality of one's relationship with God.
- 3) While we do not know why Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus it had to be more the just mere curiosity. It was not cool for someone of his professional status (as in a successful businessman defined as someone who does good at his job) to run and it was even less cool to be climbing in trees. Zacchaeus was willing to embarrass himself in order to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he was passing by.
- 4) Zacchaeus must have heard about Jesus' reputation long before the "parade" was happening. There must have been something about Jesus that drew Zacchaeus to him.
- 5) In those days it was common for a "popular" individual passing by to invite himself over to someone's house for dinner. Today we might consider that impolite or even rude but back then it was considered an honor to be selected. Not all of the Jewish leaders were against Jesus. Some of the Pharisees were interested in him and some even became followers of him - such as Nicodemus.

It is very possible that the religious leaders were hurt that Jesus did not pick one of them. Maybe they were embarrassed that a chief tax collector was selected over one of them. Certainly we can tell by their comments their feelings led to anger. "He has gone to be a guest of a sinner." Which implies they felt they were better or more important than Zacchaeus.

This was not just a humbling experience for Zacchaeus, it was a humbling experience for the rulers of Jericho as well.

- 6) It is very likely that he felt shocked and in disbelief. At least at first. I imagine that his disbelief turned to joy pretty quickly. And based on the change in Zacchaeus's life I doubt that he felt like his life was more important than someone else's.

Had Jesus stopped at a ruler's house it may have had the opposite effect. It may have inflated their ego even more and allowed them to solidify their belief that they were more important than "lesser" individuals who are not as spiritual as they were.

- 7) Listen to your students answers. If you have not already done so, this may be a good time to read the passage from the Bible. Note that Jesus never condones Zacchaeus lifestyle nor condemns it. To our knowledge Jesus never asked Zacchaeus to sell anything (like he did to the rich ruler in the first dramatized Bible story) or give back any money. Zacchaeus has made these decisions on his own.

Because of the type of job Zacchaeus had, he had to be wealthy before he was ever able to accept the job. We know this because he would have to pay the Roman tribute collector a year's taxes for the entire region up front. That had to be a huge amount of money. It is very possible that Zacchaeus had other sources of income besides collecting taxes. There is no reason to believe that after Zacchaeus gave back to everyone he had stolen from that he would be a poor man. And, again, there is also no indication that Jesus asked him to sell or give anything away.

- 8) We actually do not know. Any conclusion we come to is only a guess. As stated in the answer to question 7, it is my opinion that Zacchaeus would still be a wealthy individual. Although, paying back 4 times what he cheated to everyone he stole from would put a significant dent in his bank account. It is my guess that he continued to be a chief tax collector but now an honest one.
- 9) Students may have different answers to this questions but there is nothing in this story to indicate that it is a sin to be wealthy. It is a sin to steal or cheat someone, but not to be wealthy. Read 1Timothy 6:10. There is no problem with the money itself. It is the love of the money that gets us into trouble. Absolutely a rich man can get into heaven. Jesus says so himself in Mark 19:9.
- 10) With all the trouble Zacchaeus was going through to meet Jesus it appears as though the Holy Spirit was working on his heart long before Jesus came to town. After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus was ready to make the commitment to "follow" Jesus. In this story, to follow Jesus would mean to follow the teachings of Jesus not literally go from town to town with him.

If you are in a church setting then you have had a chance to meet Jesus. Is there anything that is stopping you from doing so? If so, what can be done to make Jesus top priority?

# Leader's Discussion Notes

## Topic Review

Intended to be used after reading the following three lessons:  
Camels and Needles, When Less is More, and My Pal "Short Stack".

- 1) Listening to what stories your students choose and why may give you some insight either into their current living situation or the values in life. You may get an unexpected answer such as, "I related to the story When Less is More because I feel like the widow." Or "My dad owns a finance company and doesn't go to church. I feel like my family might fit into the Camels and Needles story." While the question was meant for personal reflection you never know what a student might give for an answer.

Be prepared for surprises. Be prepared not to be judgmental. Be prepared to show compassion and encouragement. Be prepared to follow up with a student outside of the classroom. If a student feels like the widow, a study session, in front of peers, might not be the best place to explore why - especially if they come from a broken home or a family living off government assistance.

- 2) Yes, the Bible does mention wealthy Christians in the New Testament. Here is a list of some of them that gave generously to those in need.

- Joseph, called Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37)
- Dorcas (Acts 9:36)
- Cornelius (Acts 10:1)
- Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6-12)
- Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
- Jason (Acts 17:5-9)
- Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2-3)
- Mnason of Cyprus (Acts 21:16)
- Philemon (Philemon 1)

These people lived faithful Christian lives in addition to enjoying wealth. Note the example they set: they were wealthy AND they gave generously. Throughout their actions they lived out the responsibility placed on their lives that came with the wealth.

Peter Parker's (Spider-Man) Uncle Ben once told him, "Along with great power comes great responsibility". The same can be said for someone that God has entrusted with wealth. Along with great wealth comes great responsibility. Wealth is not just



to take care of you and your family. It is a gift that comes with the responsibility to help take care of others.

- 3) Hopefully everyone has learned they need to change at least a little bit throughout this lesson series. If not, that is okay. It is quite possible that some students just do not think about wealth at this point in their lives. For them, we are planting seeds for future growth and responsibility.

For the students that recognize they need or want to change, help them verbalize clearly what they would like to change. Help them develop a plan of action.

While there are many good additional resources I would recommend Compass Ministries (<https://compass1.org>). They specialize on money matters using Biblical principles.