

GROWING

why growth matters, what it looks like and how it happens

“All over the world this gospel is growing.. ”
[Colossians 1.6]

‘Growth’ is the theme of this series of studies, and it’s begun with the prayer that it will prove to be a real growth point in our life, and lives, as God’s people here.

Growth is expected among God’s people, since the God who makes alive is the God who also makes things grow: and growth is exhorted upon them, as something which is neither occasional nor optional.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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7. Luke 19.1-10 [w/b Sunday 22nd October]

“.. to seek and save what was lost”

Back in Old Testament times the Lord declared that, as the shepherd of His people, He would “*search for the lost and bring back the strays*” (Ezek.34.16). The short narrative here at the start of Luke 19 is, as Jesus Himself underlines in the closing verse of the passage, an illustration of precisely this facet of the shepherd’s ministry, which sees a wayward sheep growing back to true spiritual health and well-being.

The passage both shows the gracious way in which the Lord works in our lives to bring us His salvation, and also provides an example to those in leadership as to what this sort of ‘shepherd ministry’ involves. May our study of the passage issue in growth!

[There may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group: key questions for us as a fellowship in this study are questions 4, 5 & 7. Do try as always to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. **Read Luke 19.1-10.** This well-known and moving story records an incident which is narrated only by Luke. Read it all, as if you’d never read it before, asking God to speak to you through it.

What message does it leave you with?

Why do you think Luke is careful to include this particular narrative in his record of the ministry of Jesus?

2. **Read Luke 19.1-4.** These verses give us a thumb-nail portrait of the man who is later described by Jesus as 'lost' (v.10).

From this brief snapshot of Zacchaeus, what do you learn about him?

In what way(s) is this man 'lost'?

Read **Luke 18.35-43** (the immediately preceding section): what parallels are there between the two narratives, and what are the contrasts?

3. **Read Luke 19.3-4.** We're told here how the tax collector used his initiative to get a good view of Jesus.

Read **John 12.20-21**: why do you think Zacchaeus, like the Greeks to whom John refers, wanted to see Jesus?

How do we help people like Zacchaeus today to see Jesus?

4. **Read Luke 19.5.** The central moment in the narrative sees Jesus encountering the tax collector in a way that is as surprising as it is simple.

What are the features of this encounter which strike you?

How does this verse encourage you? And how does it challenge you?

What lessons might those called to 'shepherd the flock of God' learn from this verse?

5. **Read Luke 19.6.** If the previous verse expresses something of the 'gospel call', this verse shows a man responding to that call.

What do the two verbs and the two adverbs teach us about an appropriate response to the call of Jesus in the gospel?

How has the response of Zacchaeus been paralleled in your own response to the gospel?

6. **Read Luke 19.7.** Luke notes in the passing the perspective of the crowd and their negative reaction to Jesus' engaging with this man Zacchaeus.

Why did 'all the people' take such a negative view of Jesus' action here?

Can you think of ways in which as followers of Jesus today we might expose ourselves to similar muttered criticism?

7. Read Luke 19.8-10. The conclusion to this encounter which Zacchaeus has with Jesus is dramatic: the man's attitudes and actions are alike radically changed - and Jesus insists that this is what 'salvation' looks like.

Zacchaeus' penitence and generosity are not the *reason* why he's 'saved, but rather the *result* of his being saved: how does Jesus' statement in v.10 safeguard this truth?

Has there been this sort of growth in your life? In what ways have your attitudes and actions been changed by Jesus? How has that happened?