

A Gift from Jesus - A Guided Reflection with Clay



Preparation: Prepare a small bag of modelling clay/plasticine for each young person.

1. Begin the session by reading aloud the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1- 10. Encourage the young people to listen carefully to the details. After you read the story, lead a discussion around the following questions:

What did Zacchaeus do for a living?

What was his physical stature like?

How did he get to see Jesus?

What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus?

Why were people upset with Jesus?

What gift did Jesus bring to Zacchaeus?

The teens will likely be puzzled by the last question, because the story does not say anything about Jesus bringing a gift. Point out that the result of Jesus' visit was that Zacchaeus repented for the things that he did wrong and became a disciple. The gift that Jesus gave to Zacchaeus that day was the challenge to allow God into his home and his heart. Because Zacchaeus accepted his challenge, his life was changed.

2. Give each young person a piece of paper. Announce that they will have a chance to enter into a story similar to the story of Zacchaeus. Tell the young people to move into a place in the room where they can be comfortable and alone with their own thoughts. Encourage them to lie down if they want to, but to stay far enough away from other people so that they do not get distracted or distract others.

You may want to begin playing reflective music if it is available. Begin the guided meditation with a relaxation process. One way to do this is to ask young people to tighten and release various muscle groups, starting with their toes and ending with their upper body. Use a soothing tone of voice and style of speech and give the young people several seconds between each directive so that they do not feel rushed.

When they are quiet and relaxed, begin with the following meditation. Pause for a few seconds at each set of pause marks (.....)

In your mind's eye, imagine yourself walking toward home on a busy street. It's a beautiful, bright day. The air is clean, with just a hint of a breeze..... What do you see around you? You've walked this street before many times, but it seems especially busy today for some reason. As you make your way toward home, you notice a huge crowd up ahead. You stand back and look at all the people..... Do you recognize anyone?

As you get close, you hear a lot of commotion. What do you hear? You ask someone what is going on. The person tells you that someone famous is in town. He forgot the person's name, though. No one knew he was coming. He just showed up today. Everyone is trying to get a glimpse of this person, including you..... You move around the crowd, but you can't see who's in the middle..... You ask someone else, and that person tells you that Jesus came to town this morning. No one expected him. He just showed up. Now you *really* want a glimpse of him.

You notice a fence nearby. You know that if you can climb to the top of the fence, you can see into the middle of the crowd. So you make your way toward the fence and climb.... Finally you are at height where you can see Jesus. What does he look like? Does he look like you expected him to look? What is he wearing? Who is with him? Just as you are getting comfortable on your perch, Jesus looks up – straight at you. He calls you by name and tells you that he's been waiting for you. He tells you to get off the fence and come to him. Do it now, the people will let you through....

Now you're face to face with Jesus. How tall is he compared to you? He calls you by name..... and says to you, "I'm coming to your house for dinner tonight. And I need to stay there for the night too. Is that okay?" What do you say to him? How do you feel about the evening ahead? You rush home and tell your family what happened. What happens next?

Jesus arrives about three hours later. You answer the door and let him in. Dinner is not quite ready yet, so you talk with him alone for a while. He asks how you've been doing – really. Tell him The he says to you, "I have a gift for you. It's just what you need right now!" Since you were the one who let me in, you know he didn't bring a bag or box. What gift could Jesus be giving you that is *exactly* what you need right now?

3. While the young people are still meditating, quietly place a bag of modelling clay/plasticine at their side. Try not to disturb their thoughts.

Gently and gradually bring the young people back from their meditation. Call them to this quiet place and time. Ask them to open their eyes slowly and sit up, but to remain quiet. Call their attention to the bag of clay at their side, and encourage them to continue their meditation by moulding the clay into something that represents the gift that Jesus gave them in their meditation. If they need an example, use one of the following:

- If, like Zacchaeus, the gift was the challenge to be a follower of Jesus, they might mould their clay into a pair of sandals or a shoe.
- If the gift was the courage to stand up for something they believe in, they might mould their clay into a podium or microphone.
- If the gift was a willingness to forgive someone, they might mould their clay into an open door.

Allow about 10 minutes for the young people to make their clay creations. Tell them to place their completed clay creation on the piece of paper. Play reflective music to maintain the meditative mood.

4. Gather the young people in a circle. Allow a few minutes for them to examine one another's work. Invite those who want to do so to explain their creation to the group and what their gift represents.

Close the session by reading aloud Eph 2: 7- 10

(Taken from 'Hands on Ideas for ministry with young teens' by Maryann Hakowski and Joyce Schoettler Jennings. 2001 St Marys Press)