

**October 2010**  
**Welcome to TeenText:**  
**Connecting the Text With Teens' Real Lives.**

TeenText's goal is to bring each weekly lectionary text alive and link it to your high school (9th-12th grades) youth's over-scheduled, peer-pressured, cell phone, Internet-packed, real-life lives. The highly interactive process gets them out of their heads and into their hearts. It promotes reflection, appreciation of diverse perspectives and real-world application of the text beyond their classroom. Over time, TeenText can help them begin to see the Bible as a dynamic, relevant resource that can inform them throughout their lives.

**TeenText - No Biblical scholars required.**

Since TeenText is more life study than Bible study, facilitators don't need to be a Biblical scholar or theologian. They do need to have an open heart, commitment and a fearless willingness to facilitate the youth's exploration of each week's text. Using TeenText's activities and open-ended questions the facilitator guides the youth in discovering their individual connections with the text. And since TeenText is all about the youth, facilitators needn't worry about having to have the answers. They are simply there to share the journey.

**How TeenText works - From safe to deep and daring.**

Each TeenText discussion flows very much like a conversation might among friends—from the casual and safe to deeper and more personal sharing.

- First, the discussion is guided by questions focused on what the youth see happening in the text itself (Actors, Action, Setting). Sometimes role-play is used to help remind them that the people in the text were very human; that they had hopes, dreams, fears. Often questions ask how the youth "imagine" the people or individual might have been feeling.
- Second, the discussion moves to questions related to how the youth feel what was discussed in the first segment might be happening in their world today, i.e., "Who is starving physically? Who is starving spiritually? Where do you see this in the news, movies, television?"
- Third, the questions/activities get more personal, more metaphorical, making the connection between what the teens see/feel about what is happening in the text and how they feel it connects with their lives today, i.e., "What is your light within? When have you felt your light has come, that the glory of the Lord has risen within you? What are the cost and the promise to feel your light has come, that the glory of the Lord has risen within you?"

**Daily Reflections - Practice to Help Keep the Connection**

Each discussion guide includes Daily Reflections. You can either hand them out or e-mail them to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth continue to practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest that they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a daily basis.

### **How to prepare**

- Review the text, and suggested questions and activities before your session.
- Allow yourself to simply **BE** with the text, listen to what it says to you.
- Think about the youth who are in your group, and your experience with them to-date.
- Create additional questions/activities you feel would be appropriate. **The questions provided are only suggestions.**
- Gather needed supplies to support suggested activities (pencils, CDs/tapes, Crayons, magic markers, paper, etc.)
- Set up a circle of chairs with a candle in the center.
- Set out copies of the NRSV Bible.
- Write the text chapter/verse reference (Psalm 46:10-12) on a chalk/dry marker board or flip chart.
- Light the candle.

### **Suggested TeenText Process**

- Open with prayer or meditation
- Remind participants:
  - To talk to the candle, not dispute others; this is not a debate
  - To make I statements (i.e., what it says to me, I feel, etc.)
  - To get out of their heads (I think) and into their hearts, feelings, intuitions
- Point out the text for the day
- Ask youth to read the text silently
- Then, ask for volunteer(s) to read the text out loud
- Conduct "What's going on here?" questions/activities
- Conduct "How is this happening in my world today?" questions/activities
- Conduct "How is this happening in my life today?" questions/activities
- Listen carefully to their answers and ask relevant follow-up questions
- Discuss "Between Sundays" opportunities/implications
- Hand out (or e-mail) the Daily Reflections - reinforce practice
- Close with prayer or meditation.

### **Key points to remember throughout your discussion:**

- Go with the flow of the answers; ask follow-up questions when appropriate.
- Don't expect to use all the questions.
- There are no "good" or "bad" answers.
- Allow for silence and reflection between answers.
- Move from section to section as time dictates.
- Don't answer your own questions; answer any participant questions with "What do you feel that means?"
- Avoid summarizing or commenting on what you feel the text might mean to adults.

**Questions/Suggestions?** Contact TeenText at [melissa@educationalcenter.org](mailto:melissa@educationalcenter.org)

# TeenText

October 3, 2010

## Commentary

How do you give your faith a workout?

## Luke 17:5-10

17:5 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' 6 The Lord replied, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea", and it would obey you. 7 'Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? 8 Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" '\*  
\*NRSV

### Suggested discussion questions/activities.

**Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions/activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses; ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.**

### What's happening here? (Setting? Actors? Action? Theme?)

- Who are the participants in the text?
- What's going on in the text?
- What event/which individuals/groups jumped out at you? Why?
- Give participants paper, colors/makers (or other craft supplies). Ask them to be the apostles and create an image(s) of what their feelings might have been after hearing verse 17:6 If you had faith the size of the mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea", and it would obey you. Once participants have completed their image(s), ask them to pair off and as apostles discuss their work. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- Ask the same two "apostles" to pair off and create a conversation they might have had before they asked Jesus to increase their faith. Come back as a group, share the conversations and discuss.

- What might be the challenge the apostles felt they faced that required more faith than they had?
- How might they have felt, feeling they didn't have enough faith?
- What do you imagine the apostles could be the cost and the promise to make that request of Jesus?
- How do you suppose Jesus felt hearing the request?
- What might he have felt could be the cost and the promise to respond as he did?
- How might the apostles have felt being told, "...when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done?'"
- What might the apostles have felt Jesus was commanding them to do?
- How might they have felt hearing they would receive no thanks/recognition for doing what they were commanded to do?

### **How is this happening in your world today?**

- Where/how do you see this happening in the news, music, television shows, books, movies, school, families today?
- Who feels they face a challenge requiring more faith than they have?
- Who asks for more faith?
- Who feels they have enough faith?
- Who feels they need to be thanked/recognized for doing God's will?

### **How is this happening in your life today? (Literally? Metaphorically?)**

- How is this happening in your life today?
- Where do you see yourself in the text? Jesus? The apostles? The mustard seed? The mulberry tree? The slave? The master? One who should be thanked/recognized for doing what God asks?
- How is this your story?
- Give participants paper, colors/markers. Ask them to use the letters of *FAITH* and create an image(s) that illustrates:

1. their feelings about faith
2. what it would feel like to feel your faith was not as strong as you wished
3. what it would feel like to feel your faith was as strong as you needed it to be

Come back as a group, share and discuss.

- When have you felt you needed stronger faith?
- When have you ever felt your faith disappear, weaken, challenged?
- What can you do to strengthen your faith?
- What do you expect of God related to your faith?
- What do you feel God should expect of you related to your faith?
- When have you felt you deserved thanks/recognition for doing what you felt God expected you to do?

- When have you done what you felt you were called to do, but expected no thanks or recognition?
- What do you feel God expects of you that requires more faith for you to do than you feel you have?
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to write down one event in the coming week they feel they might need more faith. Then write down a short prayer affirming their faith to meet this challenge. Ask any who are willing to share. Whether they share or not then ask them to fold the paper and take it home to refer to during the week.

### **Between Sundays**

Ask participants to look ahead to their school, family, social lives in the coming week:

- When might you feel you need more faith?
- When might you feel you have all the faith you need?
- When might you resist doing what you feel God wants?
- When might you do exactly what you feel God wants?

### **Hand Out Daily Reflections**

Print out (or e-mail) the attached Daily Reflections to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a regular basis.

Tell them that the text for next week is Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7.

### **Suggested Supplies**

Paper, colors/markers (or other craft supplies) for the activities in What's happening here? and How is this happening in your life today?

# TeenText

## Daily Reflections

### Week of 10/3

*Find a quiet place, re-read the text, read these reflections, sit with your eyes closed and reflect on them and your responses; consider recording your thoughts in a journal.*

#### Day One

- *When have you felt your faith was less than, weaker than you needed?*

#### Day Two

- *What/how do you feel you can make it stronger?*

#### Day Three

- *What prevents you from making it stronger?*

#### Day Four

- *What is the biggest challenge for you to do what you feel God wants?*

#### Day Five

- *What are the cost and the promise for you to ignore what God wants?*

#### Day Six

- *How does it feel to do what you feel God wants?*

# TeenText

October 10, 2010

## Commentary

What are you waiting for?

### Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

29:1 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon

29:4 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.\*

\*NRSV

### Suggested discussion questions/activities.

**Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions/activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses, ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.**

### What's happening here? (Setting? Actors? Action? Theme?)

- Who are the participants in the text?
- What's going on in the text?
- What event/which individuals/groups jumped out at you? Why?
- Ask participants to be the exiled people of the day (provide costume items if available, i.e. robes, sheets, scarves, etc.). Ask them to sit around an imaginary campfire and create conversations they might have had as they discussed their memories of home, of their present situation and dreams of the future. Following these conversations, have one of the members read Jeremiah's message out loud to the group. Then, ask the people of the day to create conversations they might have had after hearing Jeremiah's words. Discuss.

- What might Jeremiah have felt could be the cost and the promise to send this message?
- How do you imagine the messenger who carried this letter to the exiles might have felt?
- Ask for two role-play volunteers. Ask one to be the messenger and one to be an exile. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had after the message was received. Discuss.
- How might people of the day have felt hearing Jeremiah's words?
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to write a message back to Jeremiah as if they were people of the day. Share and discuss.
- Ask participants to pair off. One is to be their captor and one to be an exile. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had about the text. Come back as a group, share the conversations and discuss.
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to write a prayer a person of the day might have said following hearing the text. Share and discuss.

### **How is this happening in your world today?**

- Where/how do you see this happening in the news, music, television shows, books, movies, school, families today?
- Who is in exile?
- Who is complaining, blaming?
- Who is encouraging?
- Who is facing difficult times, but goes on?

### **How is this happening in your life today? (Literally? Metaphorically?)**

- How is this happening in your life today?
- Where do you see yourself in the text? The exiles? Their captors? One who complains? One who makes the most of a difficult situation? One who blames God? One who has hope? One who sees God in all others, even those you consider to be your enemies?
- How is this your story?
- When have you seen/heard of others in situations they felt were unfair and complained, blamed instead of trying to make the best of it?
- When have you been in a situation you felt was unfair and found yourself spending all your time complaining, blaming instead of trying to make the best of it?
- Ask participants to get comfortable and close their eyes. Ask them to see themselves in a situation they feel isn't fair, complaining and blaming. Then, ask them to see themselves making the best of the situation. Let them sit with these feelings for a while and then ask them to open their eyes, share and discuss.
- What do you feel you are waiting for - being older, being in high school, being in the next grade, graduating?

- Ask participants to pair off and discuss what you feel are the worst things about your present situation and what steps you could take now to make the best of your present situation. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- What do you feel could be the cost and the promise to pray for your enemies?
- What part of you might you consider to be an enemy?
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. On one side of the paper ask them to write a prayer of complaint to God. On the other side of the paper ask them to write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the blessings and for being able to make the best of their situation

### **Between Sundays**

Ask participants to look ahead to their school, family, social lives in the coming week:

- When might you complain? Blame?
- When might you make the best of your situation?
- When might you treat those you consider enemies with kindness, respect?

### **Hand Out Daily Reflections**

Print out (or e-mail) the attached Daily Reflections to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a regular basis.

Tell them that the text for next week is Luke 18:1-8

### **Suggested Supplies**

Costume items if available, i.e. robes, sheets, scarves, etc, and paper, pencils/pens for the activities in What's happening here? Paper, pens/pencils for the activity in How is this happening in your life today?

# TeenText

## Daily Reflections

### Week of 10/10

*Find a quiet place, re-read the text, read these reflections, sit with your eyes closed and reflect on them and your responses; consider recording your thoughts in a journal.*

#### Day One

- *When might you feel you are an exile?*

#### Day Two

- *How might you feel you are treated unfairly?*

#### Day Three

- *When might you complain to God?*

#### Day Four

- *What do you feel could be the cost and the promise to pray for your enemies?*

#### Day Five

- *What part of you do you consider an enemy?*

#### Day Six

- *What one step could you take to stop waiting and make the best of your present situation?*

# TeenText

October 17, 2010

## Commentary

How do you treat prayer as practice?

## Luke 18:1-8

18:1 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. 2 He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. 3 In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." 4 For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming."' 6 And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? 8 I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

\*NRSV

### Suggested discussion questions/activities.

**Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions/activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses, ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.**

### What's happening here? (Setting? Actors? Action? Theme?)

- Who are the participants in the text?
- What's going on in the text?
- What event/which individuals/groups jumped out at you? Why?
- Ask participants to be disciples. Ask them to gather in a circle to hear the text. Read the text out loud and then ask them to sit silently praying for about five minutes as they feel the disciples might have prayed. Let them pray silently. Then ask them come back as a group, share and discuss.
- Why do you imagine Jesus told the disciples a parable about praying always and not losing heart?

- Ask for participants to pair off. One will be the judge and one the widow. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had if they ran into each other in the market place before the judge decided to grant her justice. Come back as a group, share the conversations and discuss.
- What might the judge have felt could be the cost and the promise for him to grant the widow justice? To not grant the widow justice?
- What do you suppose the disciples were feeling upon hearing this parable?
- What do you imagine the disciples felt this parable said about God?
- Ask participants to pair off and be disciples. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had on the way home after hearing this parable.
- How do you imagine hearing this parable might impacted the way disciples prayed?

### **How is this happening in your world today?**

- Where/how do you see this happening in the news, music, television shows, books, movies, school, families today?
- Who is seeking justice?
- Who prays always?
- Who might be losing heart?
- Who is not losing heart?
- Who refuses to grant justice?

### **How is this happening in your life today? (Literally? Metaphorically?)**

- How is this happening in your life today?
- Where do you see yourself in the text? The judge? The widow? Jesus? The disciples? One who prays always? One who does not lose heart? One who prays only in emergencies? One who has lost heart? One who seeks justice? One who denies justice? Faith?
- How is this your story?
- Ask participants to pair off. Ask the first one to talk as if they were talking to God and the other is to listen. Then ask them to reverse roles. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- What is prayer?
- How do you feel prayer is different than having a conversation with God?
- What is the perfect prayer?
- What do you feel are the cost and the promise to pray?
- When have you had an emergency prayer?
- Give participants paper, colors/markers. Ask them to create a timeline that reflects what they feel are important events in their lives from birth to today. Come back as a group and share.
- Looking at the events along their timeline, ask them how might their lives be a prayer? Discuss.
- What might it mean to you if your life was a prayer?

- What might be the cost and the promise to live your life as if it were a prayer?
- What do you expect of God in prayer?
- Ask participants to get comfortable and close their eyes. Tell them they are to be in prayer, but to not say, think anything, but to just listen. Let them sit quietly for five minutes and gently ask them to open their eyes. Discuss what it was like to not talk, to think, but to just listen to God.
- What are the cost and the promise to listen to God?
- What part of you resists listening to God?
- What part of you resists living your life as if it were a prayer.
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to sit a moment and then write a prayer they feel would reflect living their life as a prayer. Ask those who are willing to share their prayers. Then ask participants to take their prayers home and revisit them during the week.

### **Between Sundays**

Ask participants to look ahead to their school, family, social lives in the coming week:

- When might you demand things of God in prayer?
- When might you listen to God?
- When might you feel justice is denied?
- When might you stop praying?

### **Hand Out Daily Reflections**

Print out (or e-mail) the attached Daily Reflections to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a regular basis.

Tell them that the text for next week is Luke 18:9-14.

### **Suggested Supplies**

Paper, colors/markers, pens/pencils for the activities in How is this happening in your life today?

# TeenText

## Reflection Questions

Week of 10/17

*Find a quiet place, re-read the text, read these reflections, sit with your eyes closed and reflect on them and your responses; consider recording your thoughts in a journal.*

### Day One

- *When might you feel you are losing heart?*

### Day Two

- *When might you feel praying is useless?*

### Day Three

- *When have you felt God was unjust?*

### Day Four

- *When might you feel you simply wanted a conversation with God?*

### Day Five

- *How might it feel to live as if your life were a prayer?*

### Day Six

- *What one word do you feel would make the perfect prayer?*

# TeenText

October 24, 2010

## Commentary

How much do you trust yourself?

### Luke 18:9-14

18:9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: 10 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, "God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." 13 But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" 14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.'\*

\*NRSV

### Suggested discussion questions/activities.

**Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions/activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses, ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.**

### What's happening here? (Setting? Actors? Action? Theme?)

- Who are the participants in the text?
- What's going on in the text?
- What event/which individuals/groups jumped out at you? Why?
- Divide participants in half. Tell half of them they are to be the Pharisee and the other half they are to be the tax-collector. Ask them to mill about the room, mingling and praying out loud as they imagine the Pharisee and tax-collector doing. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- How might the Pharisees have felt as they heard this parable?
- How might the tax-collectors (and rogues, thieves, adulterers) have felt hearing this parable?
- Ask participants to pair off. One will be Jesus and one a disciple. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had prior to Jesus sharing this parable. Come back as a group, share the conversations and discuss.

- Give participants paper, colors/markers. On one side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of what they feel the Pharisee was feeling when he finished his prayer. On the other side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of what the tax-collector was feeling when he finished his prayer. Ask them to pair off and discuss. Then ask them to come back as a group, share and discuss.
- What do you imagine Jesus felt could be the cost and the promise to share this parable?
- What do you suppose the Pharisee might have said to friends and family once he returned home after hearing this parable?
- What might the tax-collector have said to friends and family once he returned home after hearing this parable.
- How might the lives of the Pharisee and/or the tax-collector have been impacted/changed after hearing this parable?
- How might the lives of ordinary people of the day been impacted/changed after hearing this parable?

### **How is this happening in your world today?**

- Where/how do you see this happening in the news, music, television shows, books, movies, school, families today?
- Who trusts themselves and regard others with contempt?
- Who feels they follow all the rules?
- Who acknowledges their mistakes, recognizes they need to turn around?
- Who is humble?
- Who feels it is wrong to be humble?
- Who is exalted?

### **How is this happening in your life today? (Literally? Metaphorically)**

- How is this happening in your life today?
- Where do you see yourself in the text? Jesus? The Pharisee? The tax-collector? A rogue? A thief? One who follows all the rules? One who breaks the rules? One who trusts her/himself? One who looks down on others? One who asks mercy? One who is exalted?
- How is this your story?
- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to create a list of people they look down on, feel better than (in school, neighborhood, community other countries, etc.), telling them they may share these later if they are comfortable. Ask them to pair off and share (as much as they are comfortable) and discuss. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- What part of you do you not trust?
- What part of you do you have a difficult time trusting?
- What part of you do you look down on and regard with contempt?
- What are the cost and the promise to "look down" on a part of you?

- Give participants paper, pens/pencils. Ask them to write down the rules they feel they follow. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- Where do your rules come from?
- When have you failed to follow your rules?
- How difficult is it to forgive yourself then?
- When have you asked God to be merciful to you?
- What might you expect for God to be merciful?
- When might you have been afraid to look to heaven?
- When have you exalted yourself (praised yourself highly)?
- Has anyone else exalted you, praised you highly? How did it feel?
- When have you felt spiritually humbled?
- What do you feel are the cost and the promise to feel spiritually humbled?
- What might it feel like to be justified?

### **Between Sundays**

Ask participants to look ahead to their school, family, social lives in the coming week:

- When might you have difficulty trusting yourself?
- When might you look down on others?
- When might you pray for mercy?
- When might you be humbled?

### **Hand Out Daily Reflections**

Print out (or e-mail) the attached Daily Reflections to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a regular basis.

Tell them that the text for next week is Luke 19:1-10.

### **Suggested Supplies**

Paper, colors/markers, pens/pencils for the activities in What's happening here? and How is this happening in your life today?

# TeenText

## Daily Reflections

Week of 10/24

*Find a quiet place, re-read the text, read these reflections, sit with your eyes closed and reflect on them and your responses; consider recording your thoughts in a journal.*

### Day One

- *When might you not trust yourself?*

### Day Two

- *What part of you might you look down on?*

### Day Three

- *What are the cost and the promise to "look down" on a part of you?*

### Day Four

- *When might you feel better than others?*

### Day Five

- *What are the cost and the promise to feel better than others?*

### Day Six

- *When might you ask for God's mercy?*

# TeenText

October 31, 2010

## Commentary

When have you felt lost?

### Luke 19:1-10

19:1 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2 A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' 6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' 8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' 9 Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

\*NRSV

### Suggested discussion questions/activities.

Remember, these are only suggestions. The most effective questions/activities—the ones that help participants connect their story with God's story each week—are often those that are based on your personal knowledge of the participants and where they are. Listen carefully to their responses, ask follow-up questions that help them reflect on the text and their lives, right now, right where they are.

### What's happening here? (Setting? Actors? Action? Theme?)

- Who are the participants in the text?
- What's going on in the text?
- What event/which individuals/groups jumped out at you? Why?
- Ask half of the youth to be Zacchaeus and half to be other people in the community. Ask the Zacchaeus group to sit high up on the back of chairs or someplace where they are separate/higher (up in a tree) than the rest of the "people of the community." Then ask the people in the community to circle the Zacchaeus' repeatedly shouting out, "Short. Wealthy. Hated. Short. Wealthy. Hated." Come back as group and discuss.

- Ask participants to pair off. One will be Zacchaeus and the other a friend. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had about Zacchaeus' feelings at being Short. Wealthy. Hated. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- Zacchaeus was a wealthy, powerful man --- but hated by others because he took their money. How do you imagine he felt about his job in his community, about not being well liked?
- What do you imagine he was feeling when he heard Jesus was coming to town?
- What might he have felt could be the cost and the promise for him to climb up in the tree to see Jesus?
- How might he have felt when Jesus called up to him and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today?"
- What do you suppose Jesus felt could be the cost and the promise for him to say this to Zacchaeus?
- Why do you imagine Jesus said he had to stay at Zacchaeus' house, instead of, "Come down, I must talk to you?"
- Ask participants to pair off. They will be people of the day witnessing the exchange. Ask them to create a conversation they might have had. Come back as a group, share the conversations and discuss.
- Give participants paper, colors/markers. On one side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of how Zacchaeus might have felt before the conversation. On the other side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of how he might have felt after the conversation. Come back as a group, share and discuss.
- The text doesn't indicate Jesus asked Zacchaeus take any action. Why do you imagine Zacchaeus offered to give up half of all he owned and/or repay four times what he might have defrauded from others.

### How is this happening in your world today?

- Where/how do you see this happening in the news, music, television shows, books, movies, school, families today?
- Who defrauds?
- Who is wealthy at other's expense?
- Who is powerful?
- Who wishes to see Jesus/love?

### How is this happening in your life today? (Literally? Metaphorically)

- How is this happening in your life today?
- Where do you see yourself in the text? Someone not well liked? Someone who takes advantage of others? Someone spiritually short? One eager to see Jesus/love? The sycamore tree? One who grumbles, complains? One who Jesus connects with? One happy to welcome Jesus? One willing to repent? One who is lost? One who is found?
- How is this your story?

- Give participants paper, colors/markers. On one side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of when they might have felt spiritually lost, possibly unhappy with themselves. On the other side of the paper ask them to create an image(s) of a time when they felt they were spiritually seen/acknowledged/loved. Share and discuss.
- What might be your metaphorical sycamore tree that you climb to see and be seen by love?
- What part of you do you consider to be spiritually short? That you don't particularly like?
- When have you taken advantage of others?
- What part of you do you feel you might have taken advantage of?
- When have you become aware you were lost?
- Ask participants to get comfortable and close their eyes. Ask them to see themselves anticipating the arrival of Jesus/love, but crowds prevent them from seeing and being seen so they climb up in a sycamore tree. And there they can see and be seen by Jesus/love. And Jesus/love calls out to them, "Hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." Let them sit with these images/feelings for a short while, and then gently ask them to open their eyes. Discuss.
- When have you felt seen/acknowledged by love?
- When have you felt you were found?
- What are you willing to give up to celebrate being spiritually found?
- What do you consider to be the cost and the promise to be found?

### **Between Sundays**

Ask participants to look ahead to their school, family, social lives in the coming week:

- When might you expect love?
- When might you feel lost?
- When might you feel seen/found?

### **Hand Out Daily Reflections**

Print out (or e-mail) the attached Daily Reflections to the participants. The Reflections are designed to help the youth practice connecting their lives and the text during the rest of their week. Suggest they find a quiet place and time to spend with the Reflections on a regular basis.

Tell them that the text for next week is Luke 20:27-38.

### **Suggested Supplies**

Paper, colors/markers for the activities in What's happening here? and How is this happening in your life today?

# TeenText

## Daily Reflections

Week of 10/31

*Find a quiet place, re-read the text, read these reflections, sit with your eyes closed and reflect on them and your responses; consider recording your thoughts in a journal.*

### Day One

- *When have you felt lost?*

### Day Two

- *When might you feel spiritually short?*

### Day Three

- *When might you rush to see/be seen by love?*

### Day Four

- *When might you feel you have taken advantage of others?*

### Day Five

- *When have you felt seen/found?*

### Day Six

- *When have wished to repent for taking advantage of others/of yourself?*