

# TAKE THE FIRST STEP

*«Hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5)*

1

Jesus was passing through the city of Jericho followed by a great crowd of people. Among the people was a certain Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, who because of his profession was considered a **public sinner**<sup>1</sup>. He wanted to see Jesus but since he was very short, he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree. **Jesus called him by name and then invited himself into his home.**

<sup>1</sup>Tax collectors were Jews who collected taxes for the Roman Empire, which caused people to hate them. But they also kept some of the money for themselves. They were despised because of their contact with the Romans and because they worked against their own people, so they were called a “public” sinner.

How does Jesus behave?

## HE LOVES EVERYONE.

He **TAKES THE INITIATIVE**.  
He doesn't care what people think. He shows no prejudice.  
He doesn't worry about complying with rigid social standards.

**He doesn't judge others.**

He doesn't look at whether the person is good or bad. He is actually attracted by those who are weak and can't help themselves.

2

I color one every time I feel that the **flame of God's love** has grown within me.



3

How did Zacchaeus behave?

He was won over by Jesus' love, and was moved to open his heart and admit all his sins.

He said he was willing to make up for all the wrong things he had done.

He promised to live his life in a totally new way. He no longer wants to be selfish, but rather he wants TO SERVE others.

He has a personal relationship with Jesus and peace fills his soul. He feels the joy of being a friend of Jesus and collaborating with him.

4

How can we live this Word of Life?

**Jesus tells us, too: “Hurry down!”**

**-Leave your isolation.** Let go of your fears and prejudices. Overcome your tendency to live in the past and your fear of failure. Go out and meet Jesus.

**-Believe that his love is much greater** than your weakness. He sees your good will more than your mistakes and failures. After all, he came on earth to free you, reinforce **the little flame within you and strengthen your desire to do good.**

**-Welcome Jesus into the home of your soul** by starting over again, with genuine repentance for all you did, even through the sacrament of reconciliation, if that is part of your faith. Start again to be generous in loving your neighbor.

It's hard to describe the peace that comes from this friendship with Jesus! You will experience the joy of being united to him.

You will build authentic relationships with others, based on the love that he taught us.