

Jesus and Zacchaeus

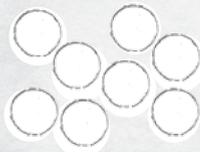
BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 19:1-10

MAIN POINT: Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

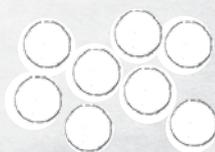
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Leader BIBLE STUDY

Zacchaeus lived in the town of Jericho. He was a chief tax collector. Zacchaeus's job was to collect money from the Jews for the Roman government. Many people knew Zacchaeus, and many did not like him.

The Bible says that Zacchaeus was rich. Tax collectors often collected more money than necessary and kept the surplus for themselves. His greed and dishonesty led Zacchaeus to being looked down upon as a "sinner." But Zacchaeus treasured his wealth more than his reputation.

Zacchaeus probably never imagined that his entire life would change in a single day. When Jesus came through

Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted to see him. He couldn't see over the crowds, so he climbed a sycamore tree and watched Jesus from a distance.

Imagine the crowd's surprise when Jesus approached the tree and called out to Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today I must stay at your house."

Of all the people in Jericho, Jesus chose to visit Zacchaeus! The other people complained. What was Jesus thinking, going to stay with a sinner like Zacchaeus?

The story reveals that Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus changed him. He offered to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back four times what he had cheated from others. Zacchaeus no longer treasured his wealth. He realized that Jesus offered something so much better. Jesus confirmed this evidence of a changed heart: "Today salvation has come to this house."

People who encounter Jesus do not walk away unchanged. Pray that the kids you teach would encounter the real Jesus, the One who came into the world because we needed Him. Jesus came to seek and save the lost—people like Zacchaeus and people like us. "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). When we repent and trust in Jesus, He changes us.



Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

• Add sound effects:

Provide a few small jars of coins for kids to shake whenever you say Zacchaeus's name.

• Use body motions:

Step up on a stool when you talk about Zacchaeus' climbing a tree. Hold your hand to your mouth when you say that Jesus called out to Zacchaeus. Put your hand on your hip when you talk about the crowd complaining.

Jesus was traveling through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was very rich. Zacchaeus was in charge of collecting taxes from the Jewish people in Jericho for the Roman government. Many Jews did not like tax collectors because they were often dishonest.

When Jesus came into town, a large crowd gathered to see Him. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus too, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree.

When Jesus came by, He looked into the tree and saw Zacchaeus.

“Come down, Zacchaeus,” Jesus said. “I want to stay with you today.”

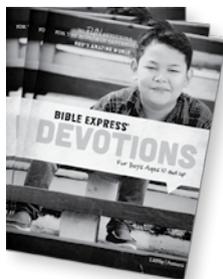
Zacchaeus was happy to welcome Jesus, and he hurried down from the tree. But everyone who saw this complained. “Zacchaeus is a sinner!” they said. “And Jesus is going to stay at his house!”

Later that day, Zacchaeus told Jesus, “I will give half of everything I have to the poor. And if I cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much.”

Jesus told Zacchaeus, “Today you have been saved. You have shown that you are one of God's people.”

Jesus said, “I have come to seek and to save the lost.” Jesus had come to look for people like Zacchaeus—people who did not know God—and to save them from their sin.

Christ Connection: Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came after us—sinners who do not deserve Him—and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him.



**WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!**

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that people were angry that Jesus showed His love to Zacchaeus, a crook! The Bible says everyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved. (Rom. 10:13) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jesus and Zacchaeus

BIBLE PASSAGE: Luke 19:1-10

MAIN POINT: Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who did Jesus say He is? Jesus said He is the Messiah.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Ask kids to share the biggest change they've ever experienced. (*moving to a different city or school, new sibling, salvation, and so forth*)

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “Changes” on the activity page. Challenge them to find and circle the 10 differences between the two pictures.

SAY • Do you know who is in these pictures? [*Allow kids to respond.*] This is a picture of Jesus talking to a man in a tree. The man's name was Zacchaeus. In the Bible story we are going to hear today, Jesus talked to Zacchaeus and changed his life forever!

- “Changes” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers



- dry beans, 12 per kid
- small paper bags, 1 per kid
- Allergy Alert download

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Tax collector game

Give each kid a small paper bag containing 12 beans. Instruct each kid to find a partner. Explain that the first partner will hide two or more beans in his hand. The

second player should guess if the first player is holding an odd number or even number of beans.

If the player guesses correctly, she collects those beans from the first player. If the guess is wrong, the second player must forfeit the same number of beans to the first player.

The object of the game is to collect the most beans.

Then players switch roles; the second player will hide two or more beans in her hand, and the first player will guess if she is holding an odd or even number of beans.

After a round, kids should find new partners and play again. The winner is the player with the most beans when a set period of time expires.

SAY • How did you feel when someone else won and took your beans? Today's Bible story is about a man who was disliked because he collected taxes, and he often took extra to keep for himself.

OPTION 2: Talk about changes

Before the session, set up three paper bags on a table. Put popcorn kernels in the first bag, bread in the second bag, and a bottle of water in the third bag.

Ask for a volunteer to reach into each bag and describe the item inside without looking. Allow kids to guess the item. Show the items and ask kids to describe what happens when heat is applied to each item. How do the items change? (*Popcorn kernels change to popcorn, bread changes to toast, and water changes to steam.*)

SAY • Today we are going to hear a Bible story about a man who met Jesus. When this man met Jesus, his life was changed forever.

- popcorn kernels
- bread
- bottle of water
- paper bags, 3
- Allergy Alert download

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• Bibles
• bottles of water
• poster board
• marker

[Large Group Leader enters and stands next to a table with Bibles and bottles of water. The table is labeled with a poster that says, Ask Anything!]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! I'm glad you are here. If this is your first time, I'm [*your name*]. For the last few weeks, I have had my booth set up here for the city street festival. I have been answering people's questions about God and the Bible.

This has been so great! I have met a lot of very interesting people. Many people have been curious to know more about God, and I have enjoyed answering their questions.

Some people walk away and I never hear from them again, but a few have come back to tell me that they really believe what the Bible says about God! That is so exciting! God's Word is life-changing!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • God’s Word is powerful. It tells us what is true about God and about ourselves. We have been hearing Bible stories that answer our big picture question about who Jesus is.

Our question is, *Who did Jesus say He is?* Does anyone remember the answer? [*Allow kids to respond.*]
Jesus said He is the Messiah.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Let’s take a look at where we are on our timeline. Remember, the Bible is full of a bunch of smaller stories, but they all fit together to tell one big story—the story of how God sent Jesus to rescue people from sin!

We have been learning about Jesus’ ministry on earth. Jesus came to earth to tell people about God and to be the Savior of the world. Jesus met with many people, including a man from the city of Jericho. [*Point to “Jesus and Zacchaeus” on the giant timeline or big story circle.*] Today’s story is called “Jesus and Zacchaeus.”

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 19:1-10. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jesus and Zacchaeus.”

LEADER • Incredible! Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in Jericho. He was in charge of other tax collectors, and their job was to collect money from the Jews to give to the Roman government.

The Bible says that Zacchaeus was rich. Tax

• Bibles
• “Jesus and Zacchaeus” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster

collectors often collected more money than the government asked for, and they kept the extra for themselves. No wonder so many people did not like Zacchaeus!

The other people were upset when Jesus said He was going to stay at Zacchaeus's house. Didn't Jesus know what kind of person Zacchaeus was? Why would Jesus want to visit with a man who was dishonest, greedy, and a helper to the Romans? It didn't make any sense!

Did you notice what Zacchaeus said when he was with Jesus? Zacchaeus offered to give half of everything he had to the poor, and he wanted to pay back four times what he had cheated from others. Zacchaeus's money was no longer the most important thing to him. Jesus had something better.

Christ connection

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever. Jesus said that salvation had come to Zacchaeus's house. Zacchaeus was a sinner, but Jesus had come into the world for sinners. Jesus said, "I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came after us—sinners who do not deserve Him—and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and trust in Him.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 14:6.

LEADER • If you haven't memorized our key passage yet,

- Key Passage Poster
- "I Am the Way" song

keep working on it! This verse tells us that we are saved only by trusting in Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

We can't come to God by doing good things and trying to earn His favor. But when we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, God the Father welcomes us into His family and changes us forever. Let's sing.

Lead kids to sing the key passage song, "I Am the Way."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever. Think about how Zacchaeus was different, and watch this.

Show the "Unit 21, Session 5" discussion starter video.

Guide kids to discuss the following questions:

- Which kid in the video was generous?
- Which kid was selfish?
- Why do you think some people are generous and others are selfish?
- Do you think the other kids helped the selfish kid at the end? Would you have shared with him? Why or why not?

LEADER • When we trust in Jesus, He changes us. God wants us to show that we are believers by being generous to others. Being generous shows that we treasure Jesus more than anything else. Because we have Jesus, we can let go of anything we have in this world and share it gladly with people in need.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • God showed the greatest generosity by sending His Son, Jesus, into the world to be our Savior. Jesus willingly gave up His place in heaven to become a

• "Unit 21, Session 5"
discussion starter
video

• "God Is Here" song

man and die on the cross for our sins. That's a great reason to sing! Will you join me?
Sing together "God Is Here."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Your Son to seek and save the lost. Apart from Jesus, we are just like Zacchaeus. We confess that we have treasured the things of this world above You. Forgive us and change our hearts to treasure Jesus. He alone is worthy of our praise and admiration. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Small Group LEADER

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- “Key Passage Triangles” printable
- scissors

Print and cut apart the key passage triangles in your preferred translation. Prepare one set for each kid. Mix together all the triangles on a table. Challenge each player find three triangles that, when put together, contain the entire key passage.

As kids finish, prompt them to read the key passage to you as you check their work.

SAY • John 14:6 makes it clear that Jesus is the only way to be saved—He said so Himself! **Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever**, and when we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, we are forever changed too.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- chalkboard or dry erase board
- chalk or markers
- erasers

Form teams of four kids. Guide teams to form single-file lines. Explain that you will ask a review question. The first player in each line should run to the board. The first player to write the correct answer earns a point for his or her team.

After each round, guide players to erase their answers and move to the end of their line.

1. Zacchaeus lived in what city? (*Jericho, Luke 19:1-2*)
2. What was Zacchaeus’s job? (*chief tax collector*,

Luke 19:2)

3. What did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus?
(*a tree, Luke 19:4*)
4. Jesus told Zacchaeus He was going to stay at Zacchaeus's what? (*house, Luke 19:5*)
5. How much of his possessions did Zacchaeus offer to give to the poor? (*half, Luke 19:8*)
6. This word means "to turn away from sin and turn toward God." (*repent*)
7. Fill in the blank: **Meeting Jesus changed _____ forever. (*Zacchaeus*)**
8. Jesus came to seek and to save whom? (*the lost, Luke 19:10*)

SAY • Good job, everyone! Are you surprised that people were angry about Jesus visiting Zacchaeus? They were upset that Jesus was spending time with a sinner. But the Bible says that we are all sinners.

Jesus said that He came to seek and save the lost—people who don't know Him. Jesus came to save sinners, and that is good news!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: The greatest treasure

Lead kids to sit in a circle. Invite them to imagine they are stranded on a desert island and could have only one object from home. What would they choose and why?

Ask each kid to briefly share about an object, why he chose it, and what he would do with it. After everyone has shared, prompt kids to decide which objects are most important to have. Which objects are most important in order to survive? Which objects bring comfort?

SAY • You might have chosen an object that was most

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.



important to you. Think about our Bible story today. Before Zacchaeus met Jesus, what was most important to him? (*money*) Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. He probably got his wealth by cheating the Jewish people. He cared more about money than what others thought of him.

How did Zacchaeus change after he met Jesus? (*He wanted to give away his wealth and pay back anyone he cheated.*) **Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever.** Jesus became Zacchaeus's greatest treasure!

OPTION 2: Magazine scavenger hunt

- children's magazines
- scissors
- paper
- marker

Form groups of two to four kids. Give each group a magazine, a pair of scissors, a piece of paper, and a marker.

Challenge kids to flip through their magazines and cut out pictures of items that begin with each letter of the alphabet. Kids should search for one item per letter. Encourage kids to list the names of the items on their paper to keep track of what letters they need to find.

Allow kids several minutes to search. Then instruct them to stop and count how many items they found. Applaud their search efforts and recognize creative or unusual findings. Invite kids to share which letters were hardest to find and which were easiest.

SAY • You all searched hard for the items in your magazines.

In today's Bible story, Jesus said that He came to seek and save whom? (*the lost*) A person is "lost" when he or she doesn't know Jesus.

Jesus came for sinners—for people like Zacchaeus and us! He came after sinners who do not deserve Him, and He rescues us from sin. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and He is glad when we repent and

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

trust in Him.

Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus forever, and when we trust in Jesus, we are forever changed too.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write about or draw a picture of what they treasure the most. What is most important in their lives?

SAY • What did Zacchaeus treasure most before he met Jesus? What did he treasure most after meeting Jesus? How do you know? Has Jesus changed you?

Allow kids to discuss, and then close in prayer. Thank God for sending His Son to save sinners. Confess that we would never be able to earn our way to heaven. Praise God for saving us when we were lost. Pray that kids would treasure Jesus more than anything else.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “To Seek and Save” on the activity page. Direct kids to fill in the missing vowels to finish the Christ connection.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “To Seek and Save” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.