



Zacchaeus meets Jesus

Session 14

Winter 2015–16

Early Childhood LUKE 19:1–10

prepare



PRAYER

*God, help me to create a welcoming space where each child will feel loved and included.
Amen.*

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To see Jesus as a friend who cares

STORY SUMMARY

Zacchaeus was a wealthy chief tax collector in Jericho. Many people despised him, seeing him as greedy, dishonest, and disloyal. When Jesus came to Jericho, Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree in order to see. Jesus stopped by the tree and said he would be coming to Zacchaeus' home. Jesus' welcoming love had a profound effect. Zacchaeus said he would share half his possessions with the poor and repay fourfold any money he had taken dishonestly.

teaching tips for early childhood

Jesus sought out the outcast in this story, which appeals even to young children. But not only did Jesus show love, Zacchaeus showed love right back. This story brings the story of good news full circle: we are healed by the love of God and experience wholeness when we respond back with love. Look for "teachable moments," opportunities to emphasize concepts of friendship and kindness toward others. If you see a child being friendly to another, point it out in a specific way, such as "I saw you sharing that toy. Thank you for being a kind friend."

Go to www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras to find tips for working with younger children. Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

The familiar story of Zacchaeus encapsulates some of Luke's most important theological emphases, such as salvation and faithful use of wealth.

Zacchaeus' quest

Zacchaeus is a character who does not fit easily into expected categories. First, he was a tax collector, an occupation almost universally despised. Not only did he take money from people already economically vulnerable, but he did so on behalf of Rome. In Luke's Gospel, however, Jesus consistently befriends tax collectors and holds them up as positive examples (e.g., 18:9–14). Second, Zacchaeus was at the top of the ladder in his occupation—a “chief” tax collector and therefore a man of some influence. Third, Luke emphasizes that he was wealthy. The job of collecting tolls, customs, and duties was contracted out to the highest bidder, who would then increase fees so as to make a profit for himself, a system that was open to abuse and fraud. The fact that Zacchaeus was wealthy suggests he was very good at his job, and Luke's Gospel is consistently critical of those who amass wealth at the expense of the poor (e.g., 16:19–31). Fourth, the crowd regards Zacchaeus as a sinner and grumbles when Jesus, a religious teacher, goes to stay with him. Finally, Zacchaeus is short, and in ancient literature short stature was often associated with small-mindedness, greed, and ridicule. As a grown man with social and economic power, he exposes himself to more shame and ridicule when he climbs a tree to see Jesus. At the end of the story, though, Jesus says that Zacchaeus too is a son of Abraham, a legitimate and full member of God's covenant people. In the end, it is Jesus' evaluation of him that matters.

Like other characters in Luke's Gospel, Zacchaeus encounters an obstacle while on a quest. In overcoming the obstacle Zacchaeus becomes a positive model for discipleship. Like the blind beggar in the previous story (18:35–43), he “seeks” to see Jesus (verse 3); however, at the end of the story we discover that Jesus is actually the one doing the seeking, for he has come “to seek and to save the lost.”



Salvation today

Salvation is an important theological theme in Luke's Gospel. Only Luke explicitly names Jesus as “Savior” (2:11), and the beginning of the Gospel is crowded with salvation language (1:68–71; 2:30–32; 3:6). Zacchaeus' story is about someone released from the captivity of wealth, a story of salvation (19:10). Although the crowds and religious leaders typically grumble when Jesus eats with tax collectors (5:29–30; 15:1–2; 19:7), Jesus' mission is to search for the lost, as the parables in Luke 15 vividly illustrate. Luke's Gospel emphasizes that salvation is for the present, not just for the future; thus, Jesus tells Zacchaeus

that “*today* salvation has come to this house” (verse 9, emphasis added). Finally, salvation stories in Luke are infused with joy (e.g., 2:10–11; 15:6–7); Zacchaeus too responds to Jesus' invitation with joy (verse 6).

The Gospel of Luke contains more teachings about wealth and poverty than any other Gospel; its message is that Jesus came to lift up the poor and oppressed and that disciples must share generously. In 18:18–27 a rich ruler is dejected when Jesus tells him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow him. Zacchaeus is evidence that, even though it is harder for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God, with God nothing is impossible. Zacchaeus responds to Jesus' gracious invitation by giving to the poor; he is the camel that got through the eye of the needle. John the Baptist exhorted religious leaders to bear fruit worthy of repentance and not rely on Abraham as their ancestor (3:8); Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham precisely because he demonstrates repentance with the fruit of generosity. And he does so joyfully. Zacchaeus' response of giving away his wealthy is not a heavy “ought” but a joyful response to Jesus' gracious welcome.

gather

supplies

- Shine Early Childhood Music CD
- CD player

resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Luke 4)

BUILD COMMUNITY

Invite the children to join you in a rhythm chant about friends. Pat your legs or clap your hands as you say each word in the sentence. Use a pattern, such as *pat, pat, pat, clap* or *clap, pat, clap, pat*. Repeat for each person present, as well as for children who are absent. If you have mostly older children, vary the pattern periodically.

_____ (name) is our friend.

Jesus is our friend.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing “Yo tengo un amigo que me ama” (I Have a Friend Who Loves Me) from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 29. Song lyrics are at the back of this guide.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Express gratitude to God through movement, using the same activity as last session. Ask children to stand. Say:

Let’s think of things we are thankful for. You might be thankful for something small, like your fingers or a butterfly. (Crouch down.) You might be thankful for a medium thing, like a dog or a bike. (Straighten up, but stay slightly bent over.) You might be thankful for a great big thing, like a church or a house or your family. (Stand tall with your arms raised high). What are you thankful for?

As children name things, the group can use the demonstrated postures, or move in other ways that reflect big, medium, or small. Allow freedom of movement, provided everyone is safe. Close with a spoken prayer, expressing gratitude for the big, medium, and small things we have.

media connections

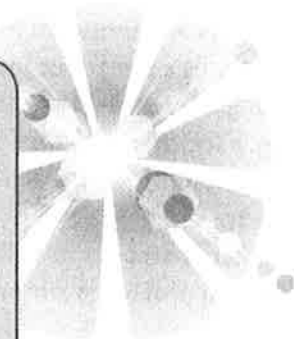
- *Zacchaeus and the Happy Day* by Rhonda Gowler Greene
- *Climb up the Tree with Zacchaeus (Action Rhymes)* by Leena Lane
- YouTube search for song “Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man”
- YouTube search for “Walking: river and forest” (3-D versions available) and “Acorn to oak tree time lapse”

Bible memory

Walk around the room in a variety of ways as you say the Bible memory verse several times. For instance, tiptoe and then stomp, or take giant steps and then baby steps. Pause each time so children can shout, “Good news!”

But he said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also.”

—Luke 4:43a



experience

SHARE THE STORY

Open the Bible to Luke 19:1–10 and show children the words of the story.

Fold the Landscape poster from the resource pack in half so only the town portion is visible. Secure the poster to the side of a box or the wall at floor level. Have story figures from pages 91–92 in this guide ready. You will need the crowd figure and two additional figures (tall and short) to represent Jesus and Zacchaeus. Set Jesus and the crowd a short distance away from the right side of the poster. Set Zacchaeus near the tree on the poster. He should be behind the crowd.

The Bible story is found on the back of the story picture in the resource pack. Follow the instructions there for movement of the props.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Say each of the wondering questions thoughtfully. The children will be more thoughtful if your tone suggests this is important and interesting.

- Imagine climbing a tree to see Jesus.
- I wonder if Zacchaeus wanted Jesus to see him.
- A lot of people didn't like Zacchaeus. I wonder why Jesus wanted to be his friend.
- I wonder how Zacchaeus felt when Jesus said, "You are part of God's family."
- Imagine Jesus coming to your house.

PEACE NOTES

Jesus' love changed Zacchaeus. He made peace with his neighbors by sharing his money and paying what he owed.

Show the picture of the child sharing a toy on the Friendship wheel from the resource pack. Take the wheel apart. Flip the wheel over to show the blank circle. Give each child an opportunity to draw a picture of something they could share with a friend. Reassemble the wheel. As you turn the wheel, revealing each picture, say,

We can share _____. (*Name the pictured item.*)

If you have a large group, cut out additional circles for the children to draw on.



Zacchaeus meets Jesus

Luke 19:1–10

supplies

- Bible
- Crayons

storytelling props

- Story figures from Additional resources (Zacchaeus, Jesus, crowd)

resource pack

- Landscape poster
- Friendship wheel
- Friendship wheel cover

to do

- Choose story figures from page 91 to represent Zacchaeus and Jesus.
- Fold the Landscape poster in half so only the town portion is showing. Secure the poster to the side of a box or the wall at floor level.

explore

CREATE

Create a mural of the story. Spread out a long piece of butcher paper on the table, or tape several pieces of paper together. Children can work together to draw a large scene including the crowd, Jesus, trees, Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus' home. There may have been several trees and perhaps others also climbed trees to see Jesus.

supplies

- Large paper
- Crayons or markers

MOVE

After meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus gave back four times the amount of money he had taken from people. Children can experience the joy of giving. Set out several dolls or stuffed animals around the room. Place a cup next to each one. Give each child a handful of coins. Children can move around the room, placing coins in each cup. Children who are able to do so may want to count out four coins to put in each cup.

supplies

- Dolls or stuffed animals
- Cups
- Large supply of coins
- Cardboard circle "coins" (for younger children)

RETELL

Talk about the events of the story as children play the board game on pages 2–3 of the Early Childhood leaflet. Each child will use an individual game board. Instructions are in the leaflet and describe a basic and a more advanced version. The advanced version requires a die.

supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- Dice (for advanced version)
- Game pieces, such as buttons or small cardboard circles

DISCOVER

Explore trees. Set out parts of a tree, such as pinecones, leaves, acorns, pods, or bark. (Pinecones and leaves are often available at craft and dollar stores.) If possible, go outside and look at trees. Could any of the trees be climbed? If there aren't trees nearby, take a virtual walk. (See Media connections.) Then set out play dough and small twigs, craft sticks, or toothpicks. Children can stand the wood pieces in the play dough to make "trees."

supplies

- Parts of a tree, such as pinecones, acorns, pods, bark, leaves, twigs
- Magnifying glasses
- Pictures of trees
- Twigs, toothpicks, or craft sticks
- Play dough



other ideas

- Make "Zacchaeus snacks." Recipes can be found at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras.
- Explore the story through play. Supervise children as they climb onto a step stool "tree." Provide dishes and toy food to prepare a "meal." Have cardboard "coins" to give away.

PRAY

Gather the group in a circle. Sing "Follow, Follow Jesus" from the *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*, track 10. Song lyrics are at the back of this guide.

SEND

Offer a blessing based on John 14-15:
Jesus said, "You are my friends. I will give you my peace and joy!"
Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.
Let families know that there is a free download of the song "Yo tengo un amigo que me ama" (I Have a Friend Who Loves Me) on the Shine website (www.ShineCurriculum.com/Music). Instructions for downloading the free song are on the back of the Early Childhood leaflet.

Leader's closing prayer

Zacchaeus didn't expect Jesus to notice him, much less offer the loving fellowship that followed. Are there times when you feel alone or discouraged? Know that you are never invisible to God and never unreachable by God's love.
God, open my heart to receive the extravagant love you offer. Enable me to extend compassion to those I meet. Amen.

Many children experience God through nature. Getting them outside to experience nature's miracles both large and small can connect them to God through the wonders of creation.
—Kathleen Fritsch
Olney, Maryland



supplies

- Early Childhood leaflets
- *Shine Early Childhood Music CD*
- CD player