

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 19:10

"...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Multiples of as many small pieces of green paper (to represent money) as the number of children in your class and as many small prizes (stickers, pencils, erasers, etc.) as the number of children in your class.

Folded sheets of paper with the shape of a man drawn on the outside, poster board cut into small heart shapes, tape, staples or glue, paper, and crayons or pencils.

A piece of red construction paper cut in the shape of a heart, a larger piece of cardboard, tape or glue, two magnets and a piece of paper that reads "goodness."

ATTENTION GRABBER!

The Tax Collector and the Prize Vendor

Cut several small pieces of green paper to represent money. Pass out an equal amount of money to each child in your class. Appoint a child to be the tax collector and have him levy a tax of one "dollar" for every letter in the child's name. This will create inequity among the class. Appoint another child as the prize vendor. Have him distribute a small prize to each child in the class if they have enough money to pay for one. The children with long names in your class will not have enough to pay for their prize.

Explain to your class that today they will learn about a tax collector who collected taxes unfairly and made life very difficult for the people of Jericho. After making your point, distribute prizes to the children who were excluded earlier.

LESSON TIME!

Today, our scripture will teach us how to make someone that is small very big. It does not take magic to do this or drinking some special potion. Our story will show how a "wee little man" becomes BIG in the eyes of God and in the eyes of a watching crowd. **Jesus changes lives.**

LUKE 19:1

Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

Jesus was on His journey toward the cross. He had warned His disciples, but they did not completely understand what He meant until His resurrection. We see that He entered and went right through the city of Jericho. Jericho was an evil place the Bible tells us. Jesus did not need to go through this evil city. There were other ways to go, but He deliberately went through Jericho.

He was looking for someone that He planned to share with. Did you know He seeks you out by His Holy Spirit? He does not care where you live; no matter how good or bad your neighborhood is Jesus will seek you out. Nothing can stop Him from looking for you or for me. If you have asked Jesus into your life, you already know how good it is to be found by Jesus! If you have not opened up your life to Him yet, He is purposely seeking you today. He plans to meet you and reveal Himself to you.

LUKE 19:2-4

Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

We are introduced to Zacchaeus in these verses. It says, "He sought to see who Jesus was..." But as we will soon see it was not Zacchaeus seeking Jesus as much as it was Jesus seeking Zacchaeus. Jesus would not be surprised by what was about to happen. He knew it and had planned on it.

What do we learn about Zacchaeus? We may know the song about Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he." The Bible tells us Zacchaeus was short in stature. He could not see over the crowd. He must have had a

curious side to him because it tells us Zacchaeus ran. It was unusual to see a man run back in Bible times. We do not often see a professional man running along the sidewalk today!

Zacchaeus was afraid he was missing something. He saw a large crowd and knew they were surrounding someone special. He was curious. He was wondering "What's going on over there?" "Who are all the people following?" He had to see; so he ran ahead of the crowd. Then he climbed a tree! Imagine that! A grown man, so curious about what was happening that he ran to beat the crowd and climbed a tree so he could see.

We also learn something else about Zacchaeus, but it is not a good thing. Zacchaeus was not a harmless "wee little man." He was a cheat, a thief, and a bully. We read in verse two that Zacchaeus was a tax collector. And he was rich. Those two things put together make us realize that Zacchaeus had been doing wrong things among the people of Jericho.

He had the job of collecting taxes from the people. That is not so bad. We pay taxes today too. That means if I bought a new jump rope that cost \$2. I would pay \$2 for the jump rope and then have to also pay taxes on the jump rope. Perhaps I would pay \$2.14 for the jump rope. The extra 14 cents would be the tax. The government in America demands that I pay that. The money goes to them to help run our country, build new roads, buy new police cars, clean the park, etc.

Zacchaeus was a man who collected the taxes people owed for living in Jericho. But things were different back then than they are today. The tax collectors would demand the money owed to the Roman government and add some more for themselves to live on. If they had only added a little bit, it would have been okay. This is how the Roman government allowed them to get their income. If they added the right amount they would not get rich, they would just have enough to live on comfortably.

Zacchaeus was rich. That means he demanded too much money of the people he collected taxes from. If they bought a jump rope for \$2.00 instead of adding 14 cents for Roman tax and a little bit more for his personal income, he added a lot more for himself. We also know this because he admits later to taking what was not his.

Doing that to all the people in his area made him very rich and made the people a lot poorer. He cheated them out of their hard-earned money with the power the Roman government had given him. The people did not respect or like wicked tax collectors like Zacchaeus.

LUKE 19:5-7

And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

This is a wonderful, supernatural part of our story. Zacchaeus was hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus whom he had heard so much about. Jesus was moving toward the tree Zacchaeus is in, with the crowd following close behind, but Jesus stopped under the tree, looked up into Zacchaeus' face and called him by name. Wow! Only Jesus could have done that! He knew right where Zacchaeus was.

He knew who Zacchaeus was and what he was doing and thinking. The Bible tells us God knows every detail about us, every moment of every day. Nothing we do, say or think is lost to Him. He even keeps count of the very hairs on our heads! He knows our thoughts before we think them! He knew all about Zacchaeus. What was He going to do with this wicked, little man?

What's On The Inside?

Before class, prepare as many half sheets of paper as the number of children in your class with the shape of a man printed on the outside. Place a poster board cutout shape of a heart inside of the paper. Next, seal the edges of the folded sheet with the poster board cutout shape inside. Have the children place a piece of paper over the folded sheet and rub a crayon or pencil over their sheet. The poster board shape should make an image on the sheet of a heart (important, make sure the heart shape stays in one place while the student colors over it).

Explain to the children that Jesus sees what is inside each and every person, even when no one else can.

The Bible tells us that Jesus invited Himself over to Zacchaeus house! It is the only time ever recorded in the Bible that Jesus invited Himself to someone's home. What did Zacchaeus do? He jumped out of that tree, thrilled to take Jesus home with him! That is a good response to have with Jesus. Joyfully receiving Him allows Jesus to do in us what He came to do.

Jesus specifically called on Zacchaeus. He had a personal touch in mind for this little cheat. How could one little, wicked thief get Jesus' attention? Jesus loves everybody, no matter what sin, no matter how wicked. We are all sinners. Jesus came to die and take away our sins on the cross; He died for Zacchaeus' sin, for your sin and for mine. He loves us. The Bible tells us He loved us even while we were His enemy, while we were sinning against Him.

Verse seven takes us back to the crowd traveling with Jesus. They were shocked to see Jesus invite himself to dinner at a sinner's house. The crowd complained that Jesus was going to a sinner's house, forgetting that they were all sinners too. Jesus just wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus.

We are all sinners and do not deserve God's attention. The story of Zacchaeus is a beautiful picture of what Jesus would one day do on the cross. On the cross, a righteous God would come to a sick and dying world to cleanse it from its disease of sin.

Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house, but we are not told what went on inside. We do are not told any of Jesus' conversation with Zacchaeus. Jesus always spoke the truth with grace. We know Zacchaeus heard the truth about himself, but he also heard of God's grace.

LUKE 19:8-9

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

After Jesus' stay in Zacchaeus' house, he came out with Jesus. It says Zacchaeus "stood." That means he was going to say something publicly to the crowd. He spoke to Jesus in front of everyone. From what Zacchaeus said, we can tell that a transformation had taken place. Zacchaeus had changed. What had happened? Well, Jesus answers that for us in verse nine.

Zacchaeus had been saved! He had trusted Jesus as his Savior. He was a new man! He was still short on the outside, but we know from what he said that God had given him a giant heart, filled with love for Jesus. Jesus had changed him into a new creation. **Jesus changes lives.** Zacchaeus was no longer a lying tax collector; he was now full of the truth and grace that comes from Jesus!

Change My Heart, Oh Lord

Tape a large red heart to a piece of cardboard. Leave enough of the edge loose so you can reach behind it for the next part. Place a magnet on the piece of cardboard so that it will repel another magnet. On another magnet tape a piece of paper that reads "goodness." Have the children try to stick the goodness to the heart. If the magnets are positioned correctly, they will not be able to.

Take the magnet behind the heart and turn it over. Now have some children try to stick the "goodness" to the heart. It should stick. Explain to the children that the only way to have goodness in our hearts is to have Jesus change our hearts from the inside.

Zacchaeus told Jesus in front of everyone that he would become a giver instead of a taker, and he would restore what he had taken in the past! Not only would he give back to the people what he had cheated out of them, but he would give them much more! Now Zacchaeus was a big man because he was doing right. Zacchaeus had trusted Jesus and obeyed Him; you cannot get much bigger than that!

Just as Jesus changed Zacchaeus' life, He desires to change ours. All we have to do is say "Yes" to Jesus. He offers us salvation through His death on the cross; it was the ultimate expression of love and grace. Grace is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." John 1:12 tells us that become sons of God when we accept Jesus. As sons and daughters of God, we share in Jesus' inheritance in heaven (Gal. 4:7). What great love He had for Zacchaeus, and what great love He has for us! **Jesus changes lives.** He can change your life today, just ask Him.

LUKE 19:10

"...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

This is a beautiful verse. In Zacchaeus' house Jesus had sought him, found him, and saved him. He is still seeking the lost and desiring to save them. Has He found you? Respond like Zacchaeus; receive Him with joy. You will see that **Jesus changes lives.**

“Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man”

Lead the children in a few choruses of the "Zacchaeus" Song:

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,
And a wee little man was he.
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
For the Lord he wanted to see,
And as the Savior passed that way,
He looked up in the tree,
And He said (shout), "Zacchaeus, you come down!
(sing) For I'm goin' to your house today,
For I'm goin' to your house today!"



PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to receive Jesus with joy. If any children have not yet responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.