
“Zacchaeus the Tax Collector”

Sunday School Lesson from Luke 19:1-10



A Tree, A Tax Collector, and a Change of Heart
Sunday School Lesson on Zacchaeus and the Grace of
Jesus

Sure, we know the fun Zacchaeus song and the sycamore tree climbing fame, but why else should we share the story of this vertically challenged tax collector? The tale of Zacchaeus is an important one to share with children as we emphasize the love of Jesus and the constant availability of grace. We see through this classic story that meeting Christ changes lives, and we also communicate to kids that we want to love other people as well, whoever they might be.

Lesson focus: Jesus loved all kinds of people, and often associated with those that others did not like so much. He changed lives by this love, and transformed how people felt and behaved. Jesus offered mercy and forgiveness, and because of that we should demonstrate unconditional love to one another.

Passage: Luke 19:1-10

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade (See notes for specific age modifications)

Materials Needed: Construction paper; paper towel or toilet paper tubes (empty); scissors; glue; clothespins or popsicle sticks; crayons or markers; Bibles.

Bonus Ideas:

- Compare our [Children’s Sermon on Zacchaeus](#)
- Compare another [Zacchaeus Sunday School Lesson](#) or [Zacchaeus Craft Ideas](#)
- Download our free story of [Zacchaeus coloring pages](#)



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Game Activities to Introduce the Lesson

Lesson Opening: Use one of the following simple games to open up the topic of the Zacchaeus story, discussing the importance of names or the element of tree climbing and looking out:

- (Younger students) Climbing, watching, walking, or dining...this directional game is a bit like “Simon says.” Demonstrate for children several mimed activities. Call off directions and have them act out what is happening. For example, if you say “climbing”, children act as though they are climbing a tree. “Watching” could be covering eyes to look out for something. Pick up the pace as you go. With older kids, or to add challenge, try to mix up the directions or add more directions, and let students who miss one sit out. Explain that all of these elements are parts of the story today.
- What’s your name? In the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus called him out by name. For this memory game, have students go around in a circle and share their name and a favorite food (or activity/animal/color etc.) that starts with the same first letter as their name. The next student to share must state the first person’s as well as their own, continuing down the line so participants must remember and share one another’s information. For smaller groups, or groups that already know one another well, choose another element of challenge, such as guessing middle names given only the first letter or number of syllables in the name.
- Sing the Zacchaeus song!

Explain to students that they will be learning about a man who had a rather odd name, and he was not very well-liked by people around him. But when he met Jesus, his whole life changed...



The Story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Sunday School Lesson

Who was Zacchaeus? Older students may be familiar with some of the elements of this story, so you can have them brainstorm what they already know. Sure, he was short, but that was not his only problem. Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Explain that tax collectors were pretty unpopular in the days of Jesus.

Basically, they robbed people. The tax collectors could come around and make people pay more money than they actually should have owed, and then the collector would pocket the remaining money. So they were deceitful and greedy, but there wasn't much that could be done about it.

Zacchaeus was one of those guys. As a result, the Jews were not big fans of his. But somehow he had heard about Jesus, and he must have been curious to learn more about the miracle worker...

He (Jesus) entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. -Luke 19:1-2

So not only was he a swindling tax collector, he was one of the bosses, and had accumulated a lot of money from his dealings. Have students come up with some equivalents for jobs or positions today that might not be so appreciated or well-reputed... (Lawyers, IRS agents, traffic officers perhaps...)

Now, Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he was short! Have students share if they have encountered any sort of difficulty with being short...sometimes you have to improvise, and that is what this man did:



And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And 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 and came down and received him joyfully. -Luke 19:3-6

Consider the amazing details that are taking place here...there's Zacchaeus, short guy climbing up a tree to see the Jewish teacher he's heard about. He probably thought he was hidden away anonymously. But Jesus knew better. He looked straight up at the guy and called him out by name. Not only that, but he invited himself over for dinner!

Encourage kids to consider how they might have felt in this position...what was going through Zacchaeus's head? Whatever it was, he was excited, because the verse tells us he hurried down and received Jesus joyfully.

Now, remember that Zacchaeus was kind of a “bad guy” in the eyes of the Jews...they weren't too pleased that Jesus would associate with such a person, and they complained about it. Fortunately, Jesus was not after public opinion boosts, but individual heart healing...and in this case, it worked.

And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” -Luke 19:7-10

Jesus was not worried about how others viewed Him. He knew that His mission came from God, and that it involved loving all people. He also knew change was



possible for all, and that He would grant forgiveness to all who asked. Zacchaeus was transformed by his encounter with Jesus. He got up and promised that if he had done any dishonest dealing, he would repay it with extra!

That probably amounted to quite a bit of money, but he realized he had found something more important. Zacchaeus became a new man and received the love and mercy of Jesus. And Jesus emphasized that He did not come just for good people, but for those who were truly lost and in need of healing. This is good news for us, because of course we sure are lost, too!

This story has another important element: Jesus loved everyone. What does that mean for us? It should mean we demonstrate love and forgiveness, too. Now, some people still do wrong things and need consequences, sure. But we know that love and mercy are possible for all. If God thinks so, shouldn't we?

Close the lesson with prayer and thank God for loving us and knowing us by name. Ask for help in sharing the love of Christ with one another, especially those who struggle or are less popular.



Craft: Zacchaeus up a Tree Tubes

- Toilet paper or paper towel tube
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Tape or glue
- String or ribbon (if you'd like to hang up the finished product)
- Markers/decorative materials
- Clothespin or popsicle stick

Procedure:

1. Decorate your popsicle stick or clothespin with a face and/or hair, clothing, etc.
2. Color your tube (tree trunk) if desired. Add a Bible verse or caption.
3. Cut leaf shapes out of construction paper (likely green color).
4. Glue the leaves onto the tree trunk.
5. Place your clothespin in or on the tree and watch Zacchaeus climb or hang out! Hang up with string, if you like.

Extra craft ideas.... You might hone in on the idea of a changed heart by encouraging students to decorate heart-shaped papers or other heart-related items. Or you can discuss the element of generosity and create a special tithing envelope or coin collection bank. For a simple craft with younger audiences, talk about the importance of Jesus knowing the name of Zacchaeus. Have children write out their names with decorative lettering, or use the letters as an acrostic poem.



Children's Prayer Moment

(Have kids repeat each line)

Dear God,
Thank you for making us special
And for loving each and every one of us
Help us to share that love with one another
And to let you make our hearts new
Thank you for your love
We love you, God!
Thank you for Jesus
In His name, Amen!



Craft: “Tree climbing Zacchaeus”

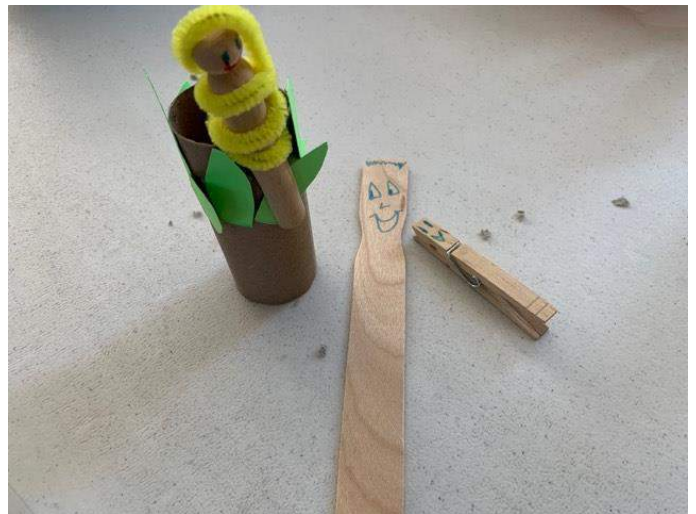
You will need:

- Toilet paper or paper towel tube
- Scissors
- Construction paper
- Tape or glue
- String or ribbon (if you’d like to hang)
- Markers/decorative materials
- Clothespin or popsicle stick



Procedure:

1. Decorate your popsicle stick or clothespin with a face and/or hair, clothing, etc.
2. Color your tube (tree trunk) if desired. Add a Bible verse or caption.
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“Story of Zacchaeus Crafts”

Bible Craft Activities Crafts for Sunday School

It's that classic story of a wee little man meeting a great big God...Zacchaeus can lend itself to several crafts, but there's no denying that trees are pretty craft-able in many ways! Use a verse or caption that emphasizes the important theme of Christ's love and mercy, and have fun letting kids create a project that allows them to help Zacchaeus climb up and through a sycamore!

Note: there are many variations on this craft, so feel free to use creativity and tweak items as needed. Just have fun with your trees and puppets!

Bonus Ideas:

- Browse all our [Sunday School crafts](#) and [video example of this activity](#)
- Compare [Zacchaeus Sunday School Lesson](#) or [Zacchaeus Children's Sermon](#)
- Download our free story of [Zacchaeus coloring pages](#)
- We have another [Luke 19:1-10 Bible lesson](#) that emphasizes our personal relationship with Jesus.

Verses or scripture captions for this craft:

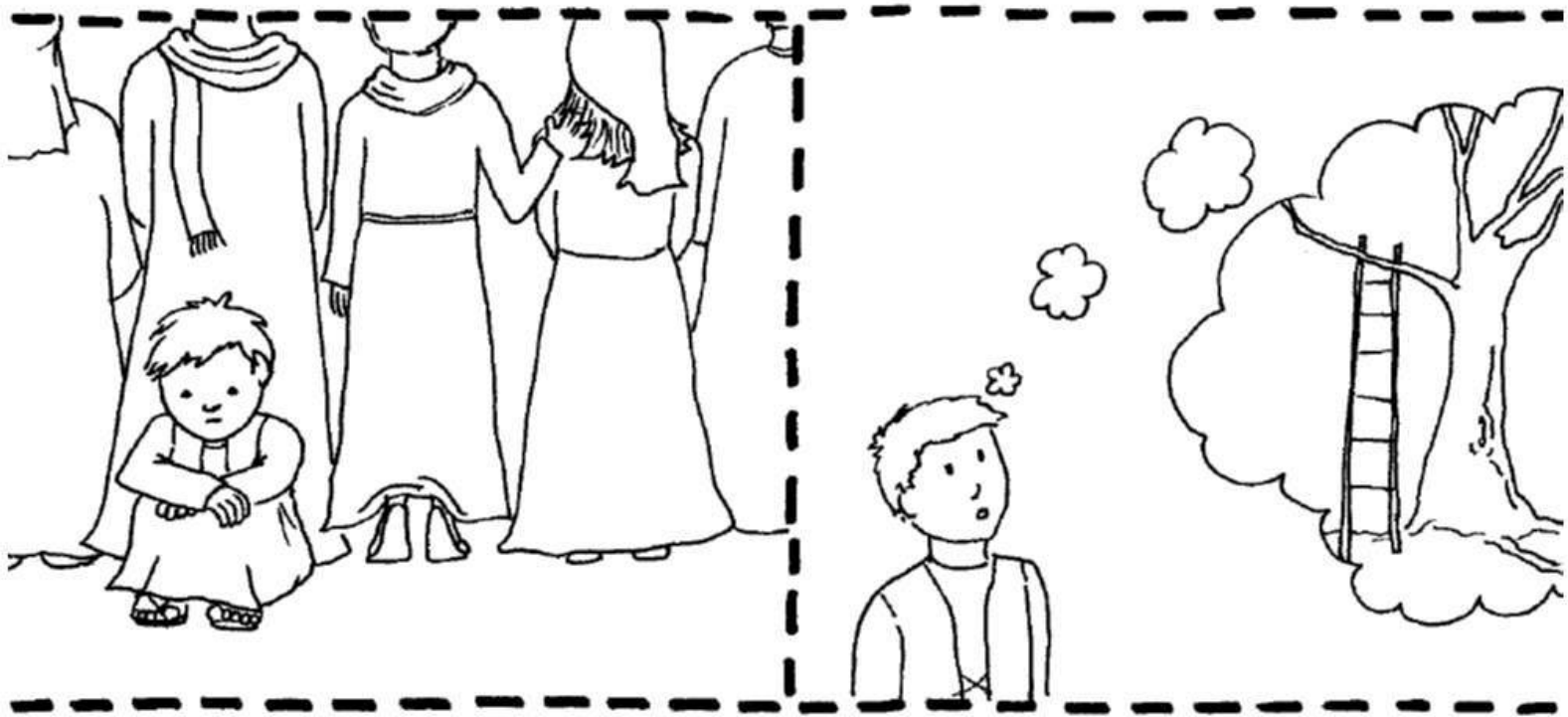
For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” -Luke 19:10

Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. -Romans 8:39

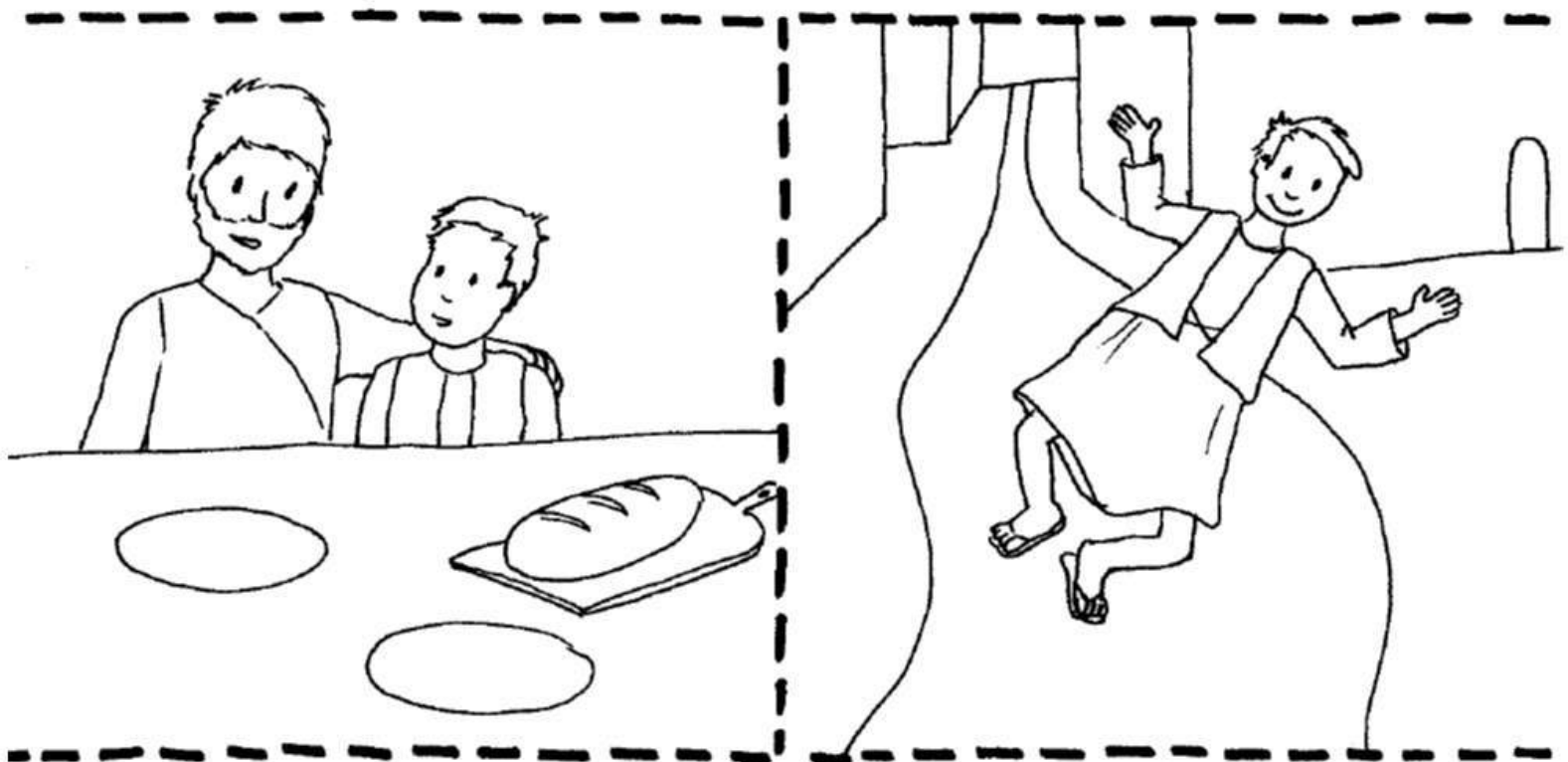
I don't have to climb a tree to know that Jesus loves me!



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Zacchaens Meets Jesus



1.

Zacchaens wants
to see Jesus.

2.

Zacchaens climbs
up to catch sight
of Jesus.

3.

Jesus dines with
Zacchaeus.

4.

God helps Zacchaeus
change his ways!

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Help you tell kids about Jesus!

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- serving where God has placed you.
- telling children about Jesus.
- allowing us to be a part of your mission.

We don't ask for money, but we do need your help.

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