



Session 7
Summer 2020
Multiage

Zacchaeus responds

LUKE 19:1-10

prepare



PRAYER

Loving God, you invite me to invite you in. Be with me now. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To discover that God's love can change us

STORY SUMMARY

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, climbed a sycamore to see above the crowd around Jesus as he passed through Jericho. Jesus saw Zacchaeus and asked him to climb down, then invited himself to Zacchaeus' home. The crowd grumbled against Jesus' choice to be a guest of a tax collector. Zacchaeus told Jesus he would give half his possessions to the poor and return four times the amount he earned from cheating others. Jesus considered Zacchaeus right with God.

teaching tips for multiage

The Zacchaeus story is a common story. Some children may have heard about the man who climbed a tree to see Jesus. Give them the opportunity to share what they know about Zacchaeus. Guide the children to see how Zacchaeus' talk with Jesus inspired a change. Explore how our own ordinary acts of friendship can have positive results.

The leaflet includes two experiments. The experiment of turning liquids to a solid requires the mixture to sit in a mold for an extended amount of time. Children can do this experiment at home or start it in this session and finish it in the next.

Decide which Explore options to offer. Check Supplies and To do throughout this session to see what needs to be prepared.

A children's story?

The story of Zacchaeus [Za-KEE-uhs] and Jesus in Luke 19 is one of the Gospel stories we learn early in life. Most of us probably have memories of seeing it acted out. With the narrative's use of tree climbing and crowds bullying the short, unpopular tax collector, it's a natural story to act out in an outdoor setting with a group of active children. But too often that's where the story of Zacchaeus remains in our spirituality: as a children's story. His story is far more than that.

It is necessary

The Greek word *dei* appears over and over in the Gospel of Luke. It is usually translated as "it is necessary" (sometimes it is translated "I must" or "you must"). Luke seems to use this word wherever he sees the will of God being most clearly defined. It shows up in all the passion predictions where Jesus says that "it is necessary" that the Son of man must suffer and die and be raised. In Luke 2, when Mary scolds the 12-year-old Jesus for staying in Jerusalem, he responds by saying that it was necessary for him to be in the temple. In this story, we read that it is necessary for Jesus to go and stay at Zacchaeus' house that very day. If nothing else in this story strikes us, the use of that phrase shows that Luke perceives Jesus' visit as part of God's project.

Childishness and childlikeness

Another theme in this section of Luke is the notion of childishness and childlikeness. In the blessing of the children in Luke 18:15–17, Jesus says that unless one receives the kingdom of God as a child, one cannot enter it. What does he mean? He certainly doesn't need to look far for examples of childishness: the people who act childishly by grabbing the high seats at a banquet; the Pharisee who looks down on the tax collector as they pray in the temple; the self-centered rich man who denies Lazarus the crumbs from his table; the opponents who try to trip up Jesus with rhetoric; the sulky elder son in the parable



of the prodigal son. On the other hand, this Gospel also contains remarkable examples of childlikeness: the prodigal younger son and his father, the shepherd who goes after the one lost sheep, the woman who chases down one little coin, the widow who persists in calling on the judge for justice.

Then we have Zacchaeus exhibiting the abandon and the exuberant love for Jesus and for others that show he is ready and able to enter the kingdom of God. Zacchaeus throws his dignity as a tax collector to the winds as he runs and climbs a tree as if a child. He readily and joyfully takes Jesus home with him and in that exchange comes to

his senses about how he has been living his life. The day of redemption dawns for Zacchaeus. Ironically, those most mature in spirit must enter the kingdom as a child.

Justice, joy, community

We sometimes get tied up trying to figure out whether Zacchaeus would have had anything left after repaying fourfold and then dividing the remainder of his assets in half. But that is not really the point of the story; as a tax collector, Zacchaeus probably had a mind for numbers, and meeting Jesus would not have changed that. Now, however, it is calculation redeemed. The sum total is that a relationship with Jesus adds joy and that this tax collector multiplies justice out of this joy. The heart of Zacchaeus' giving is not duty, but passion and desire. The result is that Zacchaeus is now right with God and with his community. Salvation has come to his house.

gather

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD* (or digital versions)
- *Annual Shine Songbooks*
- CD player
- Construction paper hearts
- Pencils or markers
- Container to collect hearts
- Battery-operated or regular candle, matches

resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Ephesians 3)

to do

- Cut small hearts from construction paper for use in Spiritual practice.

media connections

- *Boxes for Katje* by Candace Fleming
- “God’s Love Don’t Stop” by Amber Sky Records (YouTube)
- *The Giving Book* by Ellen Sabin
- “God’s Love Changes Everything” by Al Hilgendorf (YouTube)

BUILD COMMUNITY

Introduce any newcomers to the group, then try a greeting. Squat down together as a group, with one child still standing. The standing child calls the name of another. That child stands and both greet each other with a wave or handshake. The original greeter squats and the second child calls a name. Continue until everyone has been greeted.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Light a candle and invite the children into a time of silence. Let the silence settle for about a minute, then pray the following prayer.

**God, you love us and help us show love for others.
Thank you, God. Amen.**

Sing or listen to “Love Like That” (track 15, page 22).

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Zacchaeus felt he needed to give in order to grow closer to God. Giving is one way we can show our love and our thanks to God. Talk about the reasons we give gifts and donations: to make someone happy, to show we care, to thank someone, to provide for people’s needs. Give each child a heart cut from construction paper as you say “God loves you.” Invite the children to draw or write something they would like to give (a smile, a hug, a thank-you). Then pass around a container to collect the hearts for use at the end of the session.

Bible memory

As the group reads the memory passage aloud, have each child, one at a time, repeat the underlined words. When the last child says the words, signal the group to continue reading aloud until the next underlined words. Practice repeating the words before reading.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

—Ephesians 3:20–21

experience

SHARE THE STORY

Ask a child to find Luke in the Bible; use a bookmark for nonreaders. Read the story from page 244 in *Shine On*, and use a coin to represent Zacchaeus. Place the coin in front of you as you begin the story. When the crowd is introduced, place a handful of acorns or other small items in front of you. Move the coin ahead of the acorns as Zacchaeus runs and climbs the tree. Use another acorn for Jesus. Move Jesus and Zacchaeus away from the crowd as they talk to each other. At the story's end, replace Zacchaeus' coin with an acorn.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Reflect on the story together, pondering the following questions. Leave space for silent reflection, responses, and questions from the children.

- I wonder why, out of all the people in the crowd, Jesus chose to visit Zacchaeus.
- Imagine getting ready to host Jesus at your house!
- I wonder what Jesus said to Zacchaeus at his house.
- I wonder why Zacchaeus thought giving to the poor was what he needed to do.
- I wonder what you can do to make things right when you do something wrong.

PEACE NOTES

Zacchaeus changed after Jesus talked to him as a friend. Divide the group into pairs and ask them to think of two things friends might ask each other or talk about. After a few minutes, gather the group together and share ideas. Example questions include: What did you do this weekend? How is your family? Did you see the latest episode of a TV show? What's new with you? I like your shirt; where did you get it?

Talking with a friend can be enjoyable and at times comforting. Reflect on how being a friend to others can bring about good things. Ask:

What can we change when we treat someone like a friend?

Responses might include making a newcomer feel welcome, cheering up someone who's having a bad day, helping someone with a task they couldn't do alone.



Zacchaeus responds

Luke 19:1–10
Shine On, p. 244

supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*

storytelling props

- Coin
- Acorns or other small items distinct from a coin

explore

CREATE

Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, his friend. Invite children to draw a self-portrait with Jesus, who is always our friend. Frame the picture with leaf rubbings. Make leaf rubbings by placing leaves under a sheet of white paper and using crayons to color the paper. Cut out the leaves and glue them around the portraits.

supplies

- Tree leaves
- Crayons
- White paper
- Scissors
- Glue



MOVE

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. We seek Jesus too. Give each child a copy of the Finger labyrinth from page 91 of this guide. Explain that people use labyrinths as a way to pray or to think about God. Demonstrate where to enter the labyrinth and how to travel through the labyrinth with your finger. The center of the labyrinth represents Jesus. As children follow the path to the center, they can focus on Jesus' love. Then they can travel back with Jesus.

supplies

- Finger labyrinth (from Additional resources)

RETELL

Retell the story using the readers theater on page 1 of the Multiage leaflet. Assign the roles of Narrator, Zacchaeus, Jesus, and Persons 1, 2, and 3. Tell the children to do simple actions as they read. If you have non-readers, pair them with readers. The reader can read the lines while the nonreader acts the part.

For smaller groups: Combine the roles of Narrator and Persons 1, 2, and 3.

supplies

- Multiage leaflets

LEAFLET

Children can exercise their math skills in "Taking your share" on page 2 of the Multiage leaflet. *Answers:* 1½ cupcakes each, \$5 each, 2½ minutes each. Try the experiments in "Big changes" on page 3, or encourage children to try them at home. They can decorate and cut out the affirmation coins from page 4 to give love to others.

supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Pencils
- Whole milk
- Vinegar
- Measuring cup and spoons
- Bowls, spoons, molds
- Ice cubes
- Salt
- Plates
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Scissors

other ideas

- Change everyday trash into something better, like an egg carton into a jewelry box or bottle caps into refrigerator magnets.
- Fill a tray with sand to write or draw something to God that can be wiped smooth again.

bless

PRAY

Gather together in a circle. Ask a child to mark with stickers the categories on the “Faithful followers” poster from the resource pack that fit Zacchaeus (*New Testament, talked to Jesus, changed mind*).

Hold the container of hearts collected during Spiritual practice and teach the prayer below. Then pass the heart container around and ask each child to take a heart to pass on to someone else.

**God knows my heart,
God hears my prayer.
With God’s love,
there’s more to share. Amen.**

SEND

Send the children with these words adapted from Ezekiel 36:26–27:

**I will put a new spirit within you.
You will follow my laws and carefully obey my commands.**

Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.

supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Small stickers
- Container of paper hearts (from Spiritual practice)

resource pack

- “Faithful followers” poster



leader’s closing prayer

The crowd spoke against Zacchaeus, but Jesus already knew his name. Jesus knows you too and, despite what the crowd says, wants to be your guest.

God, it amazes me that I have your undivided attention. And despite my shortcomings, your love never wavers. Amen.

Teaching younger children can bring you much joy. You have the wonderful opportunity to see them become excited about a Bible story that they knew little about. My favorite story to tell young children is Zacchaeus—little children can really relate to him!

—Julia Hooley
Canton, Ohio

looking ahead

Each child will need a flashlight for several activities in the next session. You may wish to ask the children to bring a flashlight from home.