

Unit Verse

"This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I
have loved you.
JOHN 15:12

JESUS LOVED ZACCHAEUS**LEADER BIBLE STUDY****CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND PREPARATION**

(For age-appropriate language, use the Bible story on the following pages.)

LIFE POINT

We can follow Jesus' example to love others.

LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

God helps me love others, both friends and enemies.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Luke 19:1-10

WEEKLY VERSE

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
'John 15:12

If someone had to describe you, what identifiers would they use? Would they use your occupation or your financial status? Would they describe your physical attributes? Would they talk about your character?

Luke identifies Zacchaeus with three specific descriptions: tax collector, rich, and short. Being known as a rich tax collector most likely created significant friction in Zacchaeus' life. In those days, Jewish people did not trust tax collectors because they would treat the Jewish people unfairly and take more money than they were supposed to. Since Zacchaeus was known as a rich man, he would most likely have become wealthy by taking money from the Jewish people. It's fair to say that Zacchaeus was unpopular.

Knowing this, consider Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus. Jesus saw Zacchaeus in a tree, called him by name, and requested to stay at his house.

Jesus recognized that Zacchaeus wanted to know Him. Being fully God and fully man, Jesus surely knew that Zacchaeus was a tax collector. But Jesus also knew that Zacchaeus needed a Savior. Zacchaeus quickly came down from the tree, repented, and promised to repay, four times over, any money he had extorted.

Why would Jesus choose to stay in the home of a "sinful man?" Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He looked beyond the descriptors that defined Zacchaeus and offered him a chance for a new identity.

What is your response to the lost world around you? Be honest. Do you ever respond the way the crowd did to Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus? What would it look like if we followed Jesus' example to love others? Every day we have the opportunity to point those around us to a loving Father who sees beyond their failures and offers a chance for redemption.

As you pray this week, ask the Lord to open your eyes to see the lost and hurting people around you. Ask Him to give you a heart for those who need to hear the truth of the gospel and the boldness to share the good news.



TEACH THE SCRIPTURE

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Give a sticky note to each child. Instruct kids to write their names on their notes. Provide painter's tape for kids to make a loop so both sides are sticky.
- Direct kids to place the tape loop on the back of their notes.
- Allow each child a turn to jump and stick her note to the wall as high as she can. Announce the child who sticks his note the highest is
- Say: "We are going to learn how Jesus loved a man named Zacchaeus.
- Zacchaeus was very short." Explain that when Jesus traveled through Zacchaeus' town, Zacchaeus was not tall enough to see over the crowd.
- Encourage kids to listen to the Bible story to discover what Zacchaeus did to see over the heads of other people.
- At the end of the class time, retrieve the sticky notes from the wall. Distribute so each child receives someone else's name. Give kids time to write something kind to the name of the note and then return to the person.

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

- Ask: "Have you ever been to an event, like a sports game or parade, where you couldn't see past the people around you?" (Allow a few kids to answer.) Briefly discuss how it feels when a crowd of people taller than you blocks your view of something you really want to see. Suggest Zacchaeus may have felt that way when he could not see Jesus.
- Open your Bible to Luke 19:1-10 and tell the rest of the Bible story in your own words.

BIBLE STORY: JESUS LOVED ZACCHAEUS

Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector who lived in Jericho. Zacchaeus' job was to tell people how much money they owed the government and then collect the money. One day Jesus walked through Jericho. People had heard about Jesus and the miracles He had done, and they crowded the road to see Him. Zacchaeus wanted to see Him, too.

Zacchaeus was a short man, and soon he realized he could not see Jesus over the crowd. He ran ahead of the crowd, found a sycamore tree, and climbed up into the branches so he could see Jesus. As Jesus passed by the tree, He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus!



TEACH THE SCRIPTURE

Hurry down! I must stay at your house today." Zacchaeus was excited. He hurried down the tree and welcomed Jesus to his home.

But the crowd was not happy. They thought Zacchaeus was not an honest man. They complained, "Jesus has gone to stay with a sinful man

"Look," Zacchaeus told Jesus, "I'll give half of all I own to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I'll give back four times what I took." Jesus changed Zacchaeus' life. Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house. This is why I came-to find and save those who are lost from God's kingdom.

-BASED ON LUKE 19:1-10

REVIEW GAME

- Divide children into 2 teams standing on opposite sides of the room from 2 chairs.
- The leader (student helper) can stand between the chairs and ensure children are safe.
- Leader asks a question. First 2 children in line, run across the room and climb up in the tree (chair).
- 1st one in the chair, answers the question. If correct, their team gets a point. If not correct, the other team gets a chance to answer.
- Before the children can return to the line, each team takes turns yelling, "(Child's name) you come down!"
- Repeat until each child gets a turn to answer a question.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What was Zacchaeus' job? (He was a tax collector for the government.)
- What was keeping Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus? (He was short, and there was a crowd.)
- What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus walk by? (He climbed a sycamore tree.)
- When Jesus saw Zacchaeus, what did Jesus say? ("Hurry down! I must stay at your house today.")
- Why did the people complain? (They said Zacchaeus was a sinful man.)
- What did Zacchaeus decide to do after he met Jesus? (Give half of what he owned to the poor and repay anyone he had cheated 4 times what he took)
- Why do you think Zacchaeus said he would repay 4 times what he had taken wrongfully? (Jesus changed Zacchaeus' life. He wanted his actions to show that Jesus had truly changed his life.)
- Who did Jesus come to look for and rescue? (people who sin, people like you and me)



BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

STATION 1. BROCCOLI TREE PAINTING

Use broccoli to paint a tree! Use a regular paintbrush to create a trunk. Then, dip heads of broccoli into paint and dab it onto the limbs to make leaves. As students paint, ask “Why did Zacchaeus climb the tree? What did he want to see? Is Jesus worth seeing? What would you be willing to do to see Jesus?”

STATION 2. EDIBLE CRAFT

Using pretzel sticks, Sour Patch Kids, Teddy Grahams, and marshmallows, invite students to create Zacchaeus in the tree. Marshmallow help the pretzel stick tree stand. The Sour Patch Kid and Teddy Graham represents Zacchaeus and Jesus. As kids create the story, talk about friends they can bring to church or tell about Jesus. Discuss ways they can show love to them.

STATION 3. SERVING DINNER

Provide food, tea sets, silverware, and aprons for children to prepare dinner for their friends. Ask children the name of friends who don’t know Jesus. What are ways they could serve their friends? Remind them how Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house for dinner. Encourage kids to show love to others.

STATION 4. CHURCH INVITATION

Using paper, markers, and stickers, invite kids to write handwritten notes inviting a friend to come to church with them. Encourage preteens give it to their friend when they see them next! Talk about how Jesus saw Zacchaeus and invited him to dinner.

STATION 5. TREASURE HUNT

Hide Jesus figures, fake coins, and candy in a sand tub. Provide students with tongs. Set this station up for free play, or as a team game where a leader times teams to see how quickly they can find the items. Share how Zacchaeus had a lot of treasure, but was willing to give it away when he saw Jesus as his most precious treasure. Ask “Out of the items you collected, which has the most value to you and why? What are you willing to give to Jesus?”

STATION 6. TOWN MAT, CARS & PEOPLE

As children play with the blocks, town mat, cars, and people talk about ways they can show love to other people all around town. At the store? At school? In their neighborhood? At the sports events? Encourage kids to look for people who need love. Remind them that Jesus loves them.