Zacchaeus Meets Jesus *Bible lesson*

Luke 19:1–10 · 30-minute core or 60-minute full lesson



BIG IDEA

Jesus came to find the lost.

MEMORY VERSE · LUKE 19:10 BSB

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

LESSON AT A GLANCE

0–6	**Welcome** · Can’t see!	
6–10	**Hook** · The least likely	
10–20	**The Story** · The Story	●
20–30	**Talk** · Talk	●
30–35	**Memory Verse** · Memory Verse	●
35–40	**Sing** · Sing	
40–50	**Activity** · Pay it back review	
50–55	**Respond** · Changed heart	
55–60	**Pray & Send Home** · Pray & Send Home	●

● Core step. Teach just these for the 30-minute version.

Leader prep

Bible background

Jericho was a wealthy city on a major trade route. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector there and very rich (Luke 19:1–2). Tax collectors worked for Rome, often charged more than they should and kept the extra, so their own people saw them as traitors and cheats.

Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was short and the crowd blocked him, so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree (19:3–4). When Jesus reached the spot, He looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today” (19:5). The crowd grumbled that Jesus was going to be the guest of a sinner (19:7).

Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus joyfully and stood up and said he would give half his possessions to the poor and pay back four times anyone he had cheated (19:6, 8). Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house… For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (19:9–10). Jesus’ kindness came first; the changed life followed.

Where is Jesus in this story?

This story is Jesus’ mission in one sentence: He came to seek and to save the lost. He didn’t wait for Zacchaeus to clean up his life first. Jesus called him by name, and Jesus calls us by name too. When He comes into our lives, He changes us from the inside out.

Supplies

- A step stool or chair (the sycamore tree)
  Prep: Supervise climbing; a leader stands beside the chair.
- A bag of play coins
- Printed story cards, verse poster, coloring pages and parent pages
  Prep: Print from the Classroom resources section.
- A screen for the story video (optional)

Questions kids might ask

“Why didn’t people like Zacchaeus?”

He collected taxes for Rome and took extra money for himself. People felt cheated.

“Why did Jesus go to his house if he was a cheater?”

Because Jesus came for people who need Him. He loved Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus changed.

“Did Zacchaeus have to give money away to be saved?”

No. Jesus welcomed him first. Giving back was what a changed heart wanted to do.

If a child shares something serious

When kids share what scares or worries them, some may mention something serious, like someone hurting them or a big fear at home. Listen, thank them for telling you, and don't promise to keep it secret. Tell your ministry leader the same day and follow your church's child-safety policy.

Teach it

SAY read aloud DO leader action KIDS SAY call and response

1 Welcome 6 min

Full lesson

Can't see!

DO Have the tallest kids stand in a line in front while shorter kids try to see a picture you hold up behind them. Let kids suggest ways to see over the crowd.

SAY What would you do if you really wanted to see someone and a crowd was in the way? Today's guy had a great idea.

2 Hook 4 min

Full lesson

The least likely

SAY Think of the person at school nobody wants to sit with. Now imagine the most famous person in the world walks in and picks them first.

SAY That's pretty much what happens in today's story.

3 The Story 10 min

Core

DO Play the Zacchaeus video (3 min), or read it aloud with the story cards.

SAY Listen for how the crowd reacted, and how Zacchaeus changed.

DO After the video, have kids open their Bibles to Luke 19:1–10. Ask a confident reader to read it aloud.

SAY Jesus didn't wait for Zacchaeus to get better first. He came to him. And meeting Jesus changed everything.

KIDS SAY **The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost!**

4 Talk 10 min

Core

Why did people dislike Zacchaeus?
Listen for: He was a tax collector who cheated people out of money.

How did the crowd react when Jesus went to his house?
Listen for: They grumbled, because Zacchaeus was a sinner.

What did Zacchaeus do after meeting Jesus?
Listen for: Gave half his things to the poor and paid back four times what he'd cheated.

Who is someone others leave out that Jesus loves?
Listen for: Answers vary. Jesus loves everyone, including people who are hard to like.

OLDER KIDS Compare Luke 19:10 with Luke 15:4. How are Zacchaeus and the lost sheep alike? What do they show us about why Jesus came?

5 Memory Verse 5 min

Core

DO Write the verse on a whiteboard or hold up the poster. Teach the motions.

> **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**
> Luke 19:10 · BSB

MOTIONS

- **For the Son of Man came** Point up, then bring your hand down to the ground.
- **to seek** Hand over your eyes, looking around.
- **and to save the lost.** Reach out and pull someone in for a hug.

PRACTICE IT THREE WAYS

1. Say it with motions.
2. Disappearing words: erase or cover one word at a time until kids say it from memory.
3. Say it fast, then slow, then in a whisper.

6 Sing 5 min

Full lesson

> The Little Lantern song for this story is coming soon. For now, sing a favorite worship song about Jesus finding us.

7 Activity 10 min

Full lesson

Pay it back review

DO Give each team ten play coins. A wrong answer means paying one coin to the bank; a right answer earns four back (just like Zacchaeus paid back four times). Most coins wins.

What city did Zacchaeus live in?
Listen for: Jericho.

What was his job?
Listen for: Chief tax collector.

What kind of tree did he climb?
Listen for: A sycamore tree.

How much did he promise to give to the poor?
Listen for: Half of his possessions.

Finish the verse: The Son of Man came to...
Listen for: ...seek and to save the lost.

> Prefer a quieter room? Hand out the mini-book or a coloring page instead.

8 Respond 5 min

Full lesson

Changed heart

DO Kids write: “Jesus knows my name. One way I want Him to change my heart is ____.”

OLDER KIDS Is there something you need to make right with someone? Write a plan.

9 Pray & Send Home 5 min

Core

DO Pair kids up. Each shares one way they want Jesus to change their heart, and their partner prays for them.

SAY Close: Jesus, thank you for coming to find the lost, including us. Change our hearts, and help us welcome others like you did. Amen.

DO Hand out parent pages.