

18. Jesus and Zacchaeus



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Leader Notes:

- View [this session's focus](#), faith nurture goals, leader devotional, and story symbol (click on the story symbol to download or print).
- For the full set of DWELL Flex story symbols use the link in the sidebar.
- Need this as a PDF? Just [print this page](#) and choose to save/print as a PDF.

Take a few moments to greet the children and let them know how glad you are to see them.

I love exploring God's story with you. Let's get ready to do that together.

Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. *(Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.)*

Tell and Wonder

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? *(Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.)*

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "Jesus and Zacchaeus" aloud (below), pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions. NOTE: It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Pray

Close in prayer, asking Jesus to help you listen to his words and help you live in a way that shows you are listening. Thank Jesus for coming to the world to save us all from our sins and helping us live for him.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #123 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.*

**God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extra

Draw a quick game board on a piece of paper (all you need is a simple path with a beginning, an end, and 25-30 spaces in between) or search for a board game template you can print. Print a set of [game cards](#) and place them next to the board, and locate a coin or small toy for each player.

Have players take turns by drawing a card, answering the question, and moving ahead if they answer correctly. If you are leading this session remotely, consider sending a simple game board and set of the cards to each family so that they can review the story together at home.

Story: Jesus and Zacchaeus [Luke 19:1-10](#)

Open your Bible to Luke 19 and read how the story begins ([verses 1-2](#)). Then lay the Bible on your lap and continue the story.

Yes, Zacchaeus was a rich man all right—because he was a chief tax collector for the Roman government. The government had given tax collectors the right to collect taxes from the people for many things, for example, the roads they walked on. They could collect as much money as they wanted. Whatever was left after Zacchaeus paid the Romans what he owed them was his to keep—all his! So if the Romans wanted a \$1 tax for walking down the main road of Jericho, Zacchaeus could charge people \$2 or \$3, or maybe even \$4! If he charged \$4, he could keep \$3 for himself! He did this day after day after day. And he became very rich.

At night, Zacchaeus would open his bags of money and count and count and count until he got tired of it.

How do you think the people of Jericho—the town where Zacchaeus lived—felt about Zacchaeus?

What words do you think came to their minds when they thought of him? *(Pause for responses.)*

The Jewish people were angry with tax collectors like Zacchaeus. In fact, they hated them. The people of Jericho wished Zacchaeus would stop working for the Roman rulers; but most of all, they wished Zacchaeus would stop taking so much of their money to keep for himself.

(Ask several of these questions, pausing after each for responses):

- **Do you think people smiled at Zacchaeus when he demanded so much money?**
- **Do you think Zacchaeus had many friends?**
- **Do you think people ever threatened him?**
- **How do you think his kids felt knowing how much people hated their dad?**
- **How many invitations do you think he and his family got to go on picnics with their neighbors?**

Every day as Zacchaeus collected money from people, his money bags grew fatter. But Zacchaeus was not a happy man. All that money seemed to weigh heavily on his heart.

One day while Zacchaeus was collecting taxes in his tax booth by the road, he heard some interesting news. Everyone was excited. "Jesus is coming through Jericho today!" people said. Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus, although he had never seen him. The more he thought about it, the more he wanted to meet Jesus. So he closed the window of his tax booth and followed the crowd into town. **I wonder if Zacchaeus tried to walk where people wouldn't notice him.** *(Pause for responses.)*

Before long, the crowd began to slow down. People were everywhere! Zacchaeus knew that Jesus must be ahead somewhere. But he had a problem. Zacchaeus was very, very short. He wouldn't be able to see Jesus. He tried pushing and shoving through the crowd, but people didn't move for him.

Zacchaeus was desperate! He climbed up into a tree that was close to the road where Jesus would soon be walking. He perched on a sturdy branch and waited for Jesus to come by. I suppose if you had looked really closely, you might have been able to see the sandals on his feet. Zacchaeus was relieved because now he didn't have to face all those people who hated him. Best of all, he knew he would be able to see Jesus!

Jesus and the crowd of people came closer and closer. They stopped right underneath the tree where Zacchaeus was! **What do you suppose Zacchaeus was thinking?** *(Pause for responses.)*

Jesus was talking to the people. Zacchaeus could hear every word! Suddenly Jesus looked straight up into the tree—right into the eyes of Zacchaeus!

And then Jesus did something that shocked the people who knew Zacchaeus. He looked at Zacchaeus with love. He spoke kindly to Zacchaeus: "Zacchaeus, come on down from that tree! I am going straight to your house to visit you!" **What do you suppose Zacchaeus was thinking when Jesus spoke to him? Was he happy? A little bit afraid?** *(Pause for responses.)*

And here's something to think about. **What do you suppose the people in the crowd said to each other when they heard Jesus say that he was going to visit Zacchaeus—a cheat, a liar, a robber, a thief—going to this awful man's house!** *(Pause for responses.)*

At the house, Jesus talked and Zacchaeus listened. **I wonder what they talked about.** *(Pause for responses.)*

Zacchaeus listened to Jesus very carefully. Then he said, "I want to give it back. I'll give half of everything I have to poor people. And I'll give those I've cheated four times more than I took from them! I will! And I'm sorry!"

That day Zacchaeus's life changed forever! We know that Zacchaeus listened because he changed his ways. He did something about the bad things he'd done. He tried to make it right. Before Jesus left he said to Zacchaeus, "I came into this world to save people just like you!" **What do you think Jesus meant by that?** *(Pause for responses.)*

Close your Bible and ask the group to think about this: Zacchaeus could have just said that he would stop overcharging for taxes, that he would never do that again. **Would that have been a good thing to do? Why or why not?** *(Pause for responses.)*

But he didn't. He made a promise to go back and make it right with everyone he had ever cheated. **What do you suppose will happen to many of those big bags of money Zacchaeus has?** (*Pause for responses.*)

Looking for More Activities for This Story?

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- [Preschool: Zacchaeus](#)
 - [Kindergarten-1st Grade: Zacchaeus Learns about Jesus](#)
 - [2nd-3rd Grade: Jesus and Zacchaeus](#)
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