

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

People Jesus Met



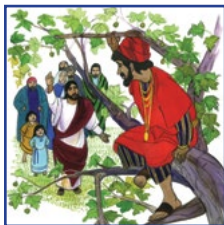
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A Story Bible Curriculum

Unit Overview and Connecting page written by Carol A. Wehrheim
Sessions written by name Luther Young

People Jesus Met

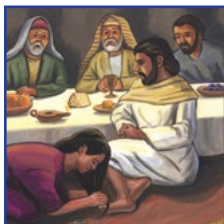
Introduction	2
Unit Overview	3
Intergenerational and Home Ideas	4



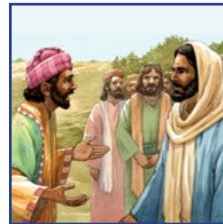
The Short Man 10
Luke 19:1-10



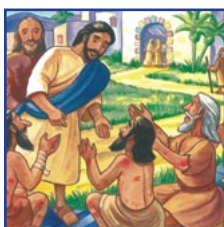
The Very Thirsty Woman 28
John 4:1-32



The Thankful Woman 14
Luke 7:36-48



The Rich Man 34
Luke 18:18-30



The Thankful Man 20
Luke 17:11-19

The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

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✦ **Goal:** To practice sharing with others.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

Tax collectors are often the prime example of sinners in the New Testament. Hated because he worked for the Roman rulers, the tax collector Zacchaeus didn't have a ghost of a chance of making his way through the crowd to get a glimpse of this Jesus who was creating such a stir. Tax collectors earned their wages by collecting more money than they had to send to Rome. Some tax collectors insisted on getting a lot more and became rich. Zacchaeus was a chief or ruler of tax collectors and had others working under him. The people may not have liked him, but he was given his due as a rich man. Climbing into the tree to try to see Jesus was hardly something people would have expected.

Read more about this story and Zacchaeus's response about his generosity at bit.ly/ZacchaeusCommentary.

Connecting with the World

While we may not identify with the position of a tax collector living in Jesus' time, we can understand that some have more than others. While Zacchaeus, or some of his tax collector colleagues, may have obtained wealth deviously, the fact remains that many cannot meet basic human needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Zacchaeus recognized his sin of taking more than he needed, and he repented. What can we do for those living in poverty?

- ✦ Read an article about what defines U.S. poverty at bit.ly/USPovertyArticle and consider what it means to have more than enough and not enough to live on.
- ✦ What organizations in your community provide food to families who experience food shortage? How can you and your class or family participate in their work?

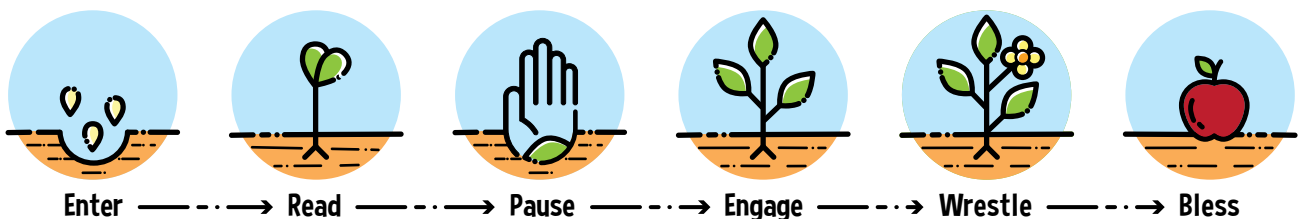
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Adults generally assume that children will identify with this "wee little man," as the song calls him, because he is short. Zacchaeus's physical stature is not the point of this story. His height compelled Zacchaeus to humble himself and climb the sycamore tree where he could see Jesus, and as it turned out, Jesus could see him. Perhaps it was this humility that Jesus noticed. Upon talking with Zacchaeus, Jesus discovered that Zacchaeus was already repentant and returning what he had taken from others. This was not behavior expected of a tax collector. This is the part of the story that will nurture the spiritual lives of children. This is a story of recognition. Jesus saw Zacchaeus. The crowd still saw Zacchaeus as a sinner, but Jesus saw him as a repentant man, turning from taking to giving. Seeing a child for who they are and who they are trying to be is seeing them with the eyes of Christ. Zacchaeus learned to give to others who were in need and teaches us about caring for others. How do children care for others? The generosity of children may not be financial generosity but generosity of the heart.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

- ✦ Forget that Zacchaeus was short and climbed a tree. Why did Jesus praise him?
- ✦ What does this story suggest about generosity as a spiritual practice?
- ✦ Often translators have put into Zacchaeus's mouth words that he intends to give to the poor, but in the Greek, he is speaking in the present tense, which means he is already giving much to the poor. Thus, Zacchaeus is an example for us today. How can you follow his example?

Generous God, may the example of Zacchaeus's generosity spur me to evaluate my own generosity. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Leading

Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Drawing supplies and paper
- ✓ Prepared construction paper coins
- ✓ Envelopes
- ✓ Basket or small container
- ✓ Three empty paper towel tubes for each child
- ✓ Internet-connected device

Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, Luke 19:1–10. As you read, make notes of things that intrigue or stand out to you. Then read the story “The Short Man” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 242). What questions arise from reading this passage?

- ✓ Why do you think Zacchaeus was so eager to see Jesus?
- ✓ How far would you be willing to go to have a personal encounter with Jesus?
- ✓ Who are the Zacchaeuses in your community—that is, people who are disliked for being different?
- ✓ Can you think of a time when other people attacked your character?
- ✓ What are the things that bring you closer to Jesus?
- ✓ How does it make you feel knowing that you have been accepted into God's family?

Before the children arrive, cut circles (about 2" in diameter) out of yellow or gold-colored construction paper. These circles will serve as “coins.” Place between one and five paper coins in envelopes, with different amounts of coins in each envelope. Make an envelope for each child and a few extra in case you need them. Cut out more coins so that you have a surplus to share during the activity.



Enter into sacred space together.

Invite the children to gather in the seating area and repeat after you as you pray:

Giver of all, /
help us to listen /
and to follow your teachings /
so that we may be closer to you /

and to one another. /
Amen. /

Point out the drawing supplies. Encourage everyone to use them during the session for illustrating anything that they hear or consider as they engage with the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus.



Read a story of God's people.

Ask the children if they have been somewhere with a lot of people and what it was like. Invite children to listen to Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus. Read the first two paragraphs of the story “The Short Man” (p. 242). Have a conversation using the following prompts:

- ✓ Imagine you had a lot of money. What would you do with it?
- ✓ Tell about a time when someone did something to you that was unfair. How did that make you feel?

Read the rest of the story.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children to take a few moments to sit quietly and picture the story in their minds. Suggest that they may use the drawing supplies to illustrate images or feelings from the story, if they would like.

You may wish to play meditative music while the children pause to reflect. Consider using a few minutes of music from a soundtrack like bit.ly/RelaxMusicForChildren (2:00:48).



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Invite the children to have a conversation about the story using the following questions:

- ✓ What is the setting of the story?
- ✓ Who is there?
- ✓ Why do you think the people in Jericho did not like tax collectors?
- ✓ Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so badly?

Leading

- ✎ What do you think Jesus thought when he saw a wealthy man in a tree?
 - ✎ How do you think the people felt when Jesus asked to go to Zacchaeus's house?
 - ✎ Why do you think Zacchaeus gave away his riches?
- Zacchaeus's Coins
- ✎ Remind the children that Jesus saw Zacchaeus not just as a wealthy man nor a disliked tax collector but as a person who went to great lengths to seek Jesus. Perhaps it was because Zacchaeus had already repented of his money dealings and wanted affirmation for his good deeds, or perhaps it was because he was called by Jesus. Whatever the reason, right then and there Zacchaeus decided to repay people. Zacchaeus was able to see the needs of others as Jesus was seeing him.
 - ✎ Hand out the envelopes filled with paper coins so that each child has one envelope. Inform the children that each person has either one, two, three, four, or five coins in their envelope. Invite the children to work together so that everyone ends up with the same number of coins. Have a basket or container ready so that the children can donate any coins that are left to people in need. Ask the children:
 - For those who received from others, how did that feel?
 - For those who gave to others, how did that feel?
 - How did it feel to have enough to share with others in need?
 - ✎ Pour out the surplus coins you have and remind the children that Zacchaeus repaid four times the amount he had taken from people. Wonder together what that may have felt like to people. Have the children divide up the extra coins. Suggest that the three coins they had would be enough for all their needs for the year. Ask the children what choices they could make with the extra coins they now have.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Ask the children to think about where they might find themselves in the story.

- ✎ Why might they be like Zacchaeus sometimes?
 - ✎ Why might they be like others in the crowd sometimes?
 - ✎ Why might they be like Jesus sometimes?
 - ✎ Who else might they be like?
- Share, Save, Spend Project
- ✎ Comment that Zacchaeus learned to be more generous with his money, not keeping all (or more) for himself. Tell the children that one way to practice generosity is by having a “Share, Save, Spend” system. Wonder together where money the children receive or earn could go in each category. Invite the children to make a “Share, Save, Spend” bank.
 - ✎ Provide each child with three empty paper towel tubes and three rubber bands. Tell the children to work with a partner to join the three tubes together with rubber bands. Have one child hold the three tubes upright on a table in a triangle formation. Have the other child place a rubber band around the middle of the tubes, then a second rubber band around the bottom third of the tubes, and finally a third rubber band around the top third of the tubes.
 - ✎ Invite the children to write one of the words “Share,” “Save,” or “Spend” on each tube. Encourage the children to decorate the tubes as they like. Give each child a 6" circle of cardboard. Have the children run a ring of tacky glue around the bottom end of each tube and place their tubes on the cardboard circle to form a base. Set aside to dry.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Invite children to share any art they made during the session.

As you conclude, encourage children to talk with their family and friends about helping others. Suggest that we can do more to help other people when we work together. Invite the children to stand in the circle and hold hands. Lead the children in the following echo prayer:

God of grace, /
we thank you for all we have. /
Forgive us when we take more than our share /
and help us to be kind to others. /
Amen. /



Grow with more.

○ Telling Stories

- ✎ Who is the most generous person you know? What makes them so generous?
- ✎ Tell us about a time when you shared something with someone. Why did you share with them? How did it make you feel?
- ✎ Have you ever had guests visit your home? How did you prepare for them to come?

○ Getting to Know You

- ✎ Jesus did not know Zacchaeus, but Jesus knew Zacchaeus was a person he wanted to know more. Play a game to get to know one another better. Invite the children to form pairs or triads. Encourage the children to learn three things about their partner(s) that they did not know. Gather in a large group and share findings.
 - What kinds of things did you learn about your partner(s)?
 - What did you learn about anyone in the group that surprised you?

○ Caring for Others

- ✎ Zacchaeus gave back to those in the community, helping others have enough for their needs. Learning about the needs of others and helping in ways we can is one way we can care for others.
- ✎ Watch the YouTube video “Kids Respond to Child Hunger” (bit.ly/KidsRespondToHunger, 2:49). It discusses how children can respond to the issue of child hunger.
 - What did you learn from watching this video?
 - What would it be like if you didn't have enough food to eat? How do you think you would feel?
 - What can you do to help children who do not have enough food?