

Zacchaeus

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and when Jesus changes a heart, that person wants to make things right.

Bible passage: Luke 19:1–10. Read it before class.

Memory verse: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." *Luke 19:10 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, 10 play coins (optional), and one take-home sheet for each child.

Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Find Me in the Crowd (5–10 minutes)

Choose one child to be the "seeker" and send them out of the room or have them close their eyes. The rest of the class stands in a tight group. Pick one child to crouch down in the middle of the group. The seeker comes back and has to find who is hiding, by looking, walking around and peeking between people. Play two or three rounds. Ask: *Was it hard to find someone small in a crowd? What did you have to do?* Say: "Today we'll meet a short man in a big crowd, and we'll see who came looking for him."

2. Bible story: Jesus Seeks Zacchaeus (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Luke 19. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Who Zacchaeus was. Look up Luke 19:1–2. Jesus was passing through Jericho. Zacchaeus was "the chief among the publicans," and he was rich. **Publicans** were tax collectors who gathered tax money from the people. Earlier, when some publicans came to John the Baptist, John told them, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (Luke 3:12–13). **Exact** means collect, so he was telling them not to take more than they were supposed to.

Up a tree. Look up Luke 19:3. Zacchaeus "sought to see Jesus who he was." **Sought** means tried. He could not see "for the press," which means because of the crowd, because he was "little of stature," which means short. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a **sycomore** tree, because Jesus was going to pass that way (19:4). (The KJV spells it "sycomore." It is a fig tree that grows in that land. The prophet Amos was "a gatherer of sycomore fruit," Amos 7:14.)

Jesus looks up. Look up Luke 19:5. Jesus came to the place, looked up, saw him and called him by name: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house." **Make haste** means hurry, and **abide** means stay. Zacchaeus hurried down and received Jesus joyfully (19:6).



The crowd grumbles. Look up Luke 19:7. When the people saw it, "they all murmured." **Murmured** means grumbled. They said Jesus had gone to be a guest with "a man that is a sinner."

Zacchaeus makes things right. Look up Luke 19:8. Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." **Goods** means the things he owned. **False accusation** means lying about someone to get their money. **Restore him fourfold** means pay him back four times as much. *(Optional: use 10 play coins to show "half," then show that 1 coin taken means 4 coins paid back.)*

Why Jesus came. Look up Luke 19:9–10. Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house." **Salvation** means being saved from sin. Jesus said Zacchaeus "also is a son of Abraham," which means he was one of God's people, Israel, even though the crowd called him a sinner. Then Jesus said why He came: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed a tree just to see Jesus (19:4). What do you do when you really want to get close to Jesus?
2. Jesus called Zacchaeus by name before Zacchaeus said a word (19:5). What does that tell you about Jesus?
3. The crowd grumbled that Jesus went to a sinner's house (19:7). Why do you think Jesus went anyway?
4. The Bible doesn't say anyone told Zacchaeus to give or pay back (19:8). Why do you think he wanted to?
5. Is there something you need to make right with someone? What would that look like?

Recall questions

1. What was Zacchaeus' job? *(The chief among the publicans, the tax collectors, Luke 19:2)*
2. How much did Zacchaeus give to the poor? *(Half of his goods, 19:8)*
3. "Fourfold" means four times as much. If someone had lost \$5, how much would Zacchaeus give back? *(Twenty dollars)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **Son of man** is a name Jesus called Himself, **is come** means has come, **seek** means look for, and **lost** means far away from God. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.



5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and that includes us. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: make one thing right. Give back something that isn't yours, say sorry to someone you hurt, or share with someone who needs it.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Luke 19:1: What city did Jesus enter and pass through? (*Jericho*)
2. Luke 19:2: Was Zacchaeus poor or rich? (*He was rich*)
3. Luke 19:3: What two things kept Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus? (*The press, or crowd, and he was little of stature, or short*)
4. Luke 19:4: Why did he climb that tree? (*To see Jesus, because Jesus was to pass that way*)
5. Luke 19:6: How did Zacchaeus receive Jesus? (*Joyfully*)
6. Luke 19:7: What did the crowd call Zacchaeus? (*A man that is a sinner*)
7. Luke 19:8: To whom did Zacchaeus give half of his goods? (*To the poor*)
8. Luke 19:9: Whose son did Jesus say Zacchaeus was? (*A son of Abraham*)

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus came looking for us and knows each of us by name. Help us make things right when we do wrong, and give us generous hearts like Zacchaeus. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks, "Was Zacchaeus a cheater?": answer honestly and simply. The crowd called him a sinner (Luke 19:7), and Zacchaeus said "if" he had taken anything by false accusation, he would pay it back four times (19:8). The Bible doesn't list what he did. It shows us that Jesus came for him, and that Zacchaeus wanted to make things right.

