

# A Surprise Visitor For Zacchaeus

## PRESCHOOL LESSON PLAN

**Theme:** Taking on Higher Ground

**Scripture:** Luke 19:1-10

**Memory Verse:** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. - Luke 19:10

### The Children's Sermon

In this Sunday's gospel story, we read about the story of a man who was physically short in stature. Zacchaeus manages the tax collection in his town of Jericho. That time in Jericho there was a lot of fuss outside Zacchaeus' office. Jesus was in town. Zacchaeus heard about Jesus and would like to see Jesus himself. Zacchaeus can hear Jesus' voice amidst the crowd. It sounded far but was coming nearer. The crowd was now building up. Zacchaeus stepped out of his office and joined the crowd.

Since he was short in stature, it was not easy. He tiptoed and squeezed between shoulders to see Jesus but it was useless. He still couldn't see even the hair of Jesus. Zacchaeus stood on a rock beside the road. But it was too far to even matter. He saw some trees and attempted to climb them. Too high... too low...

Finally, he saw a sycamore tree that was just the right size and was strong enough to hold him. He quickly made his way up the sycamore tree. Jesus' voice and the crowd were closer now. Among the tree branches he saw an excellent cool spot from where he could see Jesus. Jesus was actually heading his direction. He was excited and stayed as quiet as he could so that he could hear Jesus. Jesus it seems has just healed a man. It looked like the man he healed was in fact his neighbor - the blind boy who

grew up and played games with him. Now his blind neighbor can see! Wow, how good is that! This is far out! No wonder everyone was excited. Jesus was now moving on. He walked with this group of men following him around. Look, there is Levi; he is also a tax collector who talked much about Jesus lately. Let's see, who else is with Jesus?

"Zacchaeus"... "Zacchaeus"... Someone was calling out his name. Zacchaeus looked in the direction of the sound. The sound came from Jesus! Jesus looked up at him straight from the crowd and called his name. Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus would even know his name. Jesus continues, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because today I must stay at your house." Zacchaeus was dumbfounded. He couldn't believe what he just heard. Jesus said with a smile, "Well, Zacchaeus please hurry and do come down, because today I must stay at your house." Zacchaeus did exactly as that. He quickly came down the sycamore tree and welcomed Jesus in his house.

He was so moved that Jesus knew him so well and so caringly that he wanted to be a better tax collector. He felt bad that he has been cheating people with the tax collections and now wanted to make things right. He promised Jesus to return them to those whom he have wrong, even giving them back four times as much.

This moment in Zacchaeus' life is what we call Zacchaeus Conversion. It's when Zacchaeus decided to change his ways and follow Jesus. Zacchaeus Conversion is a big deal because it shows us that anyone can change for the better if they really want to. It didn't matter that Zacchaeus was a tax collector who people didn't like very much. What mattered was his heart was open to change.

Let's think about the sycamore tree for a moment. That tree was a big part of Zacchaeus Conversion. Without that tree, Zacchaeus might not have been able to see

Jesus. It's like sometimes, we might need a little help to see Jesus better in our lives. It could be a friend, a family member, or something we read that lifts us up so we can see Jesus more clearly.

Zacchaeus Conversion teaches us that it's never too late to make a change. Zacchaeus was an adult when he decided to follow Jesus. He had made many mistakes, but Jesus still wanted to be his friend. This shows us that Jesus loves us no matter what, and He's always ready to welcome us just like He welcomed Zacchaeus.

After Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his house, something amazing happened. Not only did Zacchaeus change, but his actions also showed others that it's possible to change. Imagine how surprised the people in Jericho were when Zacchaeus started giving back the money he took unfairly. They saw Zacchaeus Conversion right before their eyes!

Zacchaeus Conversion is a reminder to us that when we let Jesus into our hearts, we can change for the better. We can be kinder, more honest, and more loving. And just like Zacchaeus, our actions can show others the way to Jesus too.

So, let's remember Zacchaeus and his sycamore tree. Let's remember that no matter how small we feel or how big our mistakes are, Jesus is always calling us. He knows our names just like He knew Zacchaeus' name. And He's inviting us to come down from whatever is keeping us away from Him, so He can come into our hearts and homes.

Zacchaeus Conversion wasn't just about money or being short; it was about his heart changing and opening up to Jesus. And that's what Jesus wants for all of us too. To open our hearts, to change for the better, and to follow Him. So, let's be like Zacchaeus

and say "Yes" to Jesus. Let's let Him into our lives and see how much better we can be with His love guiding us.

Remember, Zacchaeus Conversion is our story too. We all have things we can change to be better friends with Jesus. And just like Zacchaeus, we can all have our own special moment of conversion, where we choose to follow Jesus more closely. Let's be brave like Zacchaeus and climb our sycamore trees, whatever they may be, so we can see Jesus more clearly in our lives.

## Bible Memory Verse

### **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. - Luke 19:10**

You Will Need:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Stickers or markers to decorate

Get Ready:

- Cut out large tree shapes from green construction paper.
- Cut out small man shapes and heart shapes from different colors of construction paper.

Do This:

1. Give each child a tree shape and several man and heart shapes.

2. Explain that the tree represents the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus, and the small man is Zacchaeus. The hearts are to remind us that Jesus loves everyone and came to save us.
3. Have the children glue the Zacchaeus shape onto the tree and decorate their tree and hearts with stickers or markers. As they work, remind them of the memory verse and discuss how Jesus seeks and saves the lost, just like he did for Zacchaeus.

## Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- Small cardboard boxes or large building blocks
- A toy figure to represent Zacchaeus
- A green cloth or paper leaves to represent the sycamore tree
- Simple costume props (optional) to act out characters

Get Ready:

- Arrange the cardboard boxes or building blocks in one area to create a hill or higher ground.
- Place the green cloth or paper leaves around a chair to represent the sycamore tree Zacchaeus climbed.
- Have the toy figure and costume props (if using) easily accessible for the children.

Do this:

1. Begin by telling the children they're going to act out a story from the Bible about a man named Zacchaeus who wanted to see Jesus so much that he climbed a tree! Explain that sometimes we have to go to "higher ground" to see Jesus better in our lives.

2. Invite the children to help you build the "sycamore tree" by arranging the green cloth or paper leaves around the chair. Then, place the toy figure (Zacchaeus) in the tree (on the chair).
3. Encourage the children to take turns playing Zacchaeus, climbing the "hill" (cardboard boxes or blocks), and then climbing the "tree" (going to the chair) to see Jesus. As they do, remind them that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much, he went to higher ground, and Jesus noticed him and came to his house. Explain that when we try to get closer to Jesus, he sees us and comes closer to us too.

## Snack Activity: Zacchaeus' Tree Climbing Snack

You'll Need:

- Green grapes
- Pretzel sticks
- Cheese cubes
- Paper plates

Get Ready: Wash the green grapes and set out all materials on a table where children can easily reach them.

Do this:

1. Help the children count out 10 green grapes each. Explain that these grapes represent the leaves on the tree Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus, taking him to a higher ground to see better.
2. Let the children use pretzel sticks to make the trunk and branches of the tree on their paper plates. They can break the pretzels into smaller pieces if needed with assistance.

3. Add a cheese cube at the base of each tree to represent Zacchaeus waiting to climb the tree. Encourage children to tell the story of Zacchaeus as they enjoy their snack, focusing on how Zacchaeus sought a higher ground to see Jesus, and how we can also seek higher ground in our lives by getting closer to Jesus.

## Game Activity: Zacchaeus' Tree Climb

You'll Need:

- Green construction paper
- Scissors
- Tape or sticky tack

Get Ready: Cut out several large leaf shapes from the green construction paper. These will be used to create 'trees' on the walls around your play area.

Do this:

1. Before the children arrive, use the tape or sticky tack to place the green paper leaves at various heights on the walls around the room to represent trees. Make sure some are low enough for the youngest children to reach and some are higher for the older children.
2. Tell the story of Zacchaeus climbing the tree to see Jesus, emphasizing the theme of 'Taking on Higher Ground' to see Jesus better.
3. Encourage the children to take turns 'climbing' (reaching or jumping) to touch the leaves on the wall. As they do, remind them that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much that he went higher. Discuss with them how we can 'reach higher' in our lives to see Jesus better, such as by being kind, praying, and helping others.

# Prayer Activity: Climbing to Jesus

You'll Need:

- A small step stool or cushion
- Picture of Jesus (or a cross)
- Simple prayer cards with short prayers or blessings written on them

Get Ready: Place the picture of Jesus or the cross at a higher point that the children can see, perhaps on a wall or on a table. Scatter the prayer cards around the room at different spots, ensuring they are accessible to the children.

Do this:

1. Explain to the children that Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus because he wanted to be closer to Him. We can also get closer to Jesus by praying and doing good things.
2. Allow each child to pick a prayer card and then take turns standing on the step stool or cushion to be 'closer to Jesus' as they say their prayer aloud or silently.
3. Encourage the children to think of one good thing they can do to get closer to Jesus, like helping a friend, listening to their parents, or sharing their toys.