

Jesus Forgives Zacchaeus

Overview

Materials You'll Need

- white paper
- markers
- construction paper
- glue
- scraps



Scriptures

Lk 19:1-9

Bible Truth Objective(s)

Jesus came to the world to save sinners

Behavioral Objective(s)

To ask for repentance for wrong actions

Memory Verse

"Today salvation has come to this house."
(Lk 19:9)



Bible Knowledge

Tax Collectors and Sinners

During the time of Jesus, the Romans had set up a system whereby tax collectors were hired to help collect taxes in the different provinces. The Bible records that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. That means he likely won a bid for the job and then hired other people who actually went out to collect the money. Zacchaeus became rich by keeping a percentage of what was collected.

Tax collectors were despised by the people in ancient Israel because they were known to collect more than they were supposed to. Thus, Zacchaeus was considered a sinner in the eyes of the crowd (Lk 19:7). In fact, tax collectors were hated to the point of being grouped with harlots (Mt 21:32). For this reason, the people had a hard time understanding why Jesus would keep company with Zacchaeus. But Paul said that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim 1:15). What the crowd failed to understand is that Jesus came into the world to offer salvation to all mankind. It did not

matter what walk of life someone came from or what he had done in his past. As long as he was willing to repent and change, the door of salvation would be opened to him.

Although the Bible does not explicitly record what brought on the change, there is clear evidence that Zacchaeus was truly repentant. He offered to give half of what he owned to the poor and return fourfold the money he owed to others. It would not have been easy for Zacchaeus to make such a vow. Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the heavenly kingdom. But once Zacchaeus realized the great treasure he had found in Jesus, he was willing to give up his riches for eternal life.



Understanding Your Students

Four- and five-year-olds are able to understand the importance of apologizing for things they have done. In fact, it is easy for them to copy the grown-ups and say, "I am sorry." It may not even mean much to them sometimes. That is why it is crucial to pair the words with action. It could be a simple hug after the words are said. It could be a note they draw or write (with

help) to express how sorry they are. Depending on how serious the behavior is, there might also be some natural consequences that follow. Afterward, the parent and child could create a chart to help the child work on a specific behavior that may be in question (e.g. hitting, screaming, taking things that don't belong to them). All these are done so that the children understand they need to be responsible for their behavior. Over time, it will be more obvious to them that they need to think about what they are doing before they do it.



Vocabulary

Tax Collector

a person who took a portion of money from the people and gave it to the rulers

Forgive

to not stay angry at someone

Honest

to be truthful; to not lie

Cheat

to lie or trick someone

Salvation

having eternal live; to be able to go to heaven



Before You Teach

In the last several lessons, the people we learned about all demonstrated with concrete actions their great love for Jesus. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, gave her expensive perfume to anoint Jesus. The sinful woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears. Here, Zacchaeus repents and promises to return to the people the money he has taken. None of these actions were easy. How many of us would give up a year's wages and offer that to God right now? How many of us would get up in front of a crowd of strangers and preach about Jesus' love? How many of us are willing to admit that we still fall short of God's glory and need His grace and Holy Spirit to overcome the temptations we face in our lives? Even if we could do any of these, we would probably need to think about it first, at the very least. Yet, these three people were able to do it without hesitation. What was the reason? They certainly were courageous, but more importantly, their actions stemmed from a deep love and devotion to our Lord Jesus.

There is a story about a woman whose husband was somewhat of a tyrant and often made lists of chores for her to finish by the end of the day. After he came home, he would inspect her work and even

if she had done a spectacular job, he would not even say thank you. Over time, she began to resent her husband and hate her chores. One day, her husband suddenly passed away and the woman was secretly happy inside. A year later, she met a man who was completely the opposite of her first husband. They got married and she felt like the luckiest woman alive. After a few years, the woman was cleaning out her attic and she came upon an old list her dead husband had written. Even though she hated him, she couldn't help but look at the list. After reading through it, she realized that all of the things on the list were things she had been doing for her current husband every day of their lives together. Yet she did not feel it was a burden, nor did she hate her job as she had with her first husband. The difference? She realized that she did these chores out of love for her second husband.

Today, are we motivated by such love as we do the work of God? Sometimes, it is easy to fall into the trap of complaining about what we do, especially if we have been doing it for a long time. If we find ourselves feeling that way, it is a good time to reread some of these stories from the Bible, so that our strength may be renewed. If we are motivated by our love for God, then nothing we will do will seem like a burden. Rather, like the woman in the story, we will do the work with great joy.



Bible Story

Jesus Is Able to Forgive

In the last lesson, we learned about a woman who came to Jesus to ask for forgiveness. Do you remember what it means to ask for forgiveness? It means we want Jesus to forget about all the bad things we have done. This woman knew that she had done some things that were wrong and she wanted Jesus to forgive her. So she came to Him and was so sorry that she cried all over Jesus' feet. Then she used her long hair to dry Jesus' feet. She did this in front of a lot of people. But she did not care that they might laugh at her. She only wanted to show Jesus how sorry she was. When she was done wiping His feet dry, she took out some perfume and rubbed the oil onto His feet. She wanted to show Jesus she was sorry by cleaning His feet for Him. In the end, Jesus told her that she had been forgiven. That means she did not have to worry about the wrong things she had done in the past. Jesus was not going to remember any of it! The woman was probably very happy she had come to see Jesus. She did not have to be sad anymore.

Today we are going to learn about another person that Jesus met and forgave. Let's learn about what he had done wrong and what Jesus said to him.

Zacchaeus Is a Tax Collector

Today's story is about Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a very rich man. He had a lot of money. He was a tax collector. That means his job was to take money from the people and give it to the rulers and kings of the land. That was the rule in the land where the people lived. They had to give a part of the money they made to the leaders in the land. So Zacchaeus collected money from the people for the rulers. But Zacchaeus was not an honest man. He lied and took more money than he was supposed to. Do you know why he did that? He wanted to keep the extra money for himself. That is why he became very rich. He got rich by taking money that didn't belong to him. That is called cheating. Do you think what Zacchaeus did was right? (Allow students to voice their opinions.) Everyone knew that Zacchaeus was taking more money from them than he should. That is why many people did not like Zacchaeus and did not want to be

his friend. Would you like having no friends? Probably not. Everyone wants friends. It would be lonely to have no friends to talk to or play with. Zacchaeus must have been sad that no one wanted to be friends with him.

Zacchaeus Wants to See Jesus

One day Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to his town. Zacchaeus never met Jesus before. But he heard about all the wonderful things Jesus had done for people. Maybe Jesus would want to be his friend. He was very excited so he decided to go to see Jesus. He walked to the street where Jesus would pass by. But there were already many people waiting there because everybody wanted to see and meet Jesus.

Now Zacchaeus was not a tall man. The Bible says that he was very short. So with all the people already standing up and down the street, he could not see anything. Zacchaeus tried to tippy-toe and stretch his body up. But he was still not tall enough. He tried to squeeze past the crowd. But no one would let him through. It was no use. He couldn't see past all the people in front of him. There were just too many people lining up wanting to see Jesus. All these people were in his way. What was he going to do? What would you have done if you were Zacchaeus? (Allow for response.)

Even though Zacchaeus tried many ways and still couldn't see, he did not give up. He thought about what else he could do. Then he saw a tall tree next to the road. He thought for a minute and then he came up with an idea. What do you think Zacchaeus was thinking? He wanted to climb the tree so that he would be able to see Jesus.

Jesus Calls Zacchaeus

So Zacchaeus went over to the tree and began to climb it. He climbed it slowly because he didn't want to fall down and get hurt. When he climbed up the trunk of the tree, he found a good spot on the tree to rest against. Then, as he looked and waited, from far away, he saw someone coming! Everyone was so excited! It was Jesus! Jesus walked past the crowd slowly. Zacchaeus could see that Jesus was getting close to where he was on the tree. He was excited, just like everyone else. Then, Jesus walked to the tree that Zacchaeus had climbed. He looked up and saw Zacchaeus on the

tree branches. Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down right away! Today, I must stay at your house!" Zacchaeus couldn't believe what he had just heard. Jesus wanted to go to his house. When Zacchaeus heard this, he was very excited. Zacchaeus climbed down from the tree, and happily welcomed Jesus to his house. But the people standing there were not happy. They complained, "Zacchaeus is not a good man. Why is Jesus staying with him?"

Zacchaeus Is Forgiven

Jesus wanted to stay with Zacchaeus because Jesus loved him, even though he had done many wrong things, like taking more money from people than he should. When Jesus told Zacchaeus He wanted to stay at his house, he felt really sorry for all the bad things he had done. He was very glad that Jesus loved him. He was glad he had a friend who cared about him. After talking to Jesus, he knew that he had to stop cheating the people and taking more than he was supposed to.

Zacchaeus said to Jesus, "I am sorry I have taken so much money from other people. I am going to give half of my money to the poor. I am also going to pay back the people I have cheated by giving them four times more than I have taken." Zacchaeus was telling Jesus and all the people there

that he wanted to give back all the money he took from the people that didn't really belong to him. He was even going to give more away to help the poor people. This made Jesus happy!

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today, salvation has come to this house, for I have come to save people just like you." When Jesus said this, it meant Jesus forgave Zacchaeus. That means Jesus was not going to remember the wrong things Zacchaeus had done. He forgave Zacchaeus because he was really sorry for what he had done. He promised to change and not to do wrong things again.

Have you done something wrong before? We have all done wrong things. When we do something we are not supposed to, we make many people feel sad. We make our family sad. We make our friends sad. We make Jesus sad too. But Jesus knows what we have done wrong and He wants to forgive us. He loves us, and He wants us all to be His good children. That is why He is willing to forgive us, but we must first repent. That means we must say, "I am sorry," to the person we did the wrong thing to. Then we must tell God that we are sorry. And the most important thing is to try our very best not to do it again. That is what Zacchaeus did, and Jesus forgave him.



Check For Understanding

1. **What was Zacchaeus' job?** (He was a tax collector.)
2. **Did the people like Zacchaeus? Why?** (The people did not like Zacchaeus because he took more money from them than he should have.)
3. **Why did Zacchaeus climb the tree?** (He wanted to see Jesus but he was too short.)
4. **Was Zacchaeus happy or sad when Jesus said He wanted to go to his house?** (He was happy because Jesus wanted to be His friend.)
5. **What did Zacchaeus do to show he was sorry for taking too much money from the**

people? (He told Jesus he would give half of his money to the poor and also return four times the money he had taken from the people.)

6. **Even though Zacchaeus had done something wrong by taking people's money, Jesus still forgave him. What does it mean to forgive?** (To forgive is to not be angry at someone anymore. Jesus forgave Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus was sorry.)
7. **Was Zacchaeus happy or sad that Jesus forgave him?** (He was happy because Jesus loved him.)
8. **If we do something wrong, how can we ask Jesus to forgive us?** (Allow students to share their answers.)



Life Application Story

Grandma's Cup

Julie was doing her homework in the kitchen one afternoon when she started to feel hungry. Her mom had to take her brother Tommy to a doctor's appointment, so her grandmother came over to stay with her until they got home. Her grandmother had told her a few minutes ago that she was tired and was going to lie down on Julie's bed, which was upstairs.

Julie put down her pencil and went over to the counter. She saw some peanut-butter cookies on the shelf. She knew her mom had just baked them earlier.

"Yummy," she thought. All she needed now was some milk. The cups were a little bit high for her to reach. Usually, she would get a stool and climb on it, but this time, she got lazy and just jumped up and grabbed one. Just as her feet touched the floor, she accidentally knocked over another cup. It fell to the floor with a crash and broke into a few pieces.

"Oh no!" Julie thought. "That's Grandma's favorite cup. Grandma will be mad if she finds out."

Julie thought of a way to clean things up. She wanted to make sure she cleaned up before her grandmother woke up.

"I hope she is sleeping," thought Julie as she grabbed a small broom and dust pan.

Julie thought about what to do. She could just throw the pieces into the garbage. But what if her grandmother asked her where the cup was? What would she say? Just then, she heard a sound from the stairs.

"Grandma's awake," she thought. She quickly dumped the pieces into the trash and put the broom and dust pan back as her grandmother walked into the kitchen.

"Hi Grandma," Julie said as she got back to her seat.

"Julie, I thought I heard some noise down here. That's why I came down. Is everything okay?"

"Yes, I just dropped something on the ground but I picked it up already," Julie said softly.

"Well, you look like you have been working

hard. Why don't we have some of these yummy cookies your mom made?" asked Julie's grandmother.

"Sure," Julie said.

"I am sure some cold milk would make the cookie taste even better," said Grandma as she reached for the milk in the fridge.

"Now, where is my cup?" asked Grandma.

Julie watched silently as her grandmother opened the cupboards and drawers to search for her cup. She even looked into the dishwasher.

Finally, after a few minutes, she asked Julie, "Have you seen my cup? I am pretty sure I just used it when I got here an hour ago."

Julie didn't know what to say. She didn't want to lie but she was afraid to tell the truth. Then her grandmother kicked the trash as she turned around and heard a funny sound.

"What's that sound?" asked Grandma.

Julie sat there for what seemed like the longest time. She knew Grandma would get really mad and she might get in trouble. But she knew she couldn't hide the glass from her grandmother either.

Finally, she took a deep breath and said, "Grandma, I broke your cup and I'm sorry. I knew you would be mad that I broke it, but I didn't know what to do so I just threw the pieces in the trash."

"Oh, Julie," Grandma said. "I am not mad. Of course I'm sad that my cup is gone. But I am worried about you. It's a good thing that you didn't get cut with the glass. But I am glad that you told me the truth."

"Grandma, I wanted to tell you but I was scared," Julie said.

"I know, and that was very brave of you. When you are not sure of what to do next time, remember that Jesus said that as long as we tell the truth, God will be very pleased and He will forgive you," said Grandma.

"I will remember that. Thanks for not getting mad at me. Do you still want some milk, Grandma?"

Grandma laughed and said, "I sure do! But I guess we will have to use a different cup."

Questions to Think About

1. What did Julie do by accident? (She broke her grandmother's cup.)

2. **Why was Julie scared to tell her grandmother the truth?** (She was afraid her grandmother would be mad at her.)
3. **Why wasn't her grandmother mad?** (Julie told

4. **Why is it important to tell the truth and repent (say we are sorry) when we have done something wrong?** (Allow students to answer.)



Activity 1

Zacchaeus Wants To See Jesus

Look at the pictures. Put them in the right order.

1. Zacchaeus climbs the tree and sees Jesus from afar (bottom right).
2. Jesus sees him and calls him down (top right).
3. The people wonder why Jesus is talking to Zacchaeus, a tax collector (top left).
4. Zacchaeus tells Jesus he will give back the money he owes (bottom left).



Activity 2

I Am Sorry For...

Look at the pictures. What can each person say to tell Jesus he or she is sorry? Write the word sorry in each picture.

1. I am sorry for saying mean things.
2. I am sorry for taking something that doesn't belong to me.
3. I am sorry for pushing someone.



Activity 3

Jesus Loves Me

Materials:

1. white paper
2. markers
3. construction paper
4. glue
5. other scraps

Directions:

1. Provide each student with a piece of paper.
2. Have them draw a self portrait. The teacher can be creative and cut the drawing into the shape of a heart.
3. Help them write the words "Jesus Loves Me"

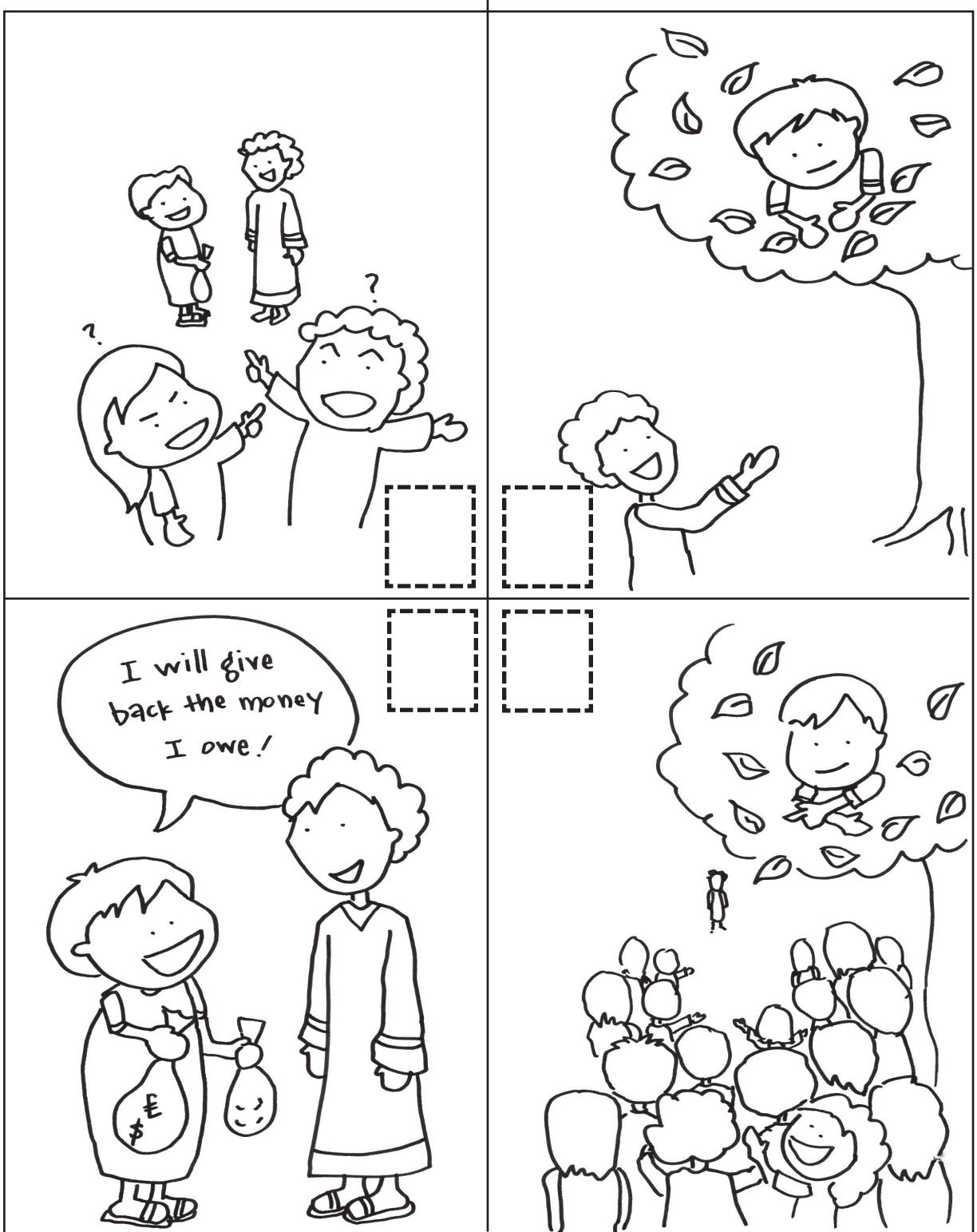
above their picture.

4. They can glue their paper onto a piece of construction paper to make it more sturdy. They can also decorate it with scraps.
5. As the students are engaged in the activity, remind them that Jesus loves them no matter what they do. If they do something they are not supposed to, they should remember to tell Jesus they are sorry and try to do what is right the next time.

Activity 7:1

Zacchaeus Wants To See Jesus

Look at the pictures. Put them in the right order by filling in the numbers.



Activity 7:2

I Am Sorry For...

Look at the pictures. What can each person say to tell Jesus that he or she is sorry? Write the word sorry in each picture.



I am _____ for saying mean things.



I am _____ for taking something that doesn't belong to me.



I am _____ for pushing someone.