

2026-5-rBackyard Older-Week 3

Today's Suggested Schedule—May 2026, Week 3

Today's Bible Story: Zacchaeus • Luke 19:1-10

Jesus cares about you no matter what.

Key Question: Who does Jesus care about?

Bottom Line: Jesus cares about everyone.

Memory Verse: *How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.* • Ephesians 3:18 NIV

Supplies NOT Included in the Activity Bags:

Social

Build It

- cardboard blocks

Lesson Activities

Memory Verse Activity- Measure the Verse

Bible Story Review- Story Box

Application Activity- High in the Tree Zacchaeus

- wall tape

Craft- Me in the Tree*

- glue sticks

Journal and Prayer



Bible Story

Zacchaeus • Luke 19:1-10

Jesus cares about you no matter what.

Key Question

Who does Jesus care about?

Bottom Line

Jesus cares about everyone.


Memory Verse

How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. • Ephesians 3:18 NIV

Social

Build It

What You Need

 Cardboard blocks



1

- Build with blocks on a table if children are not able to get down on the floor.

What You Do:

Before the Activity: Set the blocks in an open area of your space. Invite children to explore and begin building.

During the Activity: Encourage the children to build a tower as tall as they can. Ask, "How high can your tower go? Can you build it taller than Zacchaeus?" Let them take turns stacking blocks.

After the Activity: Introduce the Bible Story.

What You Say:

Before the Activity: "Friends, come over here with me and let's build with these blocks!"


During the Activity: "Let's build something tall, like a tree or a tower. Let's stack the blocks on top of each other as high as we can. *(Pause.)* Our tower is getting so tall! Let's see if we can make it even taller, one block at a time. *(Pause.)* Our tower is [number] blocks tall! Let's see if we can add more blocks to make it even taller. Wow! So tall, let's knock it down and build it again! *(Pause.)* Whoa! That was super cool. Ready to build?" *(Continue as time and interest allow.)*

After the Activity: "Today, in our true story from the Bible, we'll hear about a man named Zacchaeus who climbed a tall tree just so he could see Someone really special! Let's go hear more about Zacchaeus and who climbed the tree to see."

Groups

Memory Verse Activity- Measure the Verse

What You Need

 Soft flexible tape measure

1

What You Do:

Before the Activity: Say the Memory Verse with the motions together with the children.

During the Activity: Measure how wide each child's arm span is. Once every child has been measured, say the verse with the motions one more time.

After the Activity: Connect the Memory Verse to the Bottom Line.

What You Say:

Before the Activity: "Hello, hello! Let's say our verse as we do the motions. Ready? 'How wide (*stretch arms out wide*) and long (*stretch arms forward*) and high (*reach arms up*) and deep (*crouch down low*) is the love of Christ. (*Hug yourself.*) Ephesians 3:18 (*open hands like a book*). Fantastic!"

During the Activity: "Part of our verse says 'how wide.' Show me what the motions are for that part of the verse. (*Stretch arms out wide.*) Let's measure how wide your arms are stretched out wide. (*Measure each child's arm span.*) Wow! That's a lot of love! Now let's say our verse one more time with the motions. 'How wide (*stretch arms out wide*) and long (*stretch arms forward*) and high (*reach arms up*) and deep (*crouch down low*) is the love of Christ. (*Hug yourself.*) Ephesians 3:18 (*open hands like a book*). Wonderful job, everyone!"

After the Activity: "Zacchaeus found out just how big that love really is. Jesus saw him, called him by name, and loved him no matter what he had done **because [Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.** Who does Jesus care about? **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.**

Bible Story Review- Story Box

What You Need

- 👤 "Story Box" Cube 1
- 👤 Heart-shaped sticky notes 6

Link to the Picture of the Activity: <https://pin.it/5YbYxfnxJ>

What You Do:

Before the Activity: IF you are at South Fork 2nd service put the sticky notes back on each picture of the cube.

During the Activity: Encourage one child at a time to remove a sticky note, revealing a picture. Ask what part of the story it shows in the picture. Once all the sticky notes have been removed, retell the story, turning the box to the appropriate picture.

After the Activity: Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

What You Say:

Before the Activity: "Hello everyone. Come over and look at this cool story box! It has a heart on each side. Hearts make us think of love, and we are learning that Jesus loves and cares about everyone!"

During the Activity: "What do you think is under these hearts? *(Pause for responses.)* Those are great guesses! Let's find out! We'll take turns taking one heart off at a time. [Child's name], take one heart off the box. *(Pause.)* What do you see? *(Pause for responses.)* That's right! It's [story picture]. Let's keep going.

[Child's name], your turn to take a heart off. *(Continue with the remaining hearts.)* We found all the parts of the story. Now let's retell today's true Bible Story with each picture. *(Turn the cube to the picture of Zacchaeus with the mad people.)* Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and no one liked tax collectors! They took money from people to give to the rulers who were in charge and money to pay themselves. Zacchaeus had taken so much money that he was rich!

(Turn the cube to the picture of Jesus.) One day, Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to Jericho. Zacchaeus had heard that Jesus loves everyone, but Zacchaeus had never seen Jesus. So he went to see Jesus for himself. But when Zacchaeus got close, a big crowd of people blocked his way. They were all trying to see Jesus too!

(Turn the cube to the picture of Zacchaeus in the tree.) Zacchaeus couldn't see Jesus through the crowd, he was too short. So Zacchaeus climbed up a fig tree!

(Turn the cube to the picture of Jesus next to Zacchaeus in the tree.) Zacchaeus could see Jesus coming closer and closer until He got to the tree. Jesus stopped and looked right up at Zacchaeus and said come down and let's go to your house. Zacchaeus was amazed and excited. He scrambled out of the tree and invited Jesus to come to his home right away.




(Turn the cube to the picture of Jesus and Zacchaeus near Zacchaeus' house.) Other people saw this. They knew Zacchaeus had done wrong things, and they did not think Jesus should go to Zacchaeus' house. But Jesus loves and cares for everyone—no matter what!

(Turn the cube to the picture of Jesus and the people in the heart outline.) Jesus knew that Zacchaeus had taken too much money from people, but Jesus still loved him. Zacchaeus was changed that day, and he gave back more money than he had taken."

After the Activity: "Jesus told Zacchaeus that He came to help people who are lost and hurting and to rescue them. Jesus did not just come to help people who do the right thing all the time because all of us do wrong things sometimes. Jesus came to help people who are sick and hurting and do wrong things, like Zacchaeus. **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone**, no matter what. That means Jesus loves and cares for us too! Who does Jesus care about? **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.**"

Application Activity- High in the Tree Zacchaeus

What You Need

	"High in the Tree Zacchaeus" Activity Page	65
	Butcher paper	1
	Wall tape	1



- If a child is unable to jump, encourage children to reach up as high as they can.

Link to a Picture of Activity: <https://pin.it/5PbKp425U>

What You Do:

Before the Activity: Draw a large outline of a tree and tape to a wall at child's height or use a tree that is already in your room. Make a tape roll and place on the back of each cutout.

During the Activity: Encourage children to jump and put Zacchaeus as high in the tree as they can. Repeat as time and interest allow.

After the Activity: Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

What You Say:

Before the Activity: "Friends, come join me at this tall tree! (*Pause.*) There was a tree in our story today. Do you remember who climbed up in the tree? (*Pause for responses.*) That's right! Zacchaeus climbed up in the tree so he could see Jesus!"

During the Activity: "Let's play a game to get Zacchaeus (*hold up a picture of Zacchaeus*) in the tree. When I call your name, come get a picture of Zacchaeus, then jump as high as you can to stick him to the tree. [Child's name], come get your picture. Ready? Jump and put him high in the tree! (*Pause.*) Great job! [Child's name], your turn! (*Continue with each child.*) Wow! Some of you got Zacchaeus really high up in the tree! Super job, everyone!"














After the Activity: "Zacchaeus had heard that Jesus loves everyone. Jesus was coming to town, and Zacchaeus wanted to see Him. Everyone wanted to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was too short and couldn't see over the crowd, so he climbed up a big tree just like this so he could see. And Jesus saw Zacchaeus too. Jesus said, 'Zacchaeus, come down. I want to go to your house today!' Jesus changed Zacchaeus' heart, and Zacchaeus gave money back to everyone.

"Jesus told Zacchaeus that He came to help people who are lost and hurting and to rescue them.

Jesus didn't come to just help people who do the right thing all the time. Jesus came to help people who are sick and hurting and do wrong things, like Zacchaeus. **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone**, no matter what. That means Jesus loves and cares for us too! Who does Jesus care about?**[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone."**

Craft- Me in the Tree

What You Need

	"Allergy Alert Poster"	1
	"Me in the Tree" Activity Page	65
	Potting soil	1
	Sunflower seeds	65
	Plastic bowl	1
	Shallow plastic bin	1
	shovels	Several
	Camera	1
	Photo paper	65
	Green craft stick	65
	Glue sticks	Several
	Plastic tablecloth	1
	Baby wipes	Several



- Provide gloves for children with sensory sensitivities.

What You Do:

Before the Activity: Print "Allergy Alert Poster" on cardstock list potting soil and sunflower seeds and post at the door, one per Small Group. Spread the tablecloth on the table or floor. Pour soil into the bin and place it in the middle of the tablecloth with the spades/spoons. Pour the sunflower seeds into the bowl. Take a picture of each child and print, cut as needed. *Option: Fill each child's cup with soil and set it on the tablecloth.*

During the Activity: Ask children to glue their picture and leaf to the top of their craft stick. Encourage children to scoop soil into their cups, make a hole in the middle of the soil then stick a seed inside. Help cover the seed with more soil, then ask children to stick their craft stick into their cup. Clean hands as needed.

After the Activity: Connect the Bottom Line to the Bible Story.

What You Say:




Before the Activity: "Come join me around the table. We are going to plant a seed that will grow tall like the tree Zacchaeus climbed up in our story today."

During the Activity: "First, take your picture and the leaf, and glue them to the top of your craft stick. *(Pause.)* Great job! Now scoop some soil into your cup. *(Pause.)* Poke a hole in the middle of the soil and put a seed. *(Pause.)* Fill in the hole. *(Pause.)* Great! Now stick the craft stick with your picture into your cup. You did a really good job. Let's clean our hands and talk about today's true story from the Bible."

After the Activity: "Zacchaeus had climbed a tree so he could see Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He called him down from the tree, and they went to Zacchaeus' house. Jesus loved Zacchaeus even though he had made bad choices. Zacchaeus was changed that day and gave back the money he took and more! Jesus came to help people who are sick and hurting and do wrong things, like Zacchaeus, because **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone!** Who does Jesus care about? **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone!**"

Journal and Prayer

What You Need

-  Bible 1
-  Journal 1
-  Fun-shaped pen 1

What You Do:

Before the Activity:

Encourage the children to pretend to climb a tree like Zacchaeus as you lead them to your Small Group spot. Sit down and gather the children around you.

During the Activity: Review the Bible Story and the Memory Verse Hand Motions, then ask the children to help you make a list in the journal of things that we know are wrong to do.

After the Activity: Pray with the children using the list you made in the journal.

What You Say:

Before the Activity: "It's Small Group time! Today, we are going to pretend to climb a tree like Zacchaeus did in our story. Ready? Climb, climb, climb! Great job everyone! We're almost there! Hooray! We made it! Now we can sit down and talk about today's Bible Story. One, two, three, sit down with me!"

During the Activity: (Open the Bible and lay it in front of the children.) "In our Bible Story today, Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he was too short and could not see over all of the people. What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus? *(Pause.)* Yes, he climbed a tree! And then Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down because He wanted to go to his house! Jesus loved Zacchaeus even though he had done wrong things because **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.** Tell me, who does Jesus care about? **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.**

"The Bible verse we are learning talks about how big Jesus' love is for us. It says, 'How wide (*stretch arms out wide*) and long (*stretch arms forward*) and high (*reach arms up*) and deep (*crouch down low*) is the love of Christ. (*Hug yourself.*) Ephesians 3:18 (*open hands like a book*). Did you hear that? Jesus loves us wide, (*stretch arms out wide*) and long (*stretch arms forward*) and high (*reach arms up*) and deep! (*Crouch down low.*) Jesus loves everyone, everywhere that much because **[Bottom Line] Jesus cares about everyone.** Let's stand up and say that Bible verse together! Just say what I say and do what I do! 'How wide (*stretch arms out wide*) and long (*stretch arms forward*) and high (*reach arms up*) and deep (*crouch down low*) is the love of Christ. (*Hug yourself.*) Ephesians 3:18 (*open hands like a book*)."

"Yay! (*Clap.*) I'm so glad that Jesus loves and cares about everyone everywhere! Let's sit down so we can write in our prayer journal and talk to God. (*Open journal.*) It's a good thing Jesus loves us even when we do something wrong, because everyone has done something wrong. We all need Jesus to forgive us, right? Let's make a list of things we know are wrong. Then we can use our list when we pray. (*Suggestions: Not obeying parents, not sharing, arguing with a sibling/friend, taking something that does not belong to us, etc.*) I'll go first. (*Remember to print as you write in the journal so the children can recognize their names and the letters.*)"

After the Activity: "We've all done something wrong, just like Zacchaeus. That's what makes Jesus so special. **[Bottom Line]** **Jesus cares about everyone**, and He will always forgive us. Let's pray and talk to God about what we wrote in our prayer journal. Would anyone like to pray before I pray? *(Give each child who wants to pray the opportunity to do so.)* Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to love us no matter what. Please forgive us when we do things like *(read the list)*. And help us forgive others too. You're the best, God. We love You and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Supplies

Build It	Quantity
1. Cardboard blocks	1

Memory Verse Activity- Measure the Verse	Quantity
1. Soft flexible tape measure	1

Bible Story Review- Story Box	Quantity
1. "Story Box" Cube	1
2. Heart-shaped sticky notes	6

Application Activity- High in the Tree Zacchaeus

1. "High in the Tree Zacchaeus" Activity Page	65
2. Butcher paper	1
3. Wall tape	1

Craft- Me in the Tree

1. "Allergy Alert Poster"	1
2. "Me in the Tree" Activity Page	65
3. Potting soil	1
4. Sunflower seeds	65
5. Plastic bowl	1
6. Shallow plastic bin	1
7. shovels	Several
8. Camera	1
9. Photo paper	65
10. Green craft stick	65
11. Glue sticks	Several
12. Plastic tablecloth	1
13. Baby wipes	Several

Journal and Prayer

1. Bible	1
2. Journal	1
3. Fun-shaped pen	1