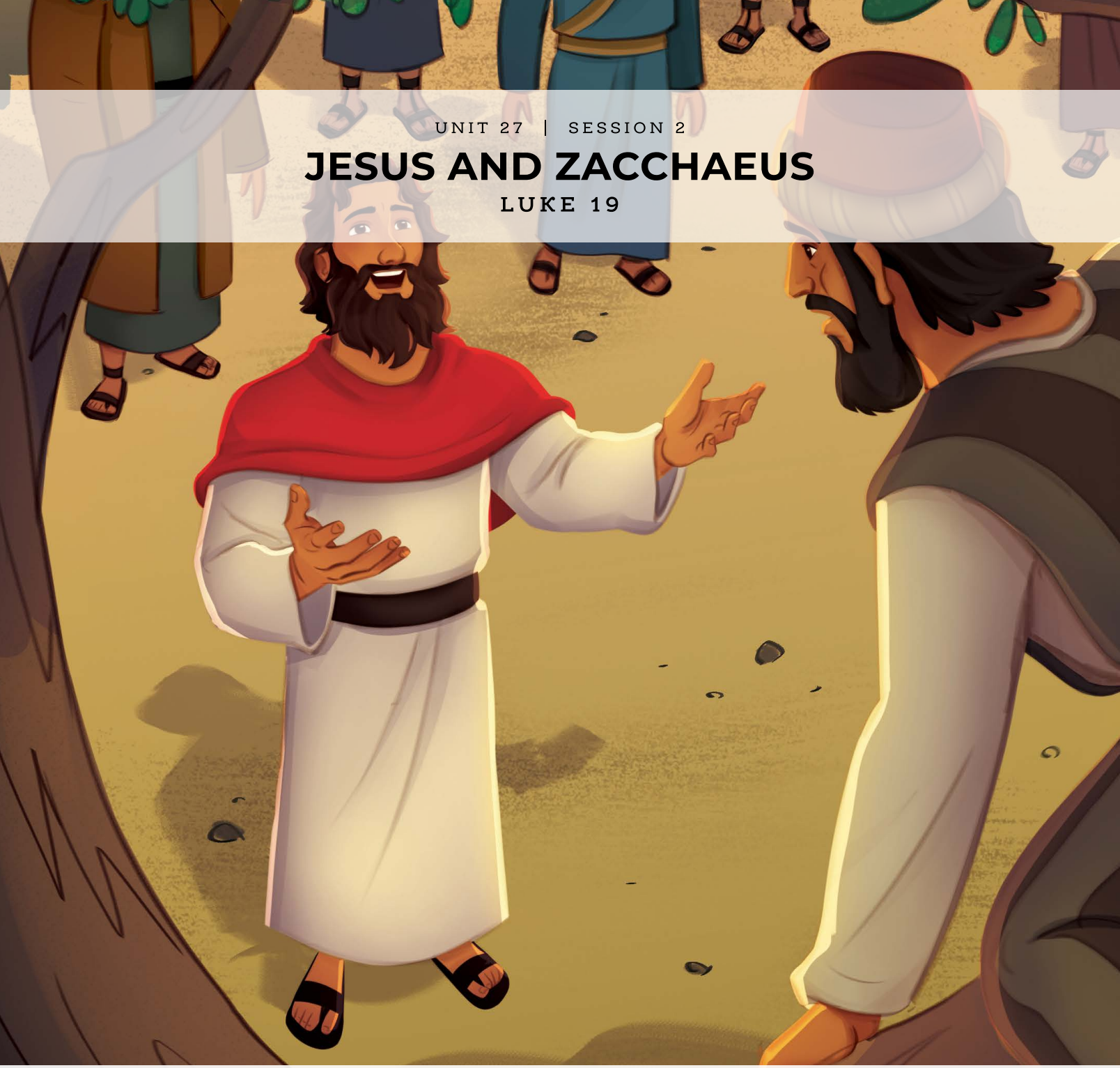


UNIT 27 | SESSION 2

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LUKE 19

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Corinthians 5:21

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: *What is justification? Justification is when God declares that we are forgiven of sin and are made righteous.*

CHRIST CONNECTION: We are all sinners, but Jesus came to seek and save us, too. He died on the cross and rose again so we can be forgiven and have eternal life when we turn from our sin and trust in Him.

STORY POINT: Jesus invited Zacchaeus to follow Him and be saved.

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PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

LEADER Bible Study

"Zacchaeus was a wee little man …"

This line from a popular children's song is lighthearted and catchy, but it can make Zacchaeus seem more innocent than he likely was. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. In Jewish culture, a tax collector was the kind of person families warned their children about. People thought of tax collectors as thieves and extortionists—people who had betrayed the Jews to work with the Romans.

And yet, chief tax collector as he was, Zacchaeus became a conduit of one of Jesus' most beautiful moments of mercy and grace.

Luke writes that Zacchaeus "was trying to see who Jesus was." Something inside Zacchaeus was stirring, and he wanted answers. But the crowd blocked Zacchaeus' view, so he did something about it: he climbed a sycamore tree. He put himself in a place to see Jesus more clearly.

Our spiritual lives often require similar action. We must learn to constantly position ourselves to see Jesus more clearly by leaning into Scripture and spending time alone with God. We make time for prayer and for fellowship with other believers who encourage and challenge us. We guard our hearts as we choose what content to consume. These disciplines don't make Jesus love us more; they simply help us be in a better position to see and obey Him.

True obedience involves trusting Jesus and doing what He says. We don't negotiate the terms. We move when He speaks. Our obedience becomes a blank check, already signed, ready for Him to fill in however He desires. That kind of surrender is where transformation begins.

This week, similar to how Zacchaeus climbed the tree, help put your kids in the best position to see Jesus so that He might lead them to repentance and transform their hearts.



Scan the QR code to listen to The Gospel Project for Kids Weekly Leader Training Podcast.



THE WEEK PRIOR

Prepare your heart to teach; plan the session



10–15 MINUTES

Greet kids and open the session



25–30 MINUTES

Teach kids the story of the gospel



15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to love the God of the gospel



15–20 MINUTES

Lead kids to live out the mission of the gospel

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PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.

WELCOME

Activity Page
- ☐ "Why Did Jesus Come?" activity page

Session Starter (Option 1)
- ☐ blindfolds, 1 per every 2 kids

LEARN

Introduce the Session
- ☐ countdown video
- ☐ Story Point Poster

Big Picture Question
- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline
- ☐ Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story
- ☐ "Jesus and Zacchaeus" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids
- ☐ "Unit 27, Session 2" Questions from Kids video

Missions Moment
- ☐ "Send Puerto Rico" video

Key Passage Activity
- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ posters, 2
- ☐ "The Righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)

LOVE

Review & Bible Skills
- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)

LIVE

Reflection and Prayer
- ☐ Bible story coloring page

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WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

> **SAY** *"What is something that's easier to do or see if you're tall? What about something that's easier to do or see if you're short?"*

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Why Did Jesus Come?" activity page.

> **SAY** *"By unscrambling the letters on the ladder you were able to decipher the message! Jesus came to seek and save sinners. Today, we'll learn that Jesus called a man named Zacchaeus to follow Him."*

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: FINDING FRIENDS

Group the kids into pairs. Provide each pair with a blindfold. Instruct one partner to line up on one side of the room and put on the blindfold. The other partner will stand on the opposite end of the room. When the pairs are ready, the blindfolded partner must try to make his or her way across the room to the other partner. His or her partner can guide them only by calling out his or her partner's name. The first team whose partner makes it to his or her other partner on the other side of the room wins.

> **SAY** *"By listening for your partner's voice, you were able to find them! Today we are reading about a man named Zacchaeus. We will learn that* **JESUS INVITED ZACCHAEUS TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE SAVED.** *Jesus called Zacchaeus' name, like you called your partners' names, so that Zaccaeus would join Him."*

☐ OPTION 2: AVOIDING GIANTS



Number the kids off by ones and twos. Explain that the twos will be *giants*. Line the ones up on one side of the room and have the twos stand in the middle of the room. Instruct the ones to become as small as they possibly can and attempt to cross the room. Ones may choose to shrink by crossing on their knees or on their hands and knees. Share that the giants can only move slowly because of their size. If the kids are tagged, they become giants too. Continue allowing the kids to move from side to side until one kid remains.

> **SAY** *"Being smaller during this game was a challenge! Today's story is about a short man named Zacchaeus. When Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming, he climbed up in a tree to see better. Together we'll learn that* **JESUS INVITED ZACCHAEUS TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE SAVED.**

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**



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INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

> **SAY** "Hi, everyone! I'm so glad you are here! My name is **[your name]**. Today we will be exploring a story that's found in the Gospel of Luke. Can anyone tell me which Testament the Gospel of Luke is found in? **[Allow responses.]** Let's get out our Bibles and turn together to the New Testament (Distribute a Bible to any kid who needs one.) Last week we read about Jesus healing a man who was born blind. Jesus came to save us from our spiritual blindness. Today we will be reading about a man named Zacchaeus. Let's pray together as we open God's Word.
>
> 'God, thank You for sending Your Son to seek and save sinners. As we read, help us understand what it means to turn from sin and follow You. Amen.'"

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

Display the Big Picture Question Poster.

> **SAY** "Last week we started learning a new big picture question together! Who can share what our big picture question is? **[Allow responses.]** Let's say our big picture question and answer aloud together: **What is justification? Justification is when God declares that we are forgiven of sin and are made righteous**. Through His miracles and teaching, Jesus revealed that He came to call sinners to repentance. Jesus lived a perfect life and died in our place. God promises to forgive us of our sin and see us through Jesus' righteousness when we repent and place our trust in Him. Today's story will remind us that Jesus came to offer justification for sinners."

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the Giant Timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

> **SAY** "As His time on earth was drawing to an end, Jesus performed many miracles to reveal Himself as God's Son. He came to bring more than physical healing; He was bringing healing for people's hearts. Jesus had compassion over God's people because they were blinded by sin. Just as He raised the dead, Jesus would soon die and rise again to bring salvation. Today, we will learn that Jesus called Zacchaeus to repent and follow Him."

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LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Luke 19. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Jesus and Zacchaeus." Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

"Jesus was traveling through the city of Jericho. A man named Zacchaeus (za KEE uhs) lived there. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was very rich.

When **Zacchaeus** heard that Jesus was coming, he **wanted to see who Jesus was.** But there was a problem: **Zacchaeus was too short to see over the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus pass by.**

When **Jesus** came to the tree, He **looked up and saw Zacchaeus. "Zacchaeus,** hurry and **come down," Jesus said, "because I must stay at your house today."**

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed Jesus with joy! But the people complained. "Why would Jesus go to the house of a sinful man like that?"

Zacchaeus stood before Jesus and **said, "Look, Lord, I will give half of everything I own to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times what I took!"**

Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because you have believed in Me. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Christ Connection: We are all sinners, but Jesus came to seek and save us, too. He died on the cross and rose again so we can be forgiven and have eternal life when we turn from our sin and trust in Him. "

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY "Zacchaeus was disliked by many because he was a tax collector. Tax collectors were known for taking more money than they should from people. How did Zacchaeus' actions in the story show how much he wanted to see Jesus? **[Allow responses.]** Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, but Jesus didn't need a tree to see Zacchaeus. He knew Zacchaeus was lost and in need of salvation. What did Zacchaeus do when Jesus said He was coming to Zacchaeus' house? **[Allow responses.]** Just as Zacchaeus received Jesus with joy, Jesus wants us to repent of our sin and joyfully welcome Him as Lord of our lives. Zacchaeus demonstrated His changed heart by offering to sell His possessions and pay back the people he had taken money from.

How did the people react when Jesus announced that He was going to Zacchaeus'

STORYTELLING TIPS

Sycamore trees: Explain that sycamore trees can grow up to 30 or 40 feet tall, but have low, spreading branches that would have made it easy for Zacchaeus to climb.

Use actions: Use actions to help tell the story. Engage the kids by inviting them to repeat the actions with you as you read.

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house? **[Allow responses.]** *Dining at someone's house shows friendship and kindness. The people could not understand why Jesus would befriend a sinful man like Zacchaeus. Jesus reminded the people that the Son of Man did not come for the righteous, because no one is righteous! Like Zacchaeus, all of us are sinners in need of a Savior. Jesus came to seek out sinners and offer us salvation.*

We are all sinners, but Jesus came to seek and save us, too. He died on the cross and rose again so we can be forgiven and have eternal life when we turn from our sin and trust in Him. "

3 GOSPEL DISCUSSION

SAY " *Jesus is the Son of God who came to lead sinners to repentance. We are all sinners, separated from God and deserving of punishment. But because of His death and resurrection, Jesus offers salvation from sin to all who call on Him as Lord. To learn more about what it means to trust your life to Jesus, you can see one of your parents or a church leader.* "

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Create an environment where kids are welcome to ask questions about what it means to follow Jesus.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 27, Session 2" Questions from Kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. If someone in my class gets in trouble a lot, should I still be friends with them?
2. How can you show kindness to someone this week?

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5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

> **SAY** "Puerto Rico is an *archipelago*, which means it is a group of islands. It consists of the main island and more than 140 smaller islands, islets, and cays. It is located in the northeastern Caribbean Sea between the Dominican Republic and the U.S. Virgin Islands."

Show the "Send Puerto Rico" video.

> **SAY** "Although Puerto Rico is part of the United States, it is about one thousand miles away from Miami, Florida, the closest United States mainland location. More than three million people live on the island. Most Puerto Ricans speak Spanish as their primary language, but many of them also learn and use English.
>
> When Hurricane Maria struck the islands in 2017, the people of Puerto Rico needed immediate help because of the widespread destruction the storm had caused. This was an opportunity for missionaries to not only help the people recover from the storm damage, but also share the message of God's love with them."

Pray for more churches to be started in Puerto Rico. Pray that more United States churches will partner with the churches already working in Puerto Rico to help more people know about Jesus.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the Key Passage Poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Corinthians 5:21 together.

> **SAY** "Jesus lived a perfect life without sin. Because of His righteousness, His death paid the price for sin. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we can be made right with God. Let's review our key passage together!"

Set up two posters. Draw blanks on the posters for each word in the key passage. Write the key passage on two different sets of paper and cut out each word. Turn the words upside down in front of each poster with a piece of tape on the back. Divide the kids into two teams and have each team line up on the opposite end of the room from their poster. Have the kids take turns racing to the poster, selecting one slip of paper and placing it in the correct blank spot on the poster.

Lead kids to sing "The Righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

> **SAY** "God, thank You for providing a perfect sacrifice for our sins through Your Son, Jesus. Let our actions and words point others to the incredible news of salvation that is available to all who call on You. Amen."

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**

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LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Luke 19. Explain that the author, Luke, refers to Zacchaeus as a chief tax collector, a term that is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Share that Zacchaeus was a very sinful man, but Jesus is able to save the worst of sinners for His glory.

Consider pointing out the location of Jericho [H6] on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Luke 19:2, 9-10, or ask the kids to follow along as you read the verses aloud.

> **SAY** *"Zacchaeus sinned by taking money that wasn't his and cheating others. But Jesus called Zacchaeus to turn away from his past sins and follow Him as Lord. We have all done things we aren't proud of, like taking things that didn't belong to us, lying, not listening to our parents, or acting unkind toward others. All of these wrong actions are called sin. Jesus came to save us from our sin. He calls us to turn from our old way of living. Like Zacchaeus, Jesus invites us to experience true joy when we follow Him as Lord!"*

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

> **SAY** *"What does it mean to repent?"*

Explain that to repent means to turn away from the sinful way we lived before. Jesus calls believers to leave behind a life of sin and follow Him as Lord. Remind kids that Christians still sin, but should try their best every day to become more like Jesus. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 3:19.)

> **SAY** *"How do the actions of believers point to their faith in Jesus?"*

Encourage kids to consider how Zacchaeus' life looked very different after meeting Jesus. Share that Jesus calls those who follow Him as Lord to act differently than they did before they were saved. Our actions cannot save us, but if someone is a Christian, their actions and choices point to the change God has brought about in their heart. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read James 2:17.)

> **SAY** *"How should God's forgiveness of believers' sin change the way they treat others?"*

Remind kids that the people complained about what Jesus did for Zacchaeus because he was a sinner. But we are all sinners, including those who judged Zacchaeus. Share that we can treat others with grace because God has shown grace to us. (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:32.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**

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LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

☐ OPTION 1: JESUS SEES

Give each kid a piece of paper and something to draw with. Lead them to draw a tree with several branches that fills up the paper. Along the branches, invite them to write or draw different situations in their life that Jesus sees. These might include a difficult friendship, a lonely moment at school, or an area of sin where they need forgiveness.

> **SAY** *"We can trust that, like Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the tree and called Him by name, Jesus sees us too! Just as* **JESUS INVITED ZACCHAEUS TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE SAVED,** *Jesus wants us to turn from sin and follow Him as Lord."*

☐ OPTION 2: CLIMB, CALL, SIT



Lead kids to spread out throughout the room. Remind them that we learned that Zacchaeus climbed a tree, was called by Jesus, and then sat down with Jesus to eat. Show them corresponding actions for each of the following words: *climb* (pretend to climb a tree by moving your arms and legs up and down); *call* (cup your hands around your mouth like a megaphone); *sit* (sit on the ground). Explain that you will call out the words and the kids must do the corresponding actions. If a kid does the wrong action, they are out. Call out the words, mixing up the order and the speed. Continue until only one kid is remaining.

> **SAY** *"Zacchaeus was too short to see over the crowd, but that did not stop Him from seeing Jesus.* **JESUS INVITED ZACCHAEUS TO FOLLOW HIM AND BE SAVED.** *Like Zacchaeus, Jesus calls us to repent and follow Him!"*

2 REFLECTION AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids. If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.

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