



LESSON 4

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Seeks and Saves Us

SCRIPTURE: [Luke 19](#)

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus seeks out a tax collector named Zacchaeus and asks to be a guest in his home where Zacchaeus changes his ways, and Jesus welcomes him into God's family

WORD OF WONDER: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. —[John 3:16–17 \(NIV\)](#)

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

In the classic Zacchaeus song, Zacchaeus is described as a “wee little man.” But he was the chief tax collector in the region, meaning he earned commission from what the tax collectors beneath him received from the Jewish people. He was very wealthy and powerful.

WHAT?

Zacchaeus, a Jewish man, was making money off his own people and identifying with the Romans, who oppressed the Jews. No wonder everyone grumbled when Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus’ house. Once again, Jesus was willing to associate with all people—righteous, sinners, wealthy, poor, powerful, and the outcast.

WHERE?

Jesus passes through Jericho as He heads west toward Jerusalem and the cross. Jericho was the first place the Israelites conquered when they entered the promised land ([Joshua 6](#)), and it’s the Jericho road where the story of the good Samaritan takes place ([Luke 10](#)).

WHEN?

In the previous chapter, Luke records Jesus’ conversation with a rich ruler who failed to follow Jesus’ advice and went away sad because he wanted to keep his wealth ([Luke 18](#)). Contrast this with Zacchaeus, who heard from Jesus and immediately realized his earthly wealth was unimportant compared to the kingdom of God.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

With Zacchaeus, Jesus showed that no one is beyond being welcomed into God’s kingdom if they are willing to repent. Throughout His ministry, Jesus sought and saved lost people. He called Matthew the tax collector to follow Him ([Matthew 9:13](#)), talked with a Samaritan woman ([John 4](#)), and told parables about lost things ([Luke 15](#)).

Curiosity

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

Welcome Question

Leader Tip: Whenever possible, get at eye level with the kids! This simple gesture will help them feel like they belong and will allow them to receive today's message with an understanding of what it feels like to be sought out!

At your start time ...

Welcome everyone with enthusiasm and invite several kids to share their answers to the Welcome Question: **When did someone make you feel extra special? What did they do to make you feel this way?**

It feels so good when other people make us feel special, doesn't it?! Today we'll hear about a time when Jesus made someone feel extra special! But first, it's time to be curious!

Make It Inclusive: Kids feel confident when they know what to expect. Create a visual chart of your lesson/service order. Post it where all the kids can see it. Each time you transition to the next part of the lesson, point out where you are on the chart.

Curiosity Questions

I'm curious ...

Have you ever done something to make someone else's day better? Tell us about it.

Do you think Jesus can change someone's life? Can you think of an example of a time He did?

(Note that kids might share about a story from their lives or from the Bible.)

Preteen Multisensory Activity: Seek Out!

Gather the kids. **To seek out something is to search for it even when it's challenging.** Let's practice our seeking skills with an activity called Seek Out! I have seven photos that I will show one at a time. For each photo, your job will be to seek out something specific. As soon as you find whatever it is you're seeking, you'll put both hands on your head. Demonstrate by putting both hands on your head.

Display the first [Seek Out! Slide](#). Read the "seek out" prompt and invite kids to look for a girl eating an ice cream cone. Once everyone has found her, point to the ice-cream-eating girl (or have a kid come up and point her out). Then advance to the next slide and read the prompt on it. Continue through all seven images and prompts.

If you'd like to turn the activity into a competition, have kids form two teams. Whichever team finds what they are looking for in the photo first earns a point, and whoever has the most points at the end wins!



Leader Tip: Add more movement to the activity by having the kids do a larger action each time they find what they're seeking. For example, they might run to the opposite side of the room or stand and do three jumping jacks.

Make It Inclusive: If kids in your group have impaired vision, either invite them to sit near the screen or print copies of slides for them to hold.

Seeking out what you were looking for was easier in some of the photos than in others, but you all did a great job! We'll learn in God's big story today about a man named Zacchaeus who wanted to see Jesus but was too short to see Him over the crowd, so he climbed up in a tree! Even though Zacchaeus went to great heights to see Jesus, it was actually Jesus who was seeking out Zacchaeus.



Because as today's Wonder Truth says, **JESUS SEEKS AND SAVES US.**

Declaring God's Wonder

**Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.) You
made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.) And
when I follow Jesus, I am Your kid! (Kids repeat.) You
know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.) You sent
Jesus to seek and save me. (Kids repeat.)**
You bring out the best in me! (Kids repeat.)
My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)

Faith

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17 (NIV)

In God's big story today, we saw Jesus seeking and saving Zacchaeus. The people in the crowd didn't like Zacchaeus because he was a tax collector, but Jesus is different from the crowd. Jesus loved Zacchaeus, and He loves us too! Let's say our Word of Wonder together as we remember God's amazing love for us! Open your Bible to [John 3:16–17](#). Read [John 3:16–17](#) several times together.

Gather the kids in a circle and set up a chair for every kid but one. Alternatively, place floor dots on the floor. Let's play musical chairs to practice our verse! Play "John 3:16" from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) or other upbeat worship music as kids play musical chairs. Each time you stop the music, invite the kid without a chair to recite as much of the Word of Wonder as she can and encourage the rest of the group to help her as needed. To keep kids engaged, let everyone stay in the game the whole time. At the end of the game, invite the kids to say the verse one more time all together.

Leader Tip: *For Younger Kids.* Simplify the game by setting up the same number of chairs as there are kids. Every time you stop the music, invite all the kids to say the verse together.

Elementary Questions

- **What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus?** (*climbed a sycamore-fig tree*)
- **What did Jesus say when He saw Zacchaeus up in the tree?** (*“Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today”* [Luke 19:5].)
- **How did the people in the crowd feel when Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house? Why do you think they may have felt this way?** (*Possible answers: They were unhappy, upset, angry because as a tax collector, Zacchaeus worked for the Romans who mistreated the Jews and may have made extra money dishonestly.*)
- **What big things did Zacchaeus do after welcoming Jesus to his house?** (*He gave half of what he owned to people who were poor and paid back four times anything he had gotten by cheating.*)
- **Before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was spiritually lost. What do you think it means to be spiritually lost?** (*Possible answers: to be living without Jesus; to not realize that Jesus loves you, died for you, offers you forgiveness and life forever with Him*)
- **Jesus seeks and saves us like He did for Zacchaeus. What does this show you about Jesus? What does it show about how He feels about you?**

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Because of Him, everyone is able to be a part of God’s family!
Let’s thank God in prayer for sending His Son to change our hearts and give us a place we’ll always belong.

Preteen Questions

- **What did Jesus say when He saw Zacchaeus up in the tree?** (*“Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today”* [Luke 19:5].)
- **Why do you think the crowd got upset when Jesus wanted to stay in Zacchaeus’ home?** (*Possible answers: Zacchaeus was a tax collector who worked for the Romans and likely cheated Jews to make money; the people considered him a “sinner;” Jesus was a Jewish teacher who would have been expected to stay away from tax collectors.*)
- **How was Zacchaeus different at the start of today’s story than at the end? Why do you think he changed?**
- **Do you think the big change in Zacchaeus affected the people around him? How so? Do you think the way you live as a Jesus-follower affects the people around you? How so?**
- **Jesus seeks and saves us like He did for Zacchaeus. What does this show you about Jesus? What does it show about how He feels about you?**

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Because of Him, everyone is able to be a part of God’s family!
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Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share any prayer requests or praises. Give kids a few moments to pray over each of the requests silently. Ask whether any of the kids want to pray for the group out loud, but if not, that’s OK! You can close in prayer and encourage kids that God always hears their prayers no matter how or when they pray.

Identity

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

Elementary Responding in Worship: Seek and Save Prayer Wall

Gather the kids in front of the designated prayer wall. We're going to reflect on Jesus' love for us by writing and drawing our prayers and putting them on a prayer wall, but before we begin, let's do a little activity. Scatter the prepared note cards all around the room. When I say, "Go," your job is to find three note cards with your name on them. Once you find all three, you can return to your seat.

Leader Tip: If your group is large, give each kid three note cards and have them write their own names on them. Then collect the cards, shuffle them, and scatter them around the room.

Great job seeking out the cards with your name on them! Some of you had to look for a long time to find all three, but you didn't give up. You kept seeking until you found what you were looking for! Today in God's big story, Jesus could have given up on Zacchaeus. After all, Zacchaeus was a tax collector who probably cheated other people out of their money. But Jesus loved Zacchaeus and kept seeking Him until Zacchaeus turned away from his old way of doing things and toward Jesus. Jesus loves us too, and He doesn't give up on us! Let's spend some time talking with Jesus now by writing or drawing prayers to Him.

Give each kid a writing utensil and set coloring utensils out as well. **Jesus loves you always and no matter what! No matter what you've done in the past, Jesus loves you and invites you to come to Him. On the back of one of your cards, thank Jesus for His love.** Give kids time to write or draw on a note card.

Jesus seeks and saves you! On the back of a different card, tell Jesus what that means to you. Give kids time to write or draw their thoughts to Jesus on a note card.

If Jesus was sitting next to you right now, what would you say to Him? Would you ask Him to help you with a certain situation? Would you praise Him for something He has done in your life? On the back of your third card, write or draw whatever you want to tell Jesus. Give kids time to write or draw on a note card.

When kids finish writing and drawing on their cards, invite them to come up and tape their cards to the prayer wall. They can tape them with their writings/drawings facing out, or if they prefer to keep their prayers between them and Jesus, they can tape their cards with their writings/drawing facing the wall. Consider softly playing music from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) throughout this response time.

Blessing Your Kids

Blessing: Jesus knows you by name. He loves you, and He hears your prayers. You matter to God! May you always remember that Jesus seeks and saves you!

GAME 4: SEEK AND FIND

Make It Inclusive: If you have kids with limited mobility in your group, modify the game by having all the kids sit in one place and look around the room to find the hidden object (similar to “I Spy”)

Show the kids the object that will be hidden. **Today’s game is called Seek and Find. I’m going to hide this object somewhere in this room. Your job is to seek and find the (insert name of object). But how quickly can you find it? We’ll see! I’m going to time each round and see just how quickly you can seek and find the (insert name of object).**

When the kids are ready, ask them to close their eyes and place their heads in their hands while you hide the object. Then ask them to open their eyes and explore the room for the object. After playing several rounds, gather the kids back together.

Leader Tip: Depending on the age range, you can make the object easier or harder to find.

During some rounds, you were having a hard time finding the (insert name of object). It wasn’t easy to see because it was hidden so well. Today in God’s big story, we’re learning about a man named Zacchaeus who was seeking for Jesus but having a hard time finding Him. In the end, it was Jesus who found Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus’ life was changed forever!