

## Today's Suggested Schedule—February 2026, Week 3

**Bible Story:** Zacchaeus • *Luke 19:1-10*

**Bottom Line:** The love of Jesus can change things for the better.

**Monthly Memory Verse:** *"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you."* • John 13:34 NIRV

### Supplies NOT Included in the Activity Bags

Bible Story Review: Unbox the Story

- Box or bucket for items

Application Activity: Respond with Love

Memory Verse Activity: Draw the Verse

- Bibles
- Paper
- Coloring supplies

Prayer Activity: Pray and Dismiss

- Jar from previous week
- Leftover candy hearts from previous week

### **Bible Story Summary**

In Week 3, Jesus singles out Zacchaeus, a tax collector who has scrambled up a tree for a better view. Instead of scolding Zacchaeus for stealing from his neighbors, Jesus invites himself over to the tax collector's house for a party. Profoundly changed by Jesus' love and acceptance, Zacchaeus offers to pay back anyone he has cheated—four times as much! [BOTTOM LINE] The love of Jesus can change things for the better.

### **PRAYER**

Thank God that His love has the power to change our hearts and our habits. Recall an age-appropriate story about a time when experiencing God's love (or love from a believer) softened your heart and inspired you to change or make something right. Ask God to help the kids in your group understand that Jesus doesn't wait for us to be perfect—He loves us now. Pray that His love would change them in real ways, helping them to be honest, to make things right (like Zacchaeus), and to be a friend to those who feel left out.

## 1. Bible Story Review- Unbox the Story

### What You Need:

- Box filled with the story props below
- Tree branch
- Coin
- Bag of coins
- Food item (plastic)
- Foam heart
- Happy face
- Sad face
- Small Jesus figure

### What You Do:

- Place the box in the middle of your group.
- Explain that you're going to "unbox" the story of Zacchaeus, just like in an unboxing video.
- Let kids take turns pulling one item out of the box.
- As each item is revealed, ask the kids how it connects to the story by asking the corresponding question.
  - **Tree branch:** "What did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus?"
  - **Coin:** "What was Zacchaeus's job? What did he do that was unfair?"
  - **Sad face:** "How did people feel about Zacchaeus?"
  - **Jesus figure:** "Who came to town that day?"
  - **Heart:** "Who loved Zacchaeus when no one else did?"
  - **Happy face:** "How did Zacchaeus feel after Jesus showed him love?"
  - **Food item:** "What did Jesus do at Zacchaeus's house?"
  - **Bag of coins:** "What did Jesus do after Zacchaeus was changed by Jesus' love?"

### What You Say:

"You unboxed the whole story! Zacchaeus was not a very liked person, but Jesus saw him and loved him anyway. Jesus looked up into the sycamore-fig tree and called him out, saying, '*Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today.*' (Luke 19:5 NIV). It changed Zacchaeus! He decided to give back the money he had taken and be generous. That's because **[Bottom Line] the love of Jesus can change things for the better.**"

## 2. Application Activity- Respond with Love

### What You Need:

- “Respond with Love” Activity Pages

### What You Do:

- Write your own scenario on the 2 blank cards.
- Read one of the scenario cards aloud.
- Ask the group, “What would you normally want to do in that situation?” (e.g., get mad, say something mean back)
- Then ask: “How can you respond with the love of Jesus instead?”
- Brainstorm kind and loving responses together.
- Continue with each of the scenarios.

### What You Say:

“It’s not always easy to choose love, is it? But when we remember how Jesus loved Zacchaeus—even when he had done wrong things—it helps us. Even when everyone was whispering that Jesus had gone to be the ‘guest of a sinner,’ Jesus chose love. We can ask Jesus to help us show love to others too. Zacchaeus’s response of generosity and making things right shows that **[Bottom Line]** the love of Jesus can change things for the better.”

Someone breaks  
your favorite pencil.

Someone says  
mean words to you.

Someone forgot  
their lunch.

Someone spilled  
water on their desk.

Someone fell when you  
were playing tag.

Someone bumped  
into you in the hall.

*Write your own scenario.*

*Write your own scenario.*

### 3. Draw the Verse

#### What You Need:

- Bibles
- Paper
- Coloring supplies

#### What You Do:

- Give every kid a Bible and direct them to look up John 13:34.
- Demonstrate how to look up the verse using the Bible Navigation Tips below:

***Finding verses for 2-3<sup>rd</sup> graders:** Guide them to open their Bibles to the front and find the table of contents. (Hold up a Bible opened to the table of contents to show the kids what the page looks like.) When the kids find the table of contents, lead them to find the name of the book in the list. When they find the book, lead them to look at the page number beside it. Explain that the number tells them on what page they can find that book. Help the kids find the page. When they find the book, explain that the big numbers on the page are the chapter numbers. Help them find the correct chapter. Then explain that the small numbers are verse numbers. Help them find the correct verse in that chapter.*

- Repeat the verse aloud several times.
- Review any words that might be unfamiliar to the kids.
- Give each kid a piece of paper and coloring supplies.
- Give each kid one part of the verse to write and then illustrate.
  - Kid 1: “I give
  - Kid 2: you a new command.
  - Kid 3: Love
  - Kid 4: one another.
  - Kid 5: You must
  - Kid 6: love
  - Kid 7: one another,
  - Kid 8: just as I
  - Kid 9: have loved you.”
  - Kid 10: John 13:34
- If you have more than 10 kids, pair kids to work together. If you have fewer than 10 kids, give each kid more than one part to write and illustrate.
- Invite the kids to put their pieces of paper together. Read the verse together several times.

#### What You Say:

“Your illustrations are awesome! These pictures will help us remember the verse! Jesus’ command to love one another is so important. Jesus’ love for Zacchaeus changed his life. Jesus told him, ‘*Today salvation has come to your house*’ (Luke 19:9 NIV). When we follow Jesus’ command, we also see that **[Bottom Line] the love of Jesus can change things for the better.**”

## 4. Pray and Dismiss

### What You Need:

- Prayer jar from Week 1
- Bag of candy hearts from Week 1

### What To Do:

- Ask the kids to think of one thing they would like to see Jesus change in their hearts for the better. It could be their bad attitude when it comes to doing math, how they're jealous of their little brother, or how they're tempted to lie in a situation because it seems easier.
- Invite them to think of that one thing and talk to Jesus silently and pray, "Dear Jesus, please change my heart in this area. I need Your help to make it better."
- When the kids are done praying silently, give them each a candy heart and encourage them to put it in the prayer jar.
- Explain that sometimes we are the ones who need to be prayed for. Sometimes it's our hearts that need to be changed for the better, and God loves to help us do that!
- Close in a group prayer.
- Store the Prayer Jar in a safe place to use again next week.

### What You Say:

"Thank you for sharing your hearts with Jesus. He loves you, and He is powerful enough to help with every single one of these things. Let's pray.

"Dear God, thank You for the story of Zacchaeus. It reminds us that Your love is so powerful. Please help us with the areas we talked to You about. We know that You can make things better. Help us to share Your love with others this week. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."