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Small Group Leader Guide

Today's Suggested Schedule

Greeting & Prayer (3 minutes)

The leader greets the children and asks how they are doing. After a brief time of sharing, the group participates in a short prayer activity to prepare their hearts for the lesson.

Small Group Activity (20 minutes)

Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

Pray & Dismiss (2 minutes)

After small group time, the leader closes in prayer. Then the children are dismissed.



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, NIV



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Greeting & Prayer



What You Need

- A Spinning Wheel
- Prayer Chart

What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive -> Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. 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.

- Choose a child to spin the wheel.
- Each color matches a prayer prompt on the chart.
- After spinning, the child finds the matching prompt, reads it, and prays.
- Let a few more children take turns spinning the wheel and praying.

What You Say

“Prayer is how we talk with God, our loving Father. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing—talking to Him anytime, anywhere. Whatever you do, begin with prayer. When you do, you can trust that God is in control and working in every situation.”

Transition -> Lead your group to the small group activity

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ACTIVITY ONE

Unbox the Story



Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

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 Need

- Box filled with the story props below
- Tree branch or Green construction paper leaf
- Bag of coins
- Food item (pastic or real)
- Foam heart
- Happy face
- Sad face
- Small Jesus figure

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."

Inclusive Pro Tips



Use thumbs-up and thumbs-down if not all children can sit and stand easily.

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ACTIVITY TWO

Respond with Love



What You Do:

- 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 Need

- "Respond with Love" Activity Pages

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."



Inclusive Pro Tips

Print "Verse Motions" Activity Pages to support visual learners and readers who want to follow along on their own copies of the motions.

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GROUPS 4/4

Pray and Dismiss

Prayer Activity

What You Say

“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.”

Transition -> As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to share one promise from today’s Bible Story that God kept and remind the kids to share that *[Bottom Line]* Jesus is good news for everyone.

Inclusive Pro Tips



Instead of praying silently, give options for the kids to write or doodle to God quietly.

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.

What to Do:

Print on cardstock and cut.
One set for each Small Group.

“Respond with Love” Activity Page

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