

**SERIES: WHAT'S YOUR STORY**  
**LESSON 1—ZACCHEUS**

**Bible Reference:** Luke 19:1-10

**Key Verse:** 2 Timothy 1:7-8—For God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control. Therefore don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...

**OVERVIEW**

- Opening Activity
- Key Verse
- Bible Story
- Small Group Activities

**ITEMS NEEDED:**

- Signs that say: *Fear, Power, Love, Self-Control*
- Items for your choice of the craft activities.

**OPENING ACTIVITY:**

*Explain to your students that you are going to play a game to help you get to know them better.*

SAY:

- If you like to cookies, stand up, but if you had rather eat salty things, like chips, sit down.
- If you like cotton candy stand up, but if you had rather have a milk shake, sit down.
- If you like to drink Coke, stand up, but if you had rather have a Sprite, sit down.
- If you like to sleep in on Saturday mornings, stand up, but if you had rather get up early, sit down.
- If you like to get lots of gifts for your birthday, stand up, but if you had rather have a party with your friends instead, sit down.
- If you like to stay up late at night, stand up, but if you had rather go to bed early, sit down.
- If you like to eat hamburgers, stand up, but if you had rather eat a hotdog, sit down.
- If you like to play sports, stand up, but if you had rather play a video game, sit down.
- If you like to go to school, stand up but if you had rather it be summer all year long, sit down.
- If winter is your favorite time of the year, stand up, but if you like summer better, sit down.
- If you like to get a new pair of shoes, stand up, but if you had rather get a new hat, sit down.

-If Thanksgiving is your favorite holiday, stand up, but if you like Christmas better, sit down.

*Now let's get a little harder...*

-If you like to eat macaroni and cheese, stand up. If you like to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, sit down. If you like to eat macaroni and cheese on your peanut butter and jelly sandwich, turn in a circle.

-If you like to go to a football game, stand up. If you like to watch a movie, sit down. If you liked to go to a football game to watch a movie, turn in a circle.

-If you like to sing songs, stand up. If you like to go to church, sit down. If you like to sing songs at church while either standing or sitting, turn around.

*Everyone have a seat...*

**ASK: What is your favorite TV show?** (Let every student answer.)

**ASK: Do you think your life and family would make for a good TV show? Why or why not?** (Take a few answers.)

SAY: You can tell a lot about a person by what they do and watch, but if your life was a TV show, what would people see? Do you think they would get a good picture of what it means to live for Jesus?

SAY: Like in the game, we all make choices and the best choice anyone can make is to give their life to Jesus. If you have given your life to Jesus, then you have a story about how you came to Christ but what kind of story would your life tell about how you follow Him?

## KEY VERSE

ASK: **What is a testimony?**

SAY: A testimony is simply a story. It's like witness in court "testifying" about something they saw or heard. Your "salvation" testimony is the story about how you were saved, about how you gave your life to Jesus.

SAY: Listen to my Salvation Testimony

**Leader's Salvation Testimony:** *Share your salvation testimony about how and when you were saved. This needs to be no longer than a few minutes and the point needs to be focused on how you became aware that you needed Jesus, what you did about it and how you gave your life to Christ. Avoid mixing in ideas of being good or being baptized, things that many people confuse with the real way a person is saved, and stick to your salvation story about how you came to Christ.*

ASK: **Would someone else like to share their salvation testimony about how they came to Christ?** (Take only one or two volunteers. If no one volunteers, that's okay too.)

SAY: Some of you might not have a salvation story because you've never given your life to Jesus and that's okay. Don't be embarrassed if you're not saved yet but realize that Jesus is the only way to be saved and the only way to go to Heaven.

ASK: **What do I mean when I say, "saved"? Saved from what?** (Jesus saves us from our sins and the punishment for our sins. He saves us from a life without Him.)

ASK: **How is a person saved?** (People are saved when they trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior; when they call on the name of the Lord and ask Him to forgive them for all their sins.)

SAY: If you haven't been saved and want to know more, please feel free to talk to any of your teachers any time.

SAY: Let's get back to our salvation stories. If you wanted to share your salvation story with someone, what would you start with? I'm going to give you a few choices and tell me which one you think would work best:

*-Start at the beginning when you were born... "I was born at a young age and I was close to my mom when it happened."*

ASK: **Would this be a good way to start?** (No, because you being born as a baby isn't about you being saved.) **What do you think—yes or no?** (No!)

SAY: What about this?

*-I really like to play baseball. I feel good when I hit a homerun!*

ASK: **Would this be a good way to start?** (No, because what does baseball have to do with when you were saved.) **What do you think—yes or no?** (No!)

SAY: What about this?

*-Share with them what started you thinking about giving your life to Jesus. For example...share what started you to thinking or seeing your need to be saved.*

**What do you think—yes or no?** (Yes!)

SAY: When you want to share your salvation story with someone else, begin with how you saw your need for Jesus...what started you to thinking about giving your life to Him? Was it something you heard someone say? Was it something that happened at church? Was it something that happened in your family? What started this story?

STORY: There was college student who shared that he was saved because of a *Star Trek* movie. In an old movie, Captain Kirk makes a statement that there is "no God." As a teenager, this young man heard this and began to wonder if there really was a God. He began searching for something more in life which led him to learn about Jesus. When he found out about Jesus, he gave his life to Christ and was saved. In his salvation story, he was watching a *Star Trek* movie and it starting him to thinking about God and His need for a Savior.

**ASK: Would someone like to share with us what started you to thinking about giving your life to Jesus?** (Choose a few to answer.)

KEY: If you have given your life to Jesus and are saved, then you have a great story to share. Your testimony is powerful, so don't ever be afraid to share it.

*Choose four volunteers*

Give the first one the sign that says, FEAR.

SAY: The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7-8—"For God didn't give us a spirit of fear..."

Ask the volunteer to tear the FEAR sign into as many pieces as he can in 10 seconds...ready, go!

*Choose two more volunteers to join the first volunteer*

SAY: The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7-8—"For God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power [*give the POWER sign to one of the volunteers*], love [*give the LOVE sign to one of the volunteers*], and self-control [*give the SELF-CONTROL sign to the last volunteer*]. Therefore don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..."

REPEAT after me: Power...Love...Self-Control!

SAY: God didn't give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control. Because of this...did you hear what it said..."don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Never be afraid to share the good things that God has done in your life and to live for Jesus every day.

## **BIBLE LESSON**

*(Based on Luke 19:1-10)*

SAY: We're going to play the opposite's game. I'm going to say a word and if you know the opposite of that word, stand up and say it. Then sit back down. I'm looking for who can be the fastest.

Cold (Hot) / Up (Down) / Bright (Dim) / Good (Bad) / True (False) / Life (Death) / Listen (Ignore) / Obey (Disobey) / Go (Stop) / Come (Go) / Throw (Catch) / Truth (Lie) / Born (Die) / Short (Tall)

*Choose five volunteers.*

*Pull up four chairs and help four of these volunteers stand on a chair. Put the fifth person in front of them.*

SAY: Let's say this is a crowd and they're not standing on chairs, they're just taller than this person (*NOTE: Be careful not to choose the shortest person in the room for this volunteer. It might be funny to choose the tallest.*)

SAY: Now let's say that they are looking for something or watching something. Is the short guy going to be able to see?

**ASK: What might he do to see better?** (Stand on a chair; get a ladder; climb a tree.)

SAY: There was a short man that the Bible tells us about and this is his salvation story (the story of how he met Jesus).

**ASK: Does anyone know who I am talking about?** (Zaccheus)

READ Luke 19:1-10 from your Bible.

**ASK: Who can tell me something about Zaccheus?** (Take a few answers—He was a tax collector; he was short; he lived in Jericho.)

SAY: Being a tax collector in Jesus' day meant that Zaccheus was a thief and really bad man but Jesus still cared for him and wanted him to be saved.

**ASK: After spending time with Jesus, how did Zaccheus change?** (He wanted to make right the things he had done wrong in stealing from others.)

SAY: When people come to Jesus, Jesus changes them from the inside out.

**ASK: If you were going to hear Zaccheus share his salvation story with someone else, how do you think he might share it?**

SAY: Do you think it might sound something like this:

"One day I heard that Jesus was coming, so I went out to see who He was but there was a crowd and I couldn't see. So I climbed a tree to watch Him as He passed by. He came right towards me and when He came up to the tree, He looked up and told me that He would eat with me. Because I met Jesus, I changed my ways and He told me that salvation had come to my house that day, what about you?"

CHALLENGE: This week I challenge you to share your salvation story with someone in your family. They might already know it, but share it with them anyways. And if you don't have a salvation story because you've never been saved, feel free to talk to any of your leaders. We'd love to show you how Jesus made a way for you to be saved.

**Dismiss to Small Groups**

SAY: Right now it is time for our small groups, so I'm going to dismiss you one row at a time.

*Dismiss rows of chairs to the tables in the rooms. Give them specific directions where to go.*

## SMALL GROUPS

### Craft – Zaccheus Tree

#### *Younger Option:*

Give each student a Tree page (see this at the end) and let them add leaves using either markers or finger paint. Then let them color the Jesus and Zaccheus figures and glue them on the page where they want them. If you have time, let them take turns using the page to tell Zaccheus' story.

*(NOTE: You can also talk about how the leaves change in the fall and how Jesus brings a change to people's lives.)*

#### *Older Option:*

Use a brown paper bag to create a tree sculpture using the following steps:

### Paper Bag Tree



*(NOTE: You can also talk about how the leaves change in the fall and how Jesus brings a change to people's lives. If you have time, you could also refer to the "tree" in Psalm 1 and the difference you can see between people who follow Christ and those who don't and the incredible change that happened in Zaccheus' life.)*

## **Activity - Telling Stories**

*(NOTE: Use these telling story activities to reinforce to your students that if they are saved, they have a story too—a story that they never need to be afraid to share. You can also use the idea of a story as a springboard to review today's story or to lead into the discussion questions below.)*

### *Option #1:*

*(NOTE: These activities will also be in next week's lesson but can easily be adapted to be done two weeks in a row. Be sure to use these activities to continually remind your students that the story of how they were saved is the greatest story of their lives.)*

Since we're starting a series today on sharing your salvation story, let's do an activity with storytelling. In a group of 5 to 8, let each leader begin a story. You can use some of the beginning lines below. Then, moving to the person to the leader's right, the next person can add one more sentence to the story, the next person can add another sentence, etc. As a group you will create what is many times a very funny story because anybody can make anything happen in their one sentence.

Suggestions for opening sentences:

"I went to the zoo and you'll never believe what I saw!"

"I got in the car and my mom started driving to the airport."

"I woke up yesterday and there was a gift at the foot of my bed."

"I ate three hamburgers yesterday and then my stomach started to rumble."

"I was so scared, I ran for my life!"

*Have fun by creating your own opening lines...*

### *Option #2:*

As a class, let your students choose four numbers below. Then let your group write or create a story that uses these items. Challenge them to create a story that in some way could share something about God. (Our salvation stories share a person story about God but others stories can teach something about Him too.)

1-Stinky feet

2-A big, red ball

3-A fuzzy bunny

4-A prickly pickle

5-A yellow fog

6-A mighty train

7-Purple goo

8-Old tomatoes

9-A new shirt

10-A little bitty ship

## **Discussion Questions**

*Below are questions that you can discuss with your students before, after or while participating in today's activity:*

-How do you think Zaccheus felt when he was trying to see Jesus?

-Why do you think Zaccheus wanted to see Jesus?

-How do you think Zaccheus might have felt when Jesus looked at him and spoke to him?

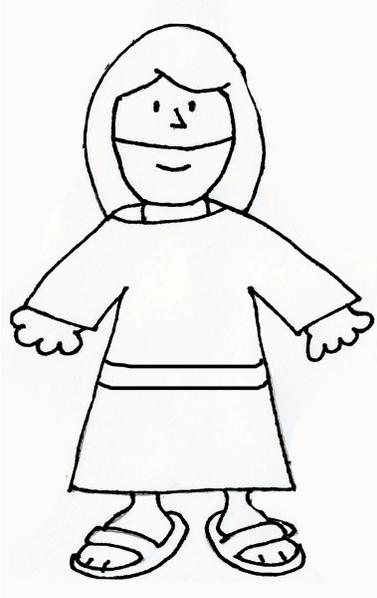
SAY: Tax collectors in Jesus's day were bad men because they were Jews who worked for the Romans who had taken over Israel. They were considered to be traitors who had turned against their own people. Then Romans told the tax collectors to collect a certain amount of money but whatever they took above that, they could keep. So the tax collectors took far beyond what they were told and became very rich. For this reason, they were greatly hated, even by the religious leaders who, according to history, taught that God rejoiced when He threw a tax collector into hell.

-How did Jesus' actions challenge what history says these religious leaders taught?  
-Are there students in your school that nobody likes? Or maybe students who don't have any friends? How can you show them Jesus' kind of love and care?

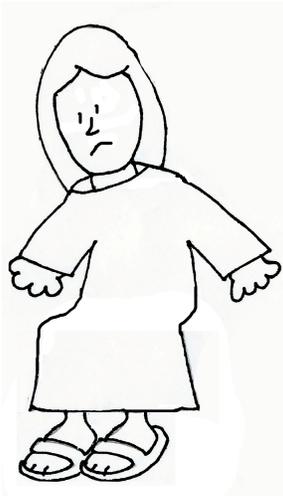
**Prayer**—Take prayer requests and pray with your students.

Color the characters on this page and attach them to the tree on the following page to help you share the story of Zaccheus with others.

**Jesus  
Character**



**Zaccheus  
Character**



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**Jesus loved Zaccheus and changed his life.**  
**Luke 19:1-10**

