



SESSION 4 of 4

# Zacchaeus

## MEETING AIM

To know that we can all be forgiven.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:1-10

## BACKGROUND

This month, we're looking at people Jesus met. In this session it's Zacchaeus. The children will be familiar with the idea of things not being fair or cheating others so while they won't know about tax, they will understand the need not to cheat others, be selfish or greedy. The forgiveness shown to Zacchaeus will also speak loudly to young children as they learn about right and wrong. If we are sorry, that same forgiveness is open to us!

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

As the children arrive, welcome each one by name and invite them to join your circle and share in the snacks you have brought. Chat together about what has happened since you last met. Ask the children if anyone has ever climbed a tree. What was it like? Perhaps they have climbed up a climbing frame or tower in a playground. What could they see?

## 10 FREE PLAY

**You will need:** food-play equipment; chairs and tables

Set out the food-play equipment and invite the children to play at making, serving and eating food. They might want to pretend to welcome people into their home or to go out to a restaurant. As you play together, chat about how you welcome people into your house and how waiters and waitresses welcome people into a restaurant.

## 10 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** cushions and rugs; a plate of flatbreads (provide a gluten-free alternative if necessary); squash or water in cups; chairs

In one corner of your space, lay out the cushions and rugs in a circle around the plate of biscuits and the drinks. Place the chairs (you'll need two or three) in another corner. Gather the children in a third corner and tell the following story.

One day, Jesus and his friends were travelling. They came to a town called Jericho. Shall we go to Jericho too? Come on! *Walk the group around the edge of your space. Comment about how far away Jericho seems. Finally, stop in front of the chairs.*

In Jericho there lived a man called Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector. That meant he took money from the people and gave it to the people in charge. They were called Romans. But Zacchaeus wasn't an honest man. He took too much money away from the people. He kept some of it for himself. Nobody liked Zacchaeus.

But Zacchaeus wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. When he heard Jesus was coming he raced to where Jesus was. But the crowd was so big that Zacchaeus couldn't see anything. What do you think Zacchaeus did so he could see Jesus? *Get some suggestions from the children.*

Zacchaeus climbed a tree! *Help them stand on the chairs so they can see over everyone else's heads. Make sure each child is supported by a leader. You will need to take turns to do this safely.*

Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus and said: "Zacchaeus, come down! I'm coming to your house today!"

Zacchaeus couldn't believe his ears. Jesus was coming to his house! He jumped down from the tree and pushed his way through the crowd. Then he led Jesus to his house. *Walk over to where the cushions and rugs are set out, and invite the children to sit down together. Jesus ate with Zacchaeus. Share out the drinks and flatbreads, and ask the children what they think Jesus and Zacchaeus talked about. Remind the children that Zacchaeus wasn't honest and cheated people out of their money.*

While they were eating, the crowd outside wasn't happy. The people knew Zacchaeus was a cheat. They were surprised that Jesus would visit the house of such a bad man.

Then, Zacchaeus came back out of his house with Jesus. *Everyone gets up and walks to the middle of the room. He told the crowd he would give everyone four times what he had taken from them!*

Jesus said: "Zacchaeus is forgiven!"

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Chat about the Bible story using these questions. Try to involve all the children in your discussion:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What does it feel like when people are mean or not fair?
- What do you think about Jesus forgiving Zacchaeus?
- What would you like to say to Jesus?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** art and craft materials; A3 paper; playdough or clay; cover-up and clean-up equipment

Before the session, gather together plenty of resources to help the children respond to the story. Encourage the children to think about what they might like to do to think more about the story. They could draw a picture or make a model from playdough. You might need to help them make their decision, then assist them in getting all the materials they need. Make sure the children know they should share resources if someone else wants to use them.

As the children work, join in with them. Continue to discuss the story and what they think about Jesus. What do they think of Zacchaeus? Chat about what this story means to you and what being forgiven means in your life.

## 5 PRAYER

**You will need:** flatbread and squash or water from 'Bible story'

Give each child a drink and a piece of flatbread. As they eat the bread and drink their drink, ask them to think if there is something they need to say sorry to Jesus for. Have they been selfish and taken something that wasn't theirs, like Zacchaeus? Have they been mean to someone? After a moment of quiet, say a short prayer thanking Jesus that his forgiveness is for everyone. Thank him for forgiving us.

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