

# Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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**Year 4: Session 6** – Jesus and Outsiders

**Class 18: Luke 19:1-10** – Zacchaeus

## CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Read and discuss the Zacchaeus story
- Highlight the two ways in which Zacchaeus is different and is isolated by those differences
- Then point out how Jesus invites Zacchaeus back into community and how we can do the same thing as Jesus did

## Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Despicable Me*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Need just one deck of cards (standard 52 card deck, no matter how large the class is)
4. You'll need something for the students to use to track their wagers with (like betting chips or paperclips or qtips or slips of paper with words on them – whatever you feel comfortable using)
5. You'll also want a prize to give to the winner of the activity that might make the other students a little bit jealous (a small bag of M&Ms for instance)

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is something that makes you think you are a little bit different than others? (could be something positive – what you can do better than most other people or be something negative – what you can’t do that most people seem able to do)

### EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

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- We're going to play a very simple card game
- I'm going to pass out one card to each person
- DO NOT LOOK at the card
- Once we all have a card, then, on the count of 3, we place the card on our foreheads, with the FACE of it outwards
- In other words, EVERYONE knows what card you have except for you
- Do **NOT** tell people what they have
- Then, we make bets – and do **not** talk about bets people make – that type of talking can give away what card a person is holding up.
- The person to the left of the dealer can either fold, which means you don't play the round, or, you can bet up to 3 chips. Then the next person has to decide if they are going to fold, are going to match your bet, or are going to match your bet and then raise it (up to three more chips)
- If the bet is raised then those who go next have to match the new total for the bet or choose to fold
- Once we go around the circle, then those who have to match the latest, highest bet will need to decide if they want to fold or match the highest bet.
- If you fold during that matching round of betting, you do not get your original bet back
- And we do this ALL while holding the card on our forehead
- Once all bets are matched, then on the count of three we look at our card to see who won
- Highest card is the Ace, then, right down the row, King, Queen, Jack, ten, 9, etc.
- Whoever has the highest card gets the chips
- If there's a tie, then the chips are split
- We'll play a few rounds. At the end of the few rounds, whoever has the highest total of chips will get an extra snack

## DO Activity

### ASK

- During the activity, did anyone tell someone else in the game what card was on their forehead?
- Would you have liked it if someone had told YOU what card YOU were holding?
- Why?
- Most likely everyone here would've felt better if they had known what their card was, and yet, most of us did NOT tell someone else what their card was. Why is that? (*because then I/we/you might lose*)
- What exactly would you lose? (*the chance to take more of THEIR chips; but maybe more importantly, they would know more than me*)

### TELL / TRANSITION to SCRIPTURE

- We've been talking about and reading stories about Jesus interacting with outsiders
- Today, we read our last story
- In today's story, there's another tax collector – just like there was a tax collector in last week's story – do you remember that tax collector's name? (Levi)
- Our opening activity was meant to help us think about what its like to have a job that's not fair to other people
- In our activity, it would've been much fairer to just tell everyone what card was on their forehead
- But that fairness would've kept other people from betting / trying to get the price.
- Being an Israelite tax collector for the Romans was the same thing.

- The only way an Israelite tax collector got paid was by over-taxing the Israelites and making them overpay their taxes. That extra money, then, would be the tax collectors payment
- So, usually, the tax collectors weren't very fair in taxing the people, because being fair meant that they, the tax collectors, didn't get paid.
- Which, again, is pretty similar to the experience you had in today's activity.
- Now, imagine how the people might think of you.
- They may not like you very much, right?
- And they might want what you have – just like you are maybe wanting the bag of M&Ms the winner of the game has in his/her possession right now
- Ok – that should help us better understand today's scripture story
- Because, in today's scripture story, one of these not-liked tax collectors wants to see Jesus
- Let's see what happens

**READ Luke 19:1-10** (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." 6So he hurried down

and was happy to welcome him. 7All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." 8Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." 9Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

**ASK**

- v2 – What is Zacchaeus' job? (*chief* tax collector – the boss of the tax collectors – he's a big deal; which is probably why Jesus knows his name)
- v3 – What did Zacchaeus want to do? (see who Jesus was)
- v4 – Why couldn't he see Jesus – at first? (because he was short and there was a crowd around Jesus)
- v4 – What was Zacchaeus' solution to this problem? (he anticipated Jesus' route and climbed a sycamore/fig tree – most likely this was a fig tree, but "sycamore" appears due to transliteration issues)
- v5 – Who sees Zacchaeus while Zacchaeus is trying to see Jesus? (Jesus does)
- v5 – How does Jesus address Zacchaeus? (by his first name; Jesus knows who Zacchaeus is)
- v5 – And what does Jesus say to Zacchaeus? (I must stay at your house today)
- v6 – Does Zacchaeus agree to Jesus inviting himself over? (yep)
- v7 – And what do the people in the crowd think of Jesus going over to Zacchaeus' place? (they don't like it)
- v7 – From previous classes and our opening activity, why do you think people don't like Zacchaeus and therefore call him a sinner? (Because he's a tax collector – the *chief* tax collector and tax collectors take money from their own people and give it to their oppressors, the Romans. Plus, tax collectors were not paid – so to make money, they over-taxed the people and then took their wages from that excess)
- v8 – What does Zacchaeus say to Jesus? (I'm going to give half of my possessions to the poor and 4 times back to anyone I overtaxed)
- What do you think about Zacchaeus' statement? Do you think that will be easy for him to do?

- v9 – What is Jesus’ response to Zacchaeus’ statement? (Jesus says salvation has come to Zacchaeus’ house(hold) and reminds Zacchaeus and whoever else is listening that Zacchaeus is part of Israelite community, i.e. a child of Abraham)
- v10 – So Jesus is referring to himself in the third person (again). What does he say one of his responsibilities is? (to seek out and save the lost)
- So – how do you think Jesus “saved” the lost Zacchaeus in this story? (Jesus invited himself over to Zacchaeus’ house – he wasn’t afraid or repulsed by Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus, in return, says, “I want more of this and here’s what I’m going to do to remove the obstacles that keep me from my community”)

## TELL

*First, let’s talk about how Zacchaeus is an outsider...*

- We should be getting good at this by now, but one more time about Israelite tax collectors: They were absolutely hated by the Israelites
- But Zacchaeus isn’t just any tax collector, he’s the chief of all the tax collectors (in the city/region)! He’s the boss of the outsiders
- Plus, it sounds like he has collected a lot of money/things -- which he accumulated by taking from his fellow Israelites’, right?
- So that’s one major reason why he’s an outsider and why the crowd calls him a “sinner.” Not because they think he sins, but because they really don’t like him – it’s how they heap their scorn on him; just like in today’s world we tend to think of all politicians as crooks and liars, even when they are honest and tell the truth.
- The second reason Zacchaeus is an outsider is because he’s short enough that it gets mentioned in the story. Which mean he’s noticeably different in the physical world; *he sticks out*
- So ... if Zacchaeus answered our opening question, he might say, “I’m really short, and I don’t really like it”
- Remember our first story in this session about the woman at the well and the Samaritans? During that class, we talked about how the Samaritans are outsiders to the Israelites just because of who they were – they were born into it.
- Then in our second story of the session (Levi the tax collector being called to be a disciple of Jesus), we talked about how Levi was an outsider because of how his choice to collect taxes put him on the outside
- With Zacchaeus, then, we see he has BOTH of these conditions working against him: He was born in a way that puts him on the outside AND he works a job that puts him on the outside

*Second, let’s talk about Zacchaeus’ intent...*

- We see that Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus
- And, when he encounters an obstacle to seeing Jesus, he is not dissuaded; he makes the extra effort to see Jesus
- Note: By “see,” that’s exactly what I mean – Zacchaeus just wants a glimpse of Jesus
- But here’s the thing: Due to Zacchaeus’ persistence to see Jesus, Jesus is then also able to see Zacchaeus
- I mean, if you were driving down the road wouldn’t Zacchaeus also catch your attention? *Look at that! There’s a short, middle-aged dude wearing a \$3k suit with really shiny shoes sitting on a tree branch...*
- Zacchaeus’ determination (that borders on humiliating) to see Jesus suggests either a great curiosity about Jesus, a great discontent with his current life, or a combination of the two
- And, again, because of Zacchaeus’ actions, he then becomes visible to Jesus

*Finally, let’s talk about what Jesus offers Zacchaeus...*

- 1. Jesus responds to Zacchaeus with dignity, by name, does not shame him, and wants to go to his house

- 2. While he's at Zacchaeus' house, we can assume that Jesus did the same thing he did with the Samaritan town, where he shares the Good News of God's Most Excellent Way of Life (we can assume this, but we don't know it for sure)
- And 3. Jesus *believes* Zacchaeus means what he says he's going to do. Jesus then tells Zacchaeus what Zacchaeus' actions will result in: That he will reconnect/rejoin his community

## TRANSITION to MOVIE CLIP

- Maybe this idea of someone accepting you and treating you well doesn't sound like it can be life changing
- To help us think about how acceptance of a person and treating them well CAN reintroduce that person to the community, we're going to watch a movie clip from a movie we've used plenty of times before – because it's just so good!
- So we're going to watch the ending scene from Despicable Me
- A brief reminder, if you haven't seen the movie: Gru is the second-best villain in the world
- He's a villain mostly because he doesn't like people
- And then, he has these three children that he ends up adopting, mostly because he has a plan to use them to get into the #1 villain's "fortress" and steal his plans by having the three children sell girl scout cookies
- In this clip, though, we see Gru tell a story about how these three girls have affected him and his life
- Let's see what happens

## WATCH MOVIE CLIP

### ASK

- What did the "one big unicorn" think about himself? (that it was as strong and proud as it could be)
- What did the three kittens do to the unicorn's life? (turned his life upside down and now he knows he can never part from those three kittens who changed his heart)
- At the end, what does the oldest girl tell Gru? (I love you)
- And how does Gru respond (I love you too)
- What do you think – have and are these relationships changing how he does his work as the world's second-greatest villain? (probably; most likely)

### TELL

- In the last class before we started this session, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan.
- By telling that story, Jesus was saying, "When it comes to loving your neighbors like yourself, there IS NO LOOPHOLE as to who your neighbor is."
- We've just completed a session, now, of three stories where Jesus lives out his NO LOOPHOLES message.
- We saw him reach out to Samaritans, tax collectors, and rich, short people
- In all three stories, we see either great change or the potential for great change: An entire town listens to Jesus and a woman reconnects with her town; Levi leaves his job and becomes a disciple of Jesus; and, in today's story, Zacchaeus is promising to make amends to the people he's cheated.
- In a world where we're supposed to defeat and destroy our enemies, Jesus says to love our neighbors and shows us how to love them
- And here's how he showed love:

- He spoke to his neighbors
- He went to his neighbors' houses
- He invited his neighbors to learn more about God
- That's pretty simple, isn't it? But it's not easy – for all sorts of reasons (peer pressure, risk, having to go against our own feelings of dislike, etc)
- Which is why it's so important to look at the results – as a reminder of why doing the simple but difficult thing is the better way: Just look at the life-changing events that occur due to Jesus' very simple ways of treating outsiders as his neighbors – that's a better world!
- And the other thing to remember is that due to the level of internal difficulty, the idea is to not do it on your own, but to seek God, God's direction, and God's help in loving one's neighbor.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**