

The Story of Zacchaeus



Read the Bible story

Jesus was going through Jericho, ² where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. ³⁻⁴ Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.

⁵ When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today.” ⁶ Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

⁷ Everyone who saw this started grumbling, “This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him.”

⁸ Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated.”

⁹ Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today you and your family have been saved, because you are a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost.”

Luke chapter 19 verses 1–10 (CEV)

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Questions to answer

1. Where does this story take place?
2. Write down three things that we know about Zacchaeus.
3. Why did Zacchaeus climb the tree? Try to give two reasons if you can.
4. Where did Jesus go to have his dinner that day?

Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in Jericho. At the time Jesus lived the Holy Land was under the control of the Romans. The Romans used to demand taxes from the ordinary people, who had to pay money to the tax collectors, who then passed it on to the Romans.

The tax collectors were hated by the ordinary people because they worked for the Romans, but also because they were often cheats. They would take too much money from the people and keep the extra for themselves. Zacchaeus was probably very rich, but also very unpopular. The crowd were probably expecting Jesus to tell him off for cheating them all!

5. Fill in the gaps to complete what Jesus, the crowd and Zacchaeus say in verses 5, 7 and 8.

“Zacchaeus, _____! I want to stay with you
_____.”

“This man Zacchaeus is a _____! And Jesus is going _____ to
_____ with him.”

“I will give _____ of my property to the _____. And I will now
pay back _____ times as much to everyone I have ever
_____.”

6. Why did everyone in the crowd say Zacchaeus was a sinner?

Jesus knew what Zacchaeus had done wrong, but he also knew that Zacchaeus wanted to change. He forgave him and helped him to change.

7. What did Zacchaeus promise to do, to show that he had really changed?

Jericho

Jesus met Zacchaeus in a town called Jericho.

Can you find it on a map?

Can you find out three facts about the city and write them in the box below?
Your facts could be things like:

how old it is

what the population (the number of people who live there) is

which major river is nearby



Do you know any other stories from the Bible that have the town of Jericho in them? You can find one of them in the Bible in the book of Mark, chapter 10 verses 46–52, the story of how Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus.

Use the index to find the pages for the book of Mark (it's quite close to the back of the Bible, in the New Testament).

Go through the large chapter numbers until you find chapter 10.

Use the small verse numbers to find verse 46, and start reading there.

The sycamore fig tree

We have sycamore trees in this country, but the ones in the Holy Land are different; they are called sycamore fig trees. This was the type of tree that Zacchaeus climbed into in the Bible story.

Use the internet to find a picture of a sycamore fig tree. Do you think it would be easy or difficult to climb a sycamore fig tree?

Can you find out:

- where these trees grow in the world?

- how long these trees can live for?

- how tall and wide they get?

- anything else interesting about these trees?

What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus?

The story in the Bible doesn't tell us what Jesus had said to Zacchaeus while they were in his house having dinner together. Can you think of two questions which Zacchaeus might have asked Jesus? How do you think that Jesus might have answered his questions?

What questions do you think Zacchaeus asked?	How do you think Jesus answered each question?
1.	
2.	

Here are some sentence starters and keywords to help you.

'Can I ...?'	pay back	change
'Will you ...?'	sorry	forgive
'What do I ...?'	money	other people
'How can I ...?'	cheated	taxes

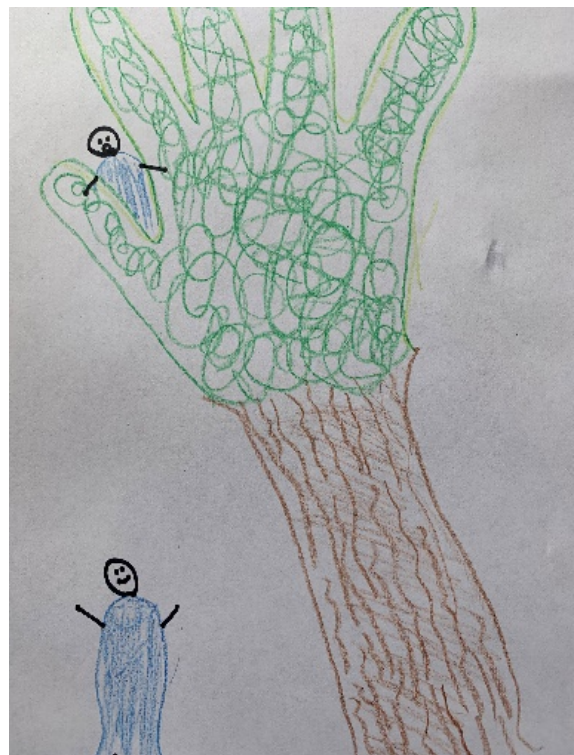
Hand, arm and thumb painting

Can you draw a picture of Zacchaeus in the tree with just your arm, hand and thumb? Here is one I did.



Use your hand for the shape of the tree, your arm for the trunk and your thumb to make the bodies of Zacchaeus and Jesus.

I used washable paint above, but you could also use finger paints, pens or pencils or crayons, like this one.



After you make your picture, find someone in your house to show your picture to and use it to tell them the story of Zacchaeus.

Colouring page



Some questions to think about or discuss as a family

If you could invite yourself around to someone's house for lunch, who would you choose?

Why?

If Jesus was coming to your house for dinner what would you have to eat?

What questions would you ask?

How do you think he would answer your questions?

Zacchaeus was shorter than everyone else and he was having trouble seeing over the crowd. Have you ever had this happen to you?

How did you feel when you couldn't see what was happening?

Did you come up with a way so that you could see?

Do you think that Zacchaeus deserved to be told off by Jesus?

Instead, Jesus invited himself around to Zacchaeus' house for lunch. Why do you think he did that rather than telling him off?