

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32)



PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
Images of Jericho
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

Tax Bill
Letters of Forgiveness
Loving God, Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Pencils | Paper

Gather: TV/DVD player | Internet access

Explore: TV/DVD player | Blindfold

Respond: Envelopes | Fresh flowers | LED candle | Tablecloth | Toy money

Bless: Fresh flowers | LED candle | Tablecloth

Before You Teach

This week we are focusing on the story of Zacchaeus, the rich tax collector. During this time, tax collectors were not looked upon favorably in their communities because many of them cheated or taxed the people unfairly to make themselves rich. At one point, Zacchaeus likely did these things; however, his encounter with Jesus changes his heart and life.

In this story, Jesus is passing through the town of Jericho, and Zacchaeus, who is a rather short man, wants to get a better look at him. Zacchaeus is having a hard time seeing Jesus because of the crowd, so he climbs up a sycamore tree so that he can see better. When Jesus passes by, he looks up and tells Zacchaeus to come down because he has to stay at Zacchaeus's house.

Zacchaeus happily welcomes Jesus, but his community is not happy about the situation. They complain that Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner. Zacchaeus says to Jesus, "I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much" (verse 8). Jesus responds by saying that salvation has come to Zacchaeus's household.

One of the important elements of this story is that Jesus does not pick a model citizen in the community to stay with during his visit. He picks someone who would have been somewhat disliked. Clearly, Zacchaeus wants to make amends to his community, and this change in him earns him a blessing from Jesus, who is there to seek and save those who are lost, like Zacchaeus. This shows that Jesus values all people, even those who are imperfect.

Zacchaeus receives forgiveness, which is the primary focus of our lesson. The activities within this session also provide an opportunity to explore the fact that forgiveness comes in many forms, such as prayer or writing a letter that never gets sent, rather than always coming through direct confrontation. We also want children to be aware that all of us need forgiveness at some point.

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32)



GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display your choice of "Attendance Chart" (Class Kit—pp. 15 & 18, or 16–17) at eye level.

- Play "All People Are God's People" (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have each child mark the "Attendance Chart." For the "Community Attendance Chart," the children can write their first names or initials on the building marked #4.

SAY: Our Bible story is about forgiving.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 4 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of "Zacchaeus" (Activity Sheets—p. 9). Let the children complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the "Four Times" activity (Activity Sheets—p. 10).

SAY: Today's Bible story reminds us that communities welcome people who have different abilities.

OR

B—Images of Jericho (Visual/Discussion)

Before class: Gather some age-appropriate images of Jericho from the Internet.

SAY: Our Bible story for this week, and the one that we studied last week both take place in the city of Jericho. Let's look at some pictures of Jericho so that we can get an idea of what it is like today.

- Show the class the images that you found.
- Allow the children to comment or ask questions.
- Answer any questions that you know or follow up by doing a quick web search to see if you can find the answers.

ASK: What do you think it would be like to live in Jericho? Would you like to visit there like Jesus did?

Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring chairs or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a useful way to help children easily move from one activity to the next.*

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32)

EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- When have you visited a different town?
 - Where did you stay during your visit?
 - Do you think it's easy or hard to forgive people?
-

Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—Luke 19:1-10).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 4.

SAY: Today, we're discussing the story of how a community forgave a man named Zacchaeus.

ASK: How do you feel when someone forgives you?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out "Community Forgives" (Bible Story Sheets—Session 4).
-

Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the "Unit 1 Bible Verse" poster (Class Kit—pp. 5 & 28).

- Read the memory verse to the children: The community of believers was one in heart and mind (Acts 4:32).
 - Have the children repeat the verse after you.
 - Have each child say the verse to another person.
 - Have each child say the verse to another child again, this time touching a hand to his or her heart on the word *heart*, and touching a hand to his or her head on the word *mind*.
-

Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32)



RESPOND

Tax Bill (Activity)

Before class: Photocopy "Tax Bill" (Leader Guide—p.30) for each child. Fill in a different tax amount (mostly large amounts) for each child. Fold the letters, and place them in envelopes. Have some toy money on hand.

- Hand each child some toy money.

ASK: How would you feel if you had all of that money in real life?

- Then give an envelope to each of the children, and have them all open their envelopes and read their amounts aloud.
- Then have each child visit and pay the "tax collector" (you).

ASK: How do you feel about the tax bills being different amounts? Does this seem fair? If you got a bill like this in real life, what would you do? what questions would you want to ask the person who sent it to you? How do you think Zacchaeus's community felt when they got bills like this from him?

OR

Letters of Forgiveness (Activity)

Before class: Gather paper and pencils.

SAY: Sometimes we aren't able to talk about our feelings with another person whom we need to forgive. Maybe that person does not live in our town or isn't in our class at school anymore. Or maybe we just don't feel comfortable saying our feelings to the person. In these types of situations, sometimes it helps to write a letter to the person. We don't even have to give it to them if we don't want to. We can just write it for ourselves. Let's each write a letter to someone we need to forgive.

- Give each child some paper and a pencil, and let them write.

SAY: Let's take a moment to pray.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for making us forgiving people. Let us forgive those who have hurt us, and let us be forgiven if we have hurt others. God, we pray for those to whom we've written today. And we pray that you will help our hearts begin to heal as we forgive. Amen.

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Before class: Display the "Missions" poster (Class Kit—p. 2) and the donation box.

- Allow the children to place donations for the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre in the box.
-

Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth, enough fresh flowers for each child to have one flower, and an LED candle.

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32)



BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display “Unit 1 Bible Verse Signs” poster (Class Kit—p. 29) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Today, we learned about forgiving as a community. Let’s learn to sign a verse about being of one heart and mind as a community.

- Gather the children around the “Bible Verse Signs” poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
- Teach the children to sign the verse.
- In pairs, let each of them practice signing the verse to another child.
- After they each sign the verse, have each pair link arms as a way of showing unity.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for helping us learn to be a forgiving community that is one in heart and mind. Amen.

Praising

SAY: Today, we learned about how Jesus welcomed a man who was not well-liked by his community but found forgiveness. Let’s give praise to God for forgiveness.

- Play the Deep Blue theme song, “Deep Blue Family” on the Annual Music CD.
 - Let the children sing and dance to the music.
-

Blessing

SAY: Flowers are often given as a gesture of apology.

- Gather the children around the worship center.
- Call each child to you by name.
- As each child comes forward, give them a fresh flower and pray the following prayer.

PRAY: God, thank you for the ability to forgive and to receive forgiveness. We pray that (insert child’s name) will find forgiveness in you and that (she or he) will find forgiveness in (her or his) heart for others as well. Amen.

At Home with God

SAY: What was one thing that you learned today about Jesus and Zacchaeus? What did you learn about forgiveness? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets, Session 4, and the Unit 1 Song Sheet home with each child.

4. Community Forgives (Luke 19:1-10)

The community of believers was one in heart and mind." (Acts 4:32)



Tax Bill

TAX

\$ _____
