

POINT ➔ **WE ACCEPT
GOD'S FORGIVENESS.**

Take kids outside and sit under a tree or in view of a tree. (In the event of poor weather, sit by windows that have a view of trees, or draw a simple picture of a tree for the children to look at.)

ASK: What do you like about trees?

Open your Bible to Luke 19, and show kids the words. **SAY:** We're outside today [or we're looking at trees today] because we're going to hear about a tree from the Bible, God's special book. The Bible says a man named Zacchaeus was changed! It all started when he climbed a tree.

Zacchaeus knew Jesus was coming to his town, and he wanted to see him. But Zacchaeus was very short, and he couldn't see Jesus. Zacchaeus climbed a tall tree so he could see Jesus walk by. Hold up the picture on the back of this card. Everyone stand up and pretend to climb a tree. Pause.

When Jesus got to Zacchaeus, he stopped and looked up into the tree. "Zacchaeus! Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today," Jesus said. Have children look up at the tree and motion for Zacchaeus to come down.

The people who heard this were upset because Zacchaeus was a bad person who stole money from people. Zacchaeus hurried down from the tree and took Jesus to his home. Have children pretend to climb down from a tree quickly.

Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus. He told Jesus he would give half of everything he owned to the poor. He would also give back what he'd stolen. Jesus forgave Zacchaeus for all the wrong things he'd done. Just like Zacchaeus, ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.**

ASK: What did Zacchaeus do to show he accepted God's forgiveness?

What do you do when someone forgives you?

SAY: God offers forgiveness to everyone! All we need to do is say, "I'm sorry," and believe we're forgiven! That's how ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.**



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SAY: Because Zacchaeus was a very short man and there were so many people around Jesus, he couldn't see Jesus when he walked by. Zacchaeus could've done many different things to help him see Jesus.

He could've crawled through all the people to get to Jesus. Have children get on their hands and knees and crawl back and forth across a small area.

ASK: Why might this be a bad idea?

SAY: He could've jumped up and down to look over the people. Have children jump up and down a few times.

ASK: Why might this be a bad idea?

SAY: Or he could've climbed a ladder. Have children pretend they're climbing a ladder.

ASK: What problems do you see with this idea?

SAY: Zacchaeus decided to climb a tall tree to see Jesus. Let's pretend we're climbing trees, too. Have children pretend to climb trees.

ASK: What do you do to talk to Jesus or feel closer to him?

What's something crazy you'd be willing to do if it meant you could see Jesus?

SAY: Zacchaeus wanted to accept God's forgiveness, so he did whatever he could to see Jesus. And ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS, TOO.**

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SAY: If there hadn't been a tree close by, Zacchaeus might never have seen Jesus, and his life might not have been changed. Accepting God's forgiveness changes our lives, so ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.**

Let's make a puzzle to remind us of the tree that was important in Zacchaeus' life. Pass out paper and *Pip-Squeaks Markers* to each child.

Hold or prop up a *Bible Buzz Card* so children can see it as they draw their pictures. SAY: **Let's draw a big tree with lots of branches and leaves. Draw Zacchaeus sitting up high in the tree. You can also draw Jesus on the ground, waving at Zacchaeus to come down. Maybe you want to draw a crowd of people standing near Jesus, too.** (Let kids be creative—their pictures won't be an obvious match to the card!)

Once kids are done drawing, help them each carefully cut or rip their picture into six similarly sized pieces. SAY: **Now, trade all your pieces with**

someone else, and try to put the puzzle together! Allow time, and help kids as needed.

SAY: **Zacchaeus did some things wrong that messed up his life. People thought he could never be a good person. But when Jesus forgave Zacchaeus, he helped put Zacchaeus' life back together—just like we put our puzzles together!**

ASK: **What are some ways Zacchaeus' life changed when he accepted Jesus' forgiveness?**

What's one thing you want Jesus to forgive you for?

PRAY: **Dear God, please forgive us for all the things we just named.** ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.** Help us obey you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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SAY: ➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.** Zacchaeus went out of his way to see Jesus and came down from the tree as soon as Jesus called him. He was happy that Jesus wanted to forgive him! Let's sing a song to remind us of what Zacchaeus did to see Jesus.

Have children sing ● "Did You Ever See Zacchaeus?" (track 9) on the CD to the tune of "Did You Ever See a Lassie?"

SING:

Did you ever see Zacchaeus, (*shade eyes with hand*)

Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus?

Did you ever see Zacchaeus
Way up in a tree? (*point up high*)

He looked 'round for Jesus, (*turn around in a circle*)

Then climbed up to see him. (*do climbing motions*)

Did you ever see Zacchaeus (*shade eyes with hand*)

Way up in a tree? (*point up high*)

Jesus saw Zacchaeus, (*shade eyes with hand*)

Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus.

Jesus saw Zacchaeus
Way up in that tree. (*point up high*)

"Zacchaeus, come down now.
(motion toward self)

I'm coming to your house." (*point to another person*)

Jesus saw Zacchaeus (*shade eyes with hand*)

Way up in that tree. (*point up high*)

ASK: **Tell about a time someone special came to your house.**

Why would you or wouldn't you want to have Jesus come to your house?

SAY: **We've had some special visitors! But Zacchaeus had the most special visitor of all—Jesus. We may not see Jesus in our houses, but he's always with us because he loves us and wants to forgive us.**
➔ **WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS.** And Jesus will find us, even if we're high up in a tree!

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Sit with the children on the floor in a circle. SAY: **The Bible tells us a lot about Zacchaeus and how he accepted Jesus' forgiveness. ➔ WE ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS. TOO.** I'm going to ask some questions. If you want to answer, raise your hand and I'll give you **Penny the Puppy** to answer with.

Whoever wants to answer may do so using the puppet. When it's time for the next question, retrieve the puppet. Get as many different answers as possible, ensuring everyone gets a turn who wants one. Encourage kids to use funny puppy voices when answering.

ASK: **Jesus called Zacchaeus by name. Tell what your name is and why you do or don't like it.**

Jesus didn't ask Zacchaeus to give half of what he owned to the poor. What's a good thing you could do without being asked?

The people were probably surprised to see Zacchaeus being nice. What do you do when someone surprises you?

Now switch roles and have the children ask any questions they may have about what happened to Zacchaeus, again using *Penny the Puppy*. Put Penny aside when finished.

SAY: **One thing we never have to wonder about is how much God loves us and wants to forgive us!**
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