

The Case of the Changed Climber *Luke 19:1-9*

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics) Numbers correspond to storyboard pictures and placement upon the storyboard. Always feel free to use less pictures, if it's best for your kids. Simply black out the numbers next to pictures you do not plan to use. All pictures are found in the Visual Aids book. Put BG (background) pictures on storyboard ahead of time. SB pictures (listed below in story text) are added to board as you tell the story. These numbers are also found on the back of each picture. Tip: Stack pictures in numerical before telling story for easy use. Use sticky-back velcro to attach pictures to storyboard felt. Use sticky-tac putty to stick a picture on top of another picture. OR, if using the Story Scenes to tell the story, disregard the storyboard picture references listed below.

Zacchaeus was a (SB1) rich, rich, rich man! He could have lots of fine clothes. He could have a big, big house. He could eat all the yummiest foods. He could buy all the nice things he liked. Yes. Zacchaeus could have almost anything he wanted because he was so rich.

But even though Zacchaeus could have almost ANYTHING he wanted, and almost ANYTHING money could buy, there was something that Zacchaeus did NOT have. It was something money could NOT buy.

What do you think Zacchaeus wanted that money could not buy?

Zacchaeus wanted (SB2) God to forgive his sins.

Now, we know that no one deserves God's forgiveness of their sins. We have all disobeyed God. We all deserve His punishment. But to many, Zacchaeus ESPECIALLY didn't deserve to have his sins forgiven.

You see, (SB3) Zacchaeus had chosen to work for Caesar, the big king in Rome. Caesar's soldiers had taken over Israel, the country where Zacchaeus and the other people lived. And one of the big things Caesar wanted from the people in Israel was MONEY. TAX MONEY.

The people of Israel hated to give the Roman king tax money, and (SB4) most of them refused to help him collect it. But not Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus loved money and when the king offered to give him lots of money to collect taxes, Zacchaeus agreed.

"Zacchaeus, collect my tax money, and any extra you get, you can keep for yourself," the big, Roman king promised.

So, that's what Zacchaeus did. (SB5) He became the head tax collector in the important city of Jericho. Zacchaeus and his men worked to get lots of money for Caesar and for themselves. Zacchaeus set up a booth along the road outside of Jericho. (SB6) He stopped everyone along the road and made them pay taxes on their things. "Stop! No one passes by without paying the king's tax," demanded Zacchaeus and his men. They did the same thing to the people of Jericho. Zacchaeus and his men knocked on every door. "Bang, bang, bang! Pay your tax money right now," they ordered everyone.

Rich people (SB7), poor people (SB8). Healthy people (SB9), sick people (SB10). Everyone was ordered to pay, no matter how hard it was for them. No one wanted to pay. Many couldn't pay. But that didn't stop Zacchaeus. He and his men took soldiers with them to do whatever was needed to make people pay. So, pay they did, the amount Caesar wanted for his taxes, and a lot more that Zacchaeus and his men kept for themselves. Zacchaeus didn't mind if the people were scared. He didn't mind if he took too much money or made their lives sad. He didn't care what happened to anyone else. He only wanted more money for himself.

So, that's how Zacchaeus got to be so rich, rich, rich. And that's why people of Jericho and many others, thought Zacchaeus ESPECIALLY didn't deserve God's forgiveness.

(SB12) "How could God forgive someone like Zacchaeus", they exclaimed. "He such a mean old greedy bully. Surely there is no forgiveness for someone like that!"

What do you think? Were the people right? Could Zacchaeus ever find God's forgiveness?

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

You might think all that money made Zacchaeus happy, and perhaps it did for a while. You see, fine clothes, a big, big house, yummy food, nice things are wonderful to have; but in the end, all those good things are never enough.

Why do you think all those good things would never be enough to make Zacchaeus happy?

Why? Because God made us to know, love, and obey Him. He, alone, can make us truly happy.

And that's why deep down in his heart, Zacchaeus was very UN-happy, even with all that money and those nice things. They would never be enough to satisfy him.

(SB13) What was worse, Zacchaeus knew God's laws, and he knew that he had broken them. He had done many terrible things to the people in his town and the people who passed along the road. He had hurt those people and now they hated him.

Zacchaeus knew that he had chosen to turn away from God and His good ways. He had rebelled against God and deserved His punishment. It seemed like there was no way for Zacchaeus to come back to God now. Why, a man who had done such bad things wasn't even allowed to go in the worship house to worship God! How could a man this bad ever find forgiveness from God? Surely, there was no way!

Do you think there was no way for a bad man like Zacchaeus to come to God?

But there WAS a way to be forgiven. God had made a way through His Son, Jesus, as Zacchaeus found out one day.

(SB14) Jesus and a crowd of people were passing through Jericho on the way to the big city of Jerusalem.

"Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming!" the exciting news spread throughout the town. Many gathered along the side of the road to see Jesus, squeezing together until there was no more room. Everyone wanted to hear Jesus teach about God and watch Him do amazing things by God's great power.

(SB16) Zacchaeus tried to join the crowd to see Jesus, too, but no one would make room for him. Zacchaeus stood behind the crowd and tried to look over their heads, but he was such a short, little man that he couldn't see anything. Oh, if someone would just let him through to the front so he could see Jesus, too! But why would people help HIM after all the terrible things he had done?

"I must see Jesus! I must see Jesus!" Zacchaeus thought. He would not give up. Up! Why that was it. Zacchaeus had an idea.

What do you think Zacchaeus was going to do?

(SB17) Zacchaeus would climb up a tree, then he could see Jesus without anyone getting in his way.

So, that's just what Zacchaeus did! He ran down the road, beyond the crowd, and climbed up a big, sycamore tree. Zacchaeus sat on his tree branch and watched as Jesus and the crowd with him came closer and closer and closer. What would happen? Would Jesus see Zacchaeus?

Do you think? Would Jesus see Zacchaeus hiding up in that tree?

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

It would have been so easy for Jesus to miss the short, little man hiding up among the leaves. But Jesus did NOT miss Zacchaeus. Jesus was LOOKING for him. Jesus knew all the terrible things Zacchaeus had done. He knew the sin in Zacchaeus' heart that made him so unhappy and separated him from God. And, Jesus knew that He could bring Zacchaeus the forgiveness from God he longed for.

So, instead of passing by Zacchaeus, (SB18) Jesus led the crowd of people right up to that tree and stopped. He looked up through the leaves and straight at Zacchaeus.

What would Jesus say to Zacchaeus? What would Jesus DO to Zacchaeus? Zacchaeus was such a bad man and Jesus was so good! Would Jesus say angry things to Zacchaeus for all the bad things he had done? Would Jesus tell him there was no hope for a bad man like him?

What do you think Jesus would say to Zacchaeus?

Jesus had GOOD news for Zacchaeus. He had come to bring people like him to God! People who knew they had broken God's laws. Jesus had come to bring them God's forgiveness and to save them from God's punishment, no matter how bad they had been.

So, Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus, and said, "(SB19) Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today!"

Zacchaeus was shocked and so happy. Good teachers like Jesus never asked to stay at the house of bad men like him, no matter how rich they were. Zacchaeus knew what this meant. Jesus wasn't just asking to stay at his big house to enjoy his nice things and yummy food. Jesus was asking to stay at his house to welcome him back to God.

Oh, what wonderful news! More than all the fine clothes, the big house, the yummy food, and the nice things in the world, Zacchaeus wanted to be welcomed back by God. Oh, how he wanted God to forgive his sins!

(SB20) Right then and there, God's Holy Spirit did a wonderful thing in Zacchaeus' heart. He helped Zacchaeus turn away from disobeying God and trust in Jesus as his Savior. Zacchaeus was forgiven by God for all the terrible things he had done. God had saved Zacchaeus through Jesus!

The town's people were shocked at Jesus' words and very unhappy!

Why do you think they weren't happy?

"(SB21) "How can Jesus stay with such a bad man who's done such terrible things and broken God's laws? Zacchaeus has lied and cheated us. He has shouted at us and hurt us. Zacchaeus has used soldiers to scare us. He's not even allowed in the worship place, he's so bad! A good teacher like Jesus shouldn't have anything to do with Zacchaeus, and He CERTAINLY shouldn't stay at his house!" they grumbled.

Jesus and Zacchaeus knew the people were right. Zacchaeus had been a very bad man. He had done terrible things and broken God's laws. He didn't deserve for Jesus to stay with him.

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

But Jesus and Zacchaeus knew the people were wrong about something, too. God had worked in Zacchaeus' heart. God had helped Zacchaeus turn away from his old, bad ways, and trust in Jesus as his Savior. God had forgiven Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a changed man!

Zacchaeus came down from that tree and showed just how changed he was. In front of everyone, he said, "(SB22) Jesus, I'm going to give half of my money and nice things to poor people. And to the people I cheated, I'll give back everything I took and give them a whole lot more!" he promised.

"(SB23) How amazing!" thought the town's people. "This doesn't sound like the same bad man who lied, cheated, and hurt us. This sounds like a NEW man, who loves God and wants to obey Him," they exclaimed.

And that's exactly what happened. God had changed Zacchaeus that day. God had helped him repent of his sins and trust in Jesus as his Savior.

Then, Jesus said to Zacchaeus and all the people, "God sent Me to seek and save people lost in their sins. And this is just what's happened today. God has forgiven Zacchaeus and made him one of His people!" Jesus! What a Savior for sinners!

Cracking the Case: (story wrap-up for Listening Assignments)

It's time to see how we did with our Listening Assignment.

Detective Dan's Lesson 1 Listening Assignment:

1. Who was the climber and why did he climb?

Zacchaeus was the climber. He climbed up a tree, so he could see Jesus.

2. How did he change? Zacchaeus turned away from his sins. He stopped being a mean, greedy cheat. He put his trust in Jesus as his Savior and God forgave his sins and made him one of his people.

What about You and Me?

Like Zacchaeus, we All have disobeyed God and deserve his punishment. How sad! But like Zacchaeus, we, too, can confess our sins to God and turn away from them. We can trust in Jesus as our Savior. And if we do, God will forgive our sins and make us one of His people, just like He did for Zacchaeus.

Detective Dan's Lesson 2 Listening Assignment:

Our Bible Verse is 1 John 1:8-9

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1. Who wanted to confess his sins and be forgiven by God? Zacchaeus did.

2. Who didn't think he should be forgiven? Who did think he should be forgiven? The people in Zacchaeus' town of Jericho didn't think Zacchaeus should be forgiven by God. He was too bad of a man. But Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus to be forgiven by God.

What about you and me?

No one is too bad to be forgiven their sins by God. All who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior will be forgiven their sins and saved! God can do this for you and me, too. Ask Him! He loves to answer this prayer.

Detective Dan's Lesson 3 Listening Assignment:

Our six clues were: a tree, a cow, a bag of money, a king, an umbrella, and yummy food.

1. Which four belong in our story?

The tree, the bag of money, the king and the yummy food belong. The cow and the umbrella do not.

2. Who confessed their sins to God and was forgiven?

Who gave back the money he had stolen?

Zacchaeus did.

For You and Me:

Like Zacchaeus we are sinners who need to confess our sins to God. Like Zacchaeus, if we do and turn to trust in Jesus as our Savior, God will forgive our sins we can become one of His dearly loved people forever.

The Gospel (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)

Our Bible Truth is:

How Can We Be Saved?

It Is God's Free Gift...

"When We Tell God Our Sins and Turn Away from Them!

Not just people like Zacchaeus who do lots of bad things need to be saved. We all do! For we all have chosen to disobey God and we all deserve God's punishment for our sins.

What good news we have, though! God promises to save all who turn away from disobeying Him and trust in Jesus as their Savior, even you and me!

Let's ask God to work in our hearts, just like He worked in Zacchaeus' heart. Let's ask Him to help us to turn away from disobeying Him and trust in Jesus as our Savior, so that we, too, might be saved.

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

- A** God, we praise You for being faithful and just, and able to forgive our sins.
- C** God, we confess that we are all sinners who need You to save us. We can never be acceptable to You on our own. We need Jesus to save us!
- T** Thank You, God, for being willing to forgive all our sins, when we confess them, turn away from them, and trust in Jesus as our Savior.
- S** God, work in our hearts. Show us our sins and our need for Jesus to save us. Help us to confess our sins to You and turn away from them. Help us to trust in Jesus as our Savior. Be our Heavenly Father! Make us Your adopted children who love You and whom You will love forever. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Go to Lesson Plan, p.9 for the script to the rest of the lesson.