



# Welcoming Zacchaeus

**Goal: To express gratitude for God's grace by welcoming others.**

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Luke 19:1-10

The story of Jesus calling Zacchaeus down from his perch in a tree to visit his house shows the giving and receiving of God's grace. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus's house (vv. 3-4). Zacchaeus was happy to welcome him (v. 6). Zacchaeus extended hospitality to Jesus and received Jesus in his home. Others criticized Jesus for being the guest of a sinner (v. 7).

Most translations indicate that Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus led to transformation in the tax collector's behavior. The NRSV says Zacchaeus promised that "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" (v. 8). The Common English Bible translates the same verse: "Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much." According to the CEB, Zacchaeus already lives a generous life. The community sees him as a sinner simply because he is a tax collector. What changes is how the community sees him after Jesus welcomes him. This was salvation for Zacchaeus (vv. 9-10).

When Jesus welcomes us into his life, we receive his love and grace. Our grateful lives then take on new directions of love for others who express Jesus' kind of hospitality.

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Zacchaeus was not well liked because of his job as a tax collector. He probably knew what it was like to eat by himself. Jesus saw him not as a reviled member of the community but as a child of Abraham, a child of God. Jesus invited himself to eat at Zacchaeus's table.

Children will be able to identify with Zacchaeus's desire to see what is going on and to know more about Jesus. They may also agree with the people who thought Jesus should not reach out to Zacchaeus. Children this age are tuned into what is fair and what isn't. Many times they will be self-centered in their ideas of fairness, but they are becoming more aware of the needs of others.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

There are many ways to recognize God's grace in this story as you invite the children to look at it from different angles of vision: Jesus, Zacchaeus, and a member of the crowd.

Children may know from personal experience or from the experience of friends what it feels like to be excluded and what it feels like to be welcomed, invited, and included. Help them connect this story with their own lives and the opportunities they have to offer God's welcome—God's hospitality—to someone else, just as Jesus did with Zacchaeus.

After you help the children name the graceful actions in this story, you can then help them make the connections between the actions and their own lives. Whom do they need to see in new ways? Whom do they need to welcome with God's love?

*Give me, O God, a heart to welcome even those  
I ignore and avoid. In Christ's name. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 12, 15, 20

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

blanket or mats

tablecloth

snack (optional)

## Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1 and 2**

choice 2: climbing toy,  
ladder, or step stools

## Exploring

choice 1: invited guest,  
English muffins, jar of  
pizza sauce, grated  
mozzarella cheese

choice 3: card stock  
copies of **GN 3**

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

## GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

### Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Christ is risen!” Prompt them to respond, “He is risen indeed!” Tell the children that this is the Easter season, and this Easter greeting is spoken around the world during this time (the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost).

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to the parents and caregivers that their children will hear a story about Jesus and Zacchaeus and how they welcomed one another.

Introduce the children to your helper or helpers. Invite children to look at the guided play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Making a picture**—Hand out copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2** and invite the children to color the tree and Zacchaeus. When the children finish, cut out the Zacchaeus figure on **GN 2**. Invite the children to glue Zacchaeus to the tree. They may place him however they wish. Some children may want to tear pieces of green construction paper for leaves and glue them on the tree. Children may use crayons to add to their pictures as they wish.
- 2. Climbing**—If your church has a commercial jungle gym, a climbing toy, a set of stairs, or a ladder, use one or make a climbing area with step stools. Give children some climbing experience to help them connect with Zacchaeus. Help children climb up and down. Ask them what they can see when they are up high that they may not have seen on the ground. Have an adult in the area.
- 3. Singing about Jesus**—Play “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 20**. Listen to the song, asking the children to name words they hear repeated, like “Jesus,” “love,” and so on. Encourage the children to learn to sing the repeated phrase “Jesus taught us how to love.” Affirm that Jesus loves them and wants us to love all people. Comment that Jesus loves all people all over the



world. Ask the children to name some of the people Jesus loves. Mention that today's story is about someone Jesus loved named Zacchaeus. You may want to sing the song again.

- T *When lining up, consider setting an order each time. For example, one time have children wearing blue line up first, another time have children whose name starts with J line up first. Engaging them while they transition lends order and draws attention away from undesired behavior.*

### Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Thank You, Holy God”—SCM 15—to thank God for loving us.

#### Small or Tall



Ask the children to stand in a circle and think of things that are tall and things that are small or short. When a child mentions something tall, everyone can stand up tall. When a child mentions something small, everyone can crouch down low to the ground.

#### Thanks, God



Invite the children to repeat your words and actions.

Hands! Hands! Thanks, God, for hands! (*wave hands in the air*) /

Feet! Feet! Thanks, God, for feet! (*stomp feet or march in place*) /

Food! Food! Thanks, God, for food! (*rub tummy*) /

Friends! Friends! Thanks, God, for friends! (*shake hands with neighbors*) /

Hands (*wave hands*), feet (*stomp feet*), food (*rub tummy*), and friends (*shake hands*)! /

Thank you, God! Amen. /

Tell the children that the story they will hear is about a little man named Zacchaeus.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story



Open the Bible to Luke 19 so that the children know the story comes from the Bible.

Read **SCM 12**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

After the children have heard the story, place a tablecloth and paper plates on the floor or on a low table. Ask the children to pretend that they are at Zacchaeus's house and that they are helping to get ready for Jesus to visit. Give each child a plate and some play dough. Invite them to make food for Jesus' visit as you read the story again.

Wonder together how Zacchaeus felt when Jesus said he was going to come to his house for dinner. Comment that many people didn't like Zacchaeus. Suggest that Jesus was also welcoming Zacchaeus as a friend when others didn't like Zacchaeus so much.

Wonder how Zacchaeus felt when he found out that Jesus loved him and wanted to be Zacchaeus's friend. Wonder what the children would do if Jesus came to their house.

## EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



### 1. Make Snacks



*Before the session, invite a guest to come and share a snack.*

Tell the children that a guest is coming and invite them to help get ready. Have the children wash their hands.

Help the children prepare mini-pizzas: Slice English muffins in half. Spread pizza sauce and grated cheese on each muffin half. Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for about 10 minutes.

Then invite them to set out the napkins, plates, and drinks in cups. Welcome your guest and share a snack together. Before you share the snack, use this echo prayer:

For food to eat, /  
and friends to share, /  
for those we love, /  
everywhere, /  
we thank you, God. /  
Amen. /

**LG** *Children may shy away from leadership tasks if they feel overwhelmed. Show them how to break tasks into doable steps to get the job done.*



## 2. Jesus Knows Your Name FM

Invite the children to sit at a table. Write their names in large letters on the top half of a sheet of paper for them. Tell them to first trace the letters of their names with their fingers and then use a pencil or crayon. Encourage the children to write or try to write their names on the paper.

Tell the children that names are important. It feels good to have someone call you by name. Tell them that just like Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, God knows them by name too.

## 3. Jesus and Zacchaeus Matching Game FM

Remind them that Zacchaeus was looking for Jesus before Jesus saw Zacchaeus and called him by name. Tell the children they are going to make a Jesus and Zacchaeus matching game that they can play with a partner and play at home.

Give each child a copy of **GN 3** and invite them to color the pictures. While they are coloring, write each child's name on an envelope to hold their picture cards. After they have finished coloring, help them cut apart their cards and place their cards in the corresponding envelopes.

Form pairs and use one child's cards to play the game (alternating card sets if the children play more than one game). Tell the children that the game is to find Jesus and Zacchaeus. Use the following directions to play the game.

- ▼ Place all the cards face down on a table and move the cards around so you don't know what is where.
- ▼ Starting with the child whose card set is being used, turn over two cards. If the cards are not Jesus and Zacchaeus, turn them face down again. Even if one is Jesus or Zacchaeus, both cards get turned face down.
- ▼ Now it is the other child's turn. He or she turns over two cards and the same rules apply.
- ▼ When a child finds Jesus and Zacchaeus, he or she says, "Zacchaeus, come down! I want to go to your house." The other child replies, "Jesus, you are welcome in my home."

Send the cards with the children to play the game at home.

## 4. Coloring Page FM C

Hand out **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, "How did Jesus know Zacchaeus's name?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What did the people think about Zacchaeus in the tree?"
- ▼ I wonder, "How did Zacchaeus get down?"

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



## LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

Sing “Jesus Taught Us How To Love”—**SCM 20**—together. Encourage them to sing the repeated phrase “Jesus taught us how to love.” If you did not share a snack in “Exploring God’s Grace,” choice 1, have a snack now. Ask the children how they can be welcoming to others this week.

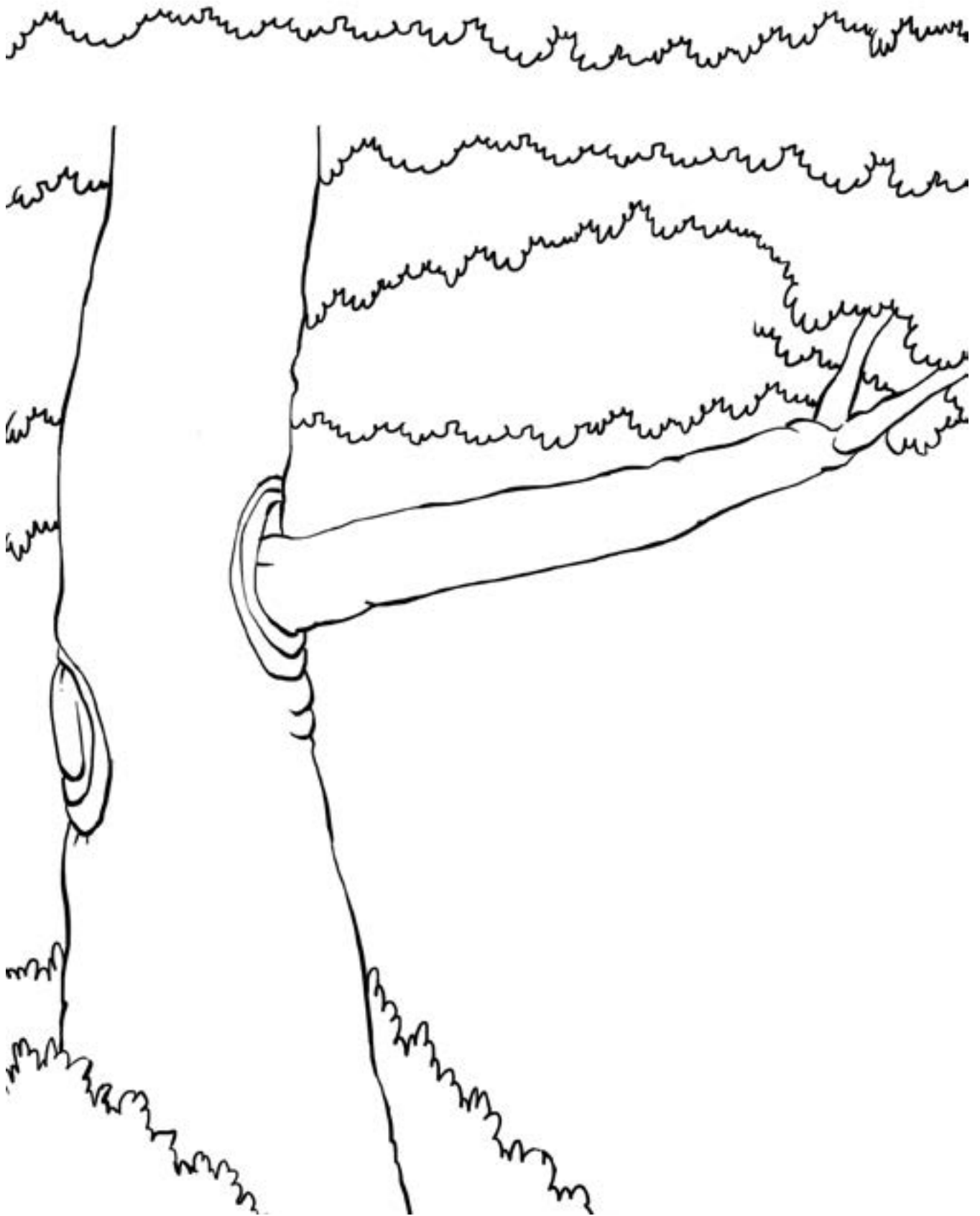
Say a litany and ask the children to respond with the words “Thank you, God”:

Thank you, God, for Jesus.  
**Thank you, God.**  
Thank you, God, for loving us.  
**Thank you, God.**  
Thank you, God, for welcoming us.  
**Thank you, God.**  
Help us welcome others with your love.  
**Thank you, God.**  
Amen.

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), welcome others with God’s love. The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



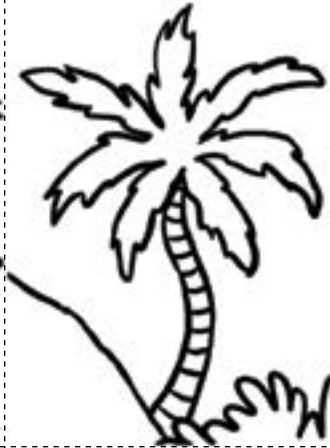
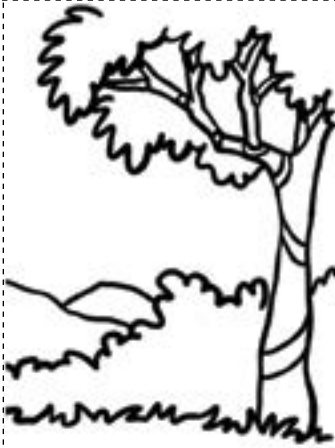
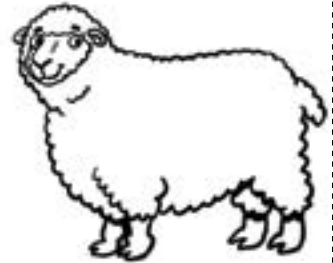
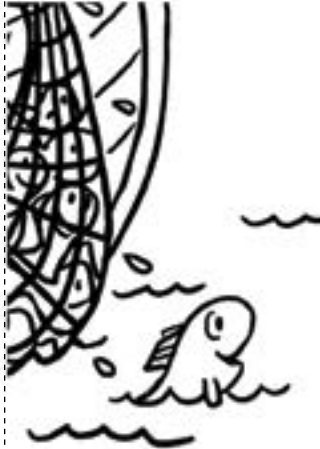
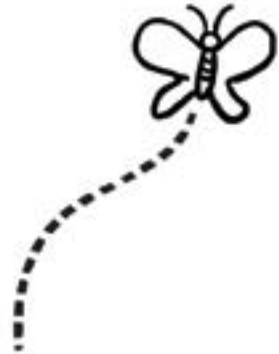




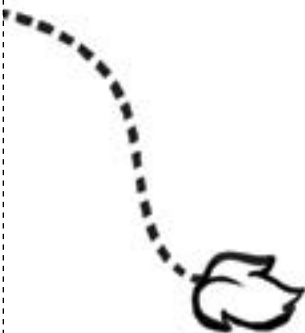




Zacchaeus



Jesus





# Welcoming Zacchaeus



Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down."

