



GOD'S CREATURES TELL THE STORY

Zacchaeus

Teacher's Packet

FREE ♦ PHOTOCOPY FREELY FOR YOUR CLASS

Five lesson plans, discussion questions for two age bands, a reproducible Bible Detective worksheet with a full answer key, a ten-question quiz, background notes on tax farming and restitution law, and projects built around ten verses that change a man's whole life. Built for readers ages 11–17 from the full narrative of *Zacchaeus*.

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How to Use This Packet

Three tracks, one book. Pick the one that matches your setting and ignore the other two. Everything here may be photocopied for your own class or family.

THE SHORTEST TEXT IN THE SERIES

The whole account is Luke 19:1–10 — ten verses. Nine chapters of book are built on them. That makes this the best title in the series for teaching students how to read a short passage slowly, and the one where it matters most to keep straight what is Scripture and what the book has imagined. The worksheet on page 5 is anchored entirely to the ten verses.

Track One — Family Devotions (nine days)

- Nine chapters, one a night. Read Luke 19:1–10 aloud on the first night before beginning, so everyone knows how short the original is.
- Close each reading with one question from page 4, chosen for the age at your table.

Track Two — Sunday School (four weeks)

- **Week 1 — The Road to Jericho.** Chapters 1–2. A wealthy town, a Roman tax contract, and a man everyone in it despises.
- **Week 2 — The Tree.** Chapters 3–4. A rich official runs down a public street and climbs a tree, which is a humiliation before it is anything else.
- **Week 3 — The House.** Chapters 5–6. Jesus invites Himself to dinner, the crowd complains, and Zacchaeus does the arithmetic out loud.
- **Week 4 — The Mission.** Chapters 7–9. Luke 19:10 is the sentence the whole Gospel of Luke has been building toward.

Track Three — Homeschool (across subjects)

- **History and civics.** Roman tax farming — how it worked, why it produced corruption by design, and why collectors were hated by their own people.
- **Law.** Restitution in Exodus 22 and Numbers 5, and how far past it Zacchaeus goes.
- **Math.** Fourfold restitution plus half of everything. Work out whether the numbers can both be true. See page 7.
- **Geography.** Jericho — a wealthy oasis on a major trade route, and the last stop before Jerusalem.
- **Writing.** An account from someone in the crowd who was owed money. See page 7.

Before the First Session

- Read page 8 before week one. Students who know what a chief tax collector actually was will read the crowd's reaction completely differently.
- Photocopy pages 5 and 9 — one per student. Everything else is for you.
- Have a calculator available. Verse 8 has arithmetic in it that repays doing.

A NOTE ON THE AGE BANDS

This packet is banded 11–13 and 14–17. The book's own study guide uses earlier, younger bands; where the two differ, follow the packet.

Five Lesson Plans

Each lesson names a key verse, the chapters to read, one main point, and one activity that can be done in the room. The lessons require the book; the verses are ones the narrative itself puts on the page.

1. Rich, and Hated for It

READ Chapters 1–2 · **KEY VERSE** *Luke 19:2*

Main point: Luke gives three facts in one verse: his name, that he was a chief tax collector, and that he was rich. The second explains the third, and both explain why nobody in Jericho would make room for him. He had collaborated with an occupying power against his own neighbors, and he had done well out of it.

Activity: Before reading further, ask the class to describe the man from verse 2 alone. Keep the descriptions. Compare them with verse 8 at the end of the unit.

2. A Grown Man in a Tree

READ Chapters 3–4 · **KEY VERSE** *Luke 19:3–4*

Main point: He ran ahead and climbed. In that culture a wealthy official did not run in public, and he certainly did not climb. Zacchaeus traded his remaining dignity for a chance to see, from a distance, a man he had never met. Wanting badly enough to look ridiculous is where this story starts.

Activity: Ask what each student would be embarrassed to be seen doing. Then ask what would have to be at the other end of it to make them do it anyway.

3. Called by Name

READ Chapter 5 · **KEY VERSE** *Luke 19:5*

Main point: Jesus stops, looks up, uses his name, and says He must stay at his house today. No sermon, no condition, no demand for repentance first. The invitation comes before any change, and it is the invitation that produces the change.

Activity: Read verse 5 and verse 8 in order and note what happens in between: a meal and a complaint. Ask which of the two seems to have done the work.

4. He Has Gone In to Eat With a Sinner

READ Chapters 6–7 · **KEY VERSE** *Luke 19:7–8*

Main point: Everyone grumbles — not some, everyone. And Zacchaeus answers not the crowd but Jesus, with numbers: half of everything to the poor, and four times over to anyone he cheated. Fourfold was the legal penalty for outright theft. He sentences himself at the maximum.

Activity: Read Exodus 22:1 and Numbers 5:6–7, then Luke 19:8. Ask what the law required and what he chose. The gap is the repentance.

5. To Seek and to Save

READ Chapters 8–9 · **KEY VERSE** *Luke 19:10*

Main point: Jesus calls him a son of Abraham — restoring to the town's most hated man the standing the town had denied him. Then comes the sentence that states the purpose of the whole Gospel: the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Activity: Note that the search ran the other direction all morning — Zacchaeus was looking for Jesus. Ask what verse 10 claims about who was actually doing the seeking.

Discussion Questions

Choose three or four per session. Most students learned this story as a song about a short man, which makes the second band worth the time.

AGES 11–13

1. Zacchaeus was rich and everybody hated him. How do you think he explained his job to himself?
2. He ran and climbed a tree, which grown men in that place simply did not do. What made it worth looking foolish?
3. Jesus knew his name without being told. What would that have felt like?
4. Jesus invited Himself to dinner instead of waiting to be asked. Was that rude, or was it something else?
5. The whole crowd complained. Not some of them — all of them. Were they wrong to?
6. Zacchaeus gave away half of everything and paid back four times what he had taken. Which of the two do you think was harder?
7. Jesus said He came to look for lost people. Zacchaeus spent all morning looking for Jesus. Who found who?
8. Jesus did not tell Zacchaeus to change anything. He asked to come to dinner. Why do you think that worked better than a lecture would have?
9. Zacchaeus had to say his promise out loud in front of everyone he had cheated. Would it have counted the same if he had said it privately?

AGES 14–17

1. Jesus made no demand before inviting Himself in. Does grace that arrives before repentance make repentance less likely, or more?
2. The crowd's complaint was factually correct — Zacchaeus was a sinner and Jesus was eating with him. What was wrong with a true statement?
3. Fourfold restitution was the penalty in Exodus 22:1 for a thief who had sold what he stole. Why would Zacchaeus volunteer for the maximum rather than the ordinary rate?
4. Work out whether a man can give half his estate away and still repay fourfold. What does the answer suggest about the scale of what he had taken?
5. Jesus calls him a son of Abraham. What was being restored by that phrase, and who had taken it from him?
6. Compare this with the rich ruler in Luke 18, a few verses earlier. Same wealth, opposite outcome. What is Luke doing by placing them near each other?
7. Nothing in the text says Zacchaeus apologized. He announced what he would do. Is action without apology sufficient repentance?
8. The account is ten verses long. The book is nine chapters. Where do you think a retelling should stop inventing, and how would you know?

Bible Detective

“A good reporter goes back to the original source.” — Penny the Squirrel. Every answer is in Luke 19:1–10. Answer key on page 10.

NAME _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____ / 9

1. What town was Jesus passing through, and what three things does Luke tell us about Zacchaeus in one verse? (*Luke 19:1–2*)

2. Give both reasons Luke gives for why he could not see Jesus. (*Luke 19:3*)

3. What did he do about it, and what kind of tree was it? (*Luke 19:4*)

4. What exactly did Jesus say to him? Write the words. (*Luke 19:5*)

5. How does Luke describe the way Zacchaeus came down? (*Luke 19:6*)

6. Who complained, and what exactly did they say? (*Luke 19:7*)

7. **Challenge.** Give both halves of what Zacchaeus promised, with the amounts. (*Luke 19:8*)

8. **Challenge.** What did Jesus call Zacchaeus, and why would that phrase matter to a man the town had rejected? (*Luke 19:9*)

9. **Super Sleuth.** Write out Luke 19:10 and say what it claims about who was looking for whom that morning.

Family and At-Home

Five devotion starters, a prayer, and one application to carry into the week. None of these require a craft table or more than fifteen minutes.

DEVOTION STARTERS

One — Willing to look foolish. A wealthy official ran down a street and climbed a tree. Ask what each person would be too embarrassed to do, and whether anything is worth more than not being embarrassed. Read Luke 19:3–4.

Two — Called by name. Jesus knew his name without introduction. Ask who in our lives would be surprised that we knew theirs. Then learn one this week. Read Luke 19:5.

Three — The invitation came first. Jesus went home with him before he changed anything. Ask whether our family waits for people to improve before we welcome them. Read Luke 19:5–7.

Four — Repentance with numbers in it. Zacchaeus did not say sorry; he said half, and four times over. Ask what a change of heart would cost each of us if we put a figure on it. Read Luke 19:8.

Five — Who was looking for whom. Zacchaeus spent his morning trying to find Jesus, and Jesus said He was the one doing the seeking. Ask what that reverses. Read Luke 19:10.

MEMORY VERSES

- *Luke 19:5* — I must stay at your house today.
- *Luke 19:8* — half of my goods I give to the poor.
- *Luke 19:9* — today salvation has come to this house.
- *Luke 19:10* — to seek and to save the lost.

A FAMILY PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You called a man by name that a whole town had written off, and You went to his house before he had changed a thing. Do that with us. Make us willing to look ridiculous if that is what it takes to see You. Where we have taken what was not ours, give us the courage to name the amount and pay it back. And make our home the kind of place where the person everyone else grumbles about would be glad to come in. Amen.

APPLICATION FOR THE WEEK

Zacchaeus named a figure. Somewhere in this family there is a small debt nobody has settled — money borrowed, a thing broken, a promise not kept. Name it out loud this week and settle it, at more than the minimum. Then talk about how it felt to be specific instead of sorry.

And notice what the crowd did. They were right about the facts and wrong about the man. Ask each person to think of someone they have decided about on good evidence, and to hold the verdict open for one week. Nobody has to name the person.

Activities and Projects

Ordinary household supplies only — a calculator, a Bible, a tape measure, a stopwatch. Nothing here needs a craft store.

AGES 11–13

Ten Verses, Ten Minutes. *Supplies: a Bible and a stopwatch.* Read Luke 19:1–10 aloud and time it. Then read it four more times, slowly, and after each reading write one thing you noticed that you had not before. Five readings of ten verses is a real skill and this is a good passage to learn it on.

Do the Restitution Math. *Supplies: a calculator.* Give yourself an imaginary estate of \$100,000. Take half for the poor. Then work out how much you could still repay at four times over — and therefore the most you could have wrongly taken. The answer surprises people.

How Tall Is a Sycamore Branch? *Supplies: a tape measure and a tree.* Find the lowest sturdy branch on any tree nearby and measure its height. Sycamore figs branch low and wide, which is why that particular tree was the climbable one.

Name Tags. *Supplies: paper and a pen.* Jesus used his name without being introduced. Write down the names of everyone you saw today and could name. Then write how many people you saw and could not. Compare the two numbers and sit with the difference.

The Crowd's Line. *Supplies: Luke 19:7.* Copy out exactly what the crowd said, then underline the part that is factually true. All of it is. Talk about how a sentence can be entirely accurate and still be the wrong thing to say.

AGES 14–17

The Creditor's Account. *Supplies: paper.* Write eight hundred words as someone in the Jericho crowd whom Zacchaeus had cheated years ago. You are owed. You have just heard he is giving it back fourfold. Do not decide in advance whether you forgive him.

Two Rich Men. *Supplies: Luke 18:18–25 and Luke 19:1–10.* Luke puts a rich ruler who walks away a few verses before a rich man who runs toward. Chart the two encounters side by side, then write five hundred words on why Luke arranged them that way.

How Tax Farming Worked. *Supplies: page 8 and a library.* Research the Roman system of tax contracts. Then write a page explaining why the arrangement produced corruption automatically, and why that makes “chief tax collector” a heavier phrase than it looks.

Three Lost Things. *Supplies: Luke 15 and Luke 19:10.* Luke 15 gives a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Chart who does the searching in each, and how hard. Then write five hundred words on how those three parables set up the sentence Jesus says at Zacchaeus's door.

Scripture and Invention. *Supplies: Luke 19:1–10 and the book.* Make two columns: what the Bible says, and what the book has imagined. Both are legitimate; the skill is telling them apart. Then check whether the book's own quiz questions can all be answered from Scripture, and note which cannot.

For the Teacher

Background you will want before a sharp fourteen-year-old asks. The first two boxes turn a familiar children's story into something with teeth.

WHY TAX COLLECTORS WERE HATED

Rome sold the right to collect taxes. A contractor paid the state up front and then recovered that sum, plus whatever more he could extract, from his own neighbors — backed by Roman authority. The system produced corruption by design, because the collector's profit was the overcharge. Add that he worked for an occupying power against his own people, and the crowd's reaction stops looking like snobbery.

CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR

Luke's word is *architelōnēs*, and this is the only place it appears in the New Testament. Zacchaeus was not a collector; he was over collectors. He held the contract and took a share of what others extracted. That is why he was rich, and why he was the most disliked man in a prosperous town.

JERICHO

A wealthy oasis city on a major trade route, with a customs post and a considerable flow of goods — a lucrative posting. It was also the last stop before the climb to Jerusalem, and Luke places this encounter immediately before Jesus makes that final journey. The placement is not accidental.

THE NUMBERS ZACCHAEUS NAMES

Exodus 22:1 sets fourfold restitution as the penalty for a thief who has sold a stolen sheep. Numbers 5:6–7 sets the ordinary rate for confessed wrongdoing at the principal plus a fifth — twenty percent. Zacchaeus skips the confession rate entirely and sentences himself at the thief's rate, on top of giving half his estate away. No one asked him to. Have students work out what that implies about his remaining wealth.

SON OF ABRAHAM

The phrase in verse 9 is a restoration of standing. Tax collectors were treated as having forfeited their place among the people; Jesus hands it back publicly, in front of the crowd that had just grumbled. Note the order — salvation has come to this house, *therefore* he is a son of Abraham. Not the reverse.

LUKE 19:10 IN ITS PLACE

This is the thesis sentence of Luke's Gospel, and it lands at the end of the last encounter before the journey to Jerusalem. Everything Luke has shown — the shepherds, the outsiders, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son — is summarized here. If your class memorizes one verse from this book, make it this one.

TWO NOTES ON THE BOOK'S APPENDICES

The science section says a sycamore fig can live over a thousand years and wonders whether the tree in the story might still be standing. These trees are long-lived, but a millennium is well beyond what is established, and the aside belongs to the storytelling rather than to the science. Second, two of the ten quiz questions in that appendix can only be answered from the book's invented material rather than from Luke. Both are fine as book comprehension; neither belongs on a Scripture quiz. The quiz on page 9 of this packet is anchored entirely to the ten verses.

Professor Hoot's Quiz

Ten questions, all answerable from Luke 19:1–10. Circle one answer for each. Scoring guide and answer key on page 10.

NAME _____ DATE _____ SCORE _____ / 10

1. What was Zacchaeus's job?
a) Carpenter b) Chief tax collector c) Roman soldier
2. What town was this?
a) Bethany b) Capernaum c) Jericho
3. Why couldn't he see Jesus?
a) It was dark b) The crowd, and he was short c) He arrived late
4. What kind of tree did he climb?
a) Olive b) Sycamore c) Palm
5. What did Jesus say to him?
a) "Stay where you are" b) "Come down, I must stay at your house today" c) "Follow me"
6. How did Zacchaeus come down?
a) Slowly and reluctantly b) Hurriedly, and welcomed Him gladly c) Only after being asked twice
7. How did the crowd react?
a) They cheered b) They all grumbled c) They said nothing
8. How much did Zacchaeus give to the poor?
a) A tenth b) Half c) Everything
9. How much did he repay anyone he had cheated?
a) Twice over b) Three times over c) Four times over
10. What did Jesus say His mission was?
a) To teach the law b) To seek and save the lost c) To judge the nations

Bonus. Jesus called Zacchaeus a son of Abraham. Write one sentence on why that mattered in front of that particular crowd.

Answer Keys and Where to Go Next

QUIZ ANSWER KEY — PAGE 9

1	b — chief tax collector	6	b — hurriedly and gladly
2	c — Jericho	7	b — they all grumbled
3	b — the crowd, and his height	8	b — half
4	b — sycamore	9	c — four times over
5	b — come down, I must stay today	10	b — to seek and save the lost

Bonus. Credit answers noticing that the crowd treated him as having forfeited his place among the people, and that Jesus restored it publicly, in front of them, at the moment they were complaining.

BIBLE DETECTIVE ANSWER KEY — PAGE 5

1. Jericho; he was named Zacchaeus, he was a chief tax collector, and he was rich (19:1–2).
2. Because of the crowd, and because he was short (19:3).
3. He ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree (19:4).
4. “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today” (19:5).
5. He hurried down and welcomed Him gladly (19:6).
6. All who saw it grumbled that He had gone in to be the guest of a sinner (19:7).
7. Half of his goods to the poor, and fourfold to anyone he had defrauded (19:8).
8. A son of Abraham — restoring publicly the standing the town had denied him (19:9).
9. “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Zacchaeus spent the morning searching, and the verse says the seeking was being done from the other direction.

SCORING GUIDE

9–10 correct — Senior Correspondent. Reading at the level of detail Penny would sign off on.

7–8 correct — Field Reporter. Solid. Send them back for the two they missed and let them find the verse themselves.

5–6 correct — Cub Reporter. The tree landed; verse 8 did not. Re-read the ten verses.

Under 5 — Back to the Newsroom. Not a failing grade. Read the book together rather than assigning it.

WHERE TO GO NEXT — MORE FREE DOWNLOADS

- **The Six Sacred Rules of Divine Reporting** — one-page classroom poster.
- **Meet the Divine News Team** — one page, four character cards.
- Teacher’s Packets for every other title in the series — including **Joshua and the Walls of Jericho**, set in the same town many centuries earlier.
- **52 Questions: A Year of Family Bible Conversations** — one a week, from across the series. Coming soon.

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