

“Step Inside the Tree”

by
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What This is an interactive skit from the "Step Inside" series. In this skit, the audience is invited up in the tree with Zacchaeus and reminded that God is always there for us when we mess up.

Special Word of the Day: Mess Up. “God is always there for us when we mess up.”

Series copy: Each skit in the "Step Inside" series encourages audience participation and focuses on a word that can be used as your lesson or theme for the day. These skits bring Bible stories to life for children and remind them that God is always there for us.

Themes: Mess Up, Forgiveness, Step Inside, Repent, Bible Stories, Kids Ministry

Who Zacchaeus,
Offstage Voices (possibly pre-recorded)
Voice of Jesus

When Biblical Times

Costumes and Props A room with decorated with elements to resemble a treetop (see below).
Zacchaeus should wear an expensive looking tunic and robe and should have rings and jewelry. He should also have a small coin purse.

Each child should be given a small coin at the start of the skit.

Why Luke 19: 1-10

How Transform a classroom or large space into a tree! Place speakers around the room and play sounds of a murmuring, excited crowd. There are free sound samples of crowds online or you can pre-record your own. Inexpensive plastic coins could be purchased online or from a dollar store, or you could make your own by printing off images of biblical coins on cardstock and cutting them out.

PURCHASE
You could certainly stage this performance outdoors, with your actor playing Zacchaeus seated in a branch of a tree and your audience seated around the base of the tree. But if you are performing this skit indoors, find ideas on how to Go Simple! or Go Big! below:

Go Simple! Inside your room or space, place one large pillow or cushion in the center of the room to act as your tree trunk. Roll up blankets into long branches and place them around the center trunk, extending out into the room. Cover the trunk and branches with brown blankets or tablecloths from the dollar store. At intervals on the branches, use pillows, cushions, or balled up blankets to act as clusters of leaves. Cover the leaf clusters in green blankets or dollar store tablecloths. Your actor playing Zacchaeus could be seated on the trunk while the audience is seated on the branches and leaves. I would recommend using binder clips or multi-purpose clips from the dollar store to securely affix the blankets or tablecloths as your audience will be seated on the branches.

Go Big! Inside your room or space, in the center place a ladder. Using sheets of foam board (available at most home improvement stores) construct a large foam tree that you can affix to the front of the ladder (leaving the back open for your actor to climb) and paint it. You will want parts of the tree to be taller than the ladder, so that it appears that Zacchaeus is on a branch midway up the tree. For stability, you may need to provide supporting structure on either side of the ladder to secure the foam. For the branches that your audience would be seated on, place rows of chairs coming out at intervals from around the base of the tree and cover those chairs in brown fabric that matches the paint on your tree. Using felt, cut out leaves and affix them to the ends of your branches. You can also use additional foam to attach along the back of the rows of chairs and you can affix your leaves to that. For the performance, Zacchaeus would be seated on top of the ladder and your audience would be seated on the lower branches around him.

Time

Approximately 5 minutes

AT

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*At start of scene the children are waiting around the tree or outside of the room, and each of them should have been given a coin. You will want to instruct them that they must give **Zacchaeus** their coin, but you can choose to encourage them to interact with Zacchaeus if you'd like. If so, **Zacchaeus** may need to ad lib in character during the tax collection scene, focusing on **Zacchaeus's** greed and dishonesty in order to collect the tax money. **Zacchaeus** enters, carrying coin pouch.*

Zacchaeus: *(smiling and rubbing his hands together)* What a wonderful day to make some money. *(shakes his coin pouch)* Sounds like I'm running low. *(looks inside his pouch)* Looks like I'm running low too! Zacchaeus wants more money and what Zacchaeus wants, Zacchaeus gets! *(sees children)* I guess it's time to collect some taxes! *(crosses to first child and holds out his hand, in a gruff voice)* Taxes are due. Pay up! *(waits for child to give him coin then moves on to the next child)* Have you already paid your taxes this week? *(waits for response)* That's alright, you can pay them now *(or replace the word "now" with "again" if they answer yes. He steps to the next child)* Is that all the money you've got? *(waits for response, then sighs)* I'll take it. *(starts to cross to the next child then stops and turns back to the last one)* But you owe me. *(turns to next child and open up his coin pouch)* Taxes due. Drop all your hard-earned money right into my pouch.

*Indicates that the remaining children should cross to him and put their coins in his pouch. Once all the coins have been placed in the pouch, **Zacchaeus** looks inside his pouch and smiles to himself.*

Not a bad day's work if I do say so myself. I told you Zacchaeus always gets what he wants. *(takes a few coins out of the pouch)* This is the amount of money the government sent me to collect for taxes. *(shakes his bag)* The rest I'm going to keep for myself. *(cinches the pouch)* What the government...and the people...don't know won't hurt them. *(starts to walk away, smugly, perhaps whistling)* Thanks everyone. I'll see you all next week. *(stops and turns back)* And you'd better have my money! *(suddenly the sounds of murmuring crowd are heard)* What's that?

Voice: I can't wait to see Jesus!

Zacchaeus: *(intrigued)* Jesus! That's the man that everyone said can perform miracles. I can't believe he's here in Jericho. *(looking around)* There's quite a crowd forming. It's as if the whole town wants to see this man they call the Messiah. Truth is, I'd love to get a good look at him myself. *(stands on his toes, straining to get a look as the sound of the crowd grows louder)* Where is he? I can't see him. *(turns to child)* Can you see him? *(waits for a response)* Of course you can't see him! You're short like me. *(to same child)* How old are you anyway? Twenty-two? *(waits for response)* That's it?! But you're almost as tall as me and I'm a grown man!

(crosses his arms, upset) It's not fair! I've got to find a way to see Jesus! What Zacchaeus wants, Zacchaeus gets! *(looks around, then crosses to one of the smallest children)* Maybe you could give me a boost? *(waits for an answer or shakes his head)* No, that's not going to work. *(puts his hands on his hips and looks back and forth at a group of children)* Maybe you guys could form a sort of pyramid...you know, like the ones like they have over in Egypt? Then I could crawl up to the top and— *(shakes his head)* No, that's not going to work either! Now I'm never going to be able to see Jesus! *(throws his hands up in the air and looks upward, at the tree. He gets an idea)* Wait a minute... *(walks around the tree)* I bet if I climbed this sycamore tree I could see Jesus. What do you guys think? *(waits for a response)* Then up I go!

He climbs into his perch on the tree. If making your own tree branches, he should also invite the children to join him. The sound of the crowd grows louder.

Voice: Here comes Jesus now!

Zacchaeus: *(points offstage)* There he is! I can see him now! *(smugly)* I told you Zacchaeus always gets what he wants. *(looks offstage)* I've got to say, Jesus isn't quite what I was expecting. This man is famous all over the land. He gets invited to the homes of prominent people. A man like that should be wearing robes made of silk and covered with jewels. But this man... *(shakes his head in disbelief)* this man comes in plain robes made of simple fibers. He is not adorned in any way—he is humble in every sense of the word and yet people flock to him. He radiates a goodness and light that I've never seen in another person before. *(looks down at his own robes)* Suddenly I feel overdressed. *(holds out his hand and looks at his rings)* Suddenly I feel garish and gaudy. I was willing to do anything to see Jesus, but now I hope he doesn't see me...not like this.

Jesus: *(offstage voice)* Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus: Oh no! He sees me!

Jesus: *(offstage voice)* Come down quickly, because I must stay at your house today.

Zacchaeus: My house?! *(turns to children)* Why do you think he'd want to come to my home? *(waits for response)* But this is a good man...a man without faults, a man who always does the right thing. *(suddenly ashamed)* Why would he want to come to the home of a man like me? A man who cheats the people out of their hard earned money? A man who takes more taxes than the government requires to fund his own lavish lifestyle? *(waits for a response)*

Voice: Zacchaeus is a sinner! He steals from the poor. Jesus, you can't be the guest in the home of a sinner.

Zacchaeus: See! All these people know that Jesus doesn't belong in my home. I think I really messed up this time. I've made so many bad choices. Suddenly I wish I was a different kind of person...a man who gives instead of takes. A man who helps instead of harms. What do you think I should do? *(waits for a response)* Those are all great ideas. I think I know what I am going to do!

Calls offstage, perhaps starts taking off his rings and jewelry and hands them to various audience members.

Lord, these people are right. I've made mistakes in my past. I've messed up time and time again and chose to do the wrong thing in order to get what I want. But I want to change my ways...go down a different path. I want to make things right, so I promise here and now to give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone of anything, I am paying it back four times as much.

Jesus: *(offstage voice)* Today salvation has come to this man because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

Zacchaeus: *(calls out)* Thank you Jesus. *(turns to children)* You know, I've messed up many times in my life. I thought of myself before others, I cheated, and I lied. The truth is, we all mess up from time to time. But what I've learned here today is that God is always there for us when we mess up and when we repent of our sins, he is there to forgive us. Does anyone know what it means to repent? *(waits for responses)* To repent is more than just saying that you're sorry. If you really want to repent, you must rethink the choices you made and choose to go in a different direction—a direction filled with good choices. So when we confess those sins to God, about those times we messed up and made the wrong choice—and then choose to go in a different direction, then we will be forgiven, just as Jesus forgave me today. Now let's pray to God and thank him for forgiving us when we mess up. *(folds his hands in prayer)* Dear God, sometimes we mess up and make bad choices that are selfish or hurt others. But we know you are always there, ready to listen when we repent for our sins and helping to guide us in a better direction. Thank you for always being there, even when we mess up. We promise to do our best to open our hearts and our minds so that we might hear you better and to follow you. Amen. *(looks up)* Now I'd better get out of this tree. Jesus will be at my house any minute! Thanks for coming!

Helps children exit. End of scene.