

# FEBRUARY LG | W3



## Bible Story

Zacchaeus • *Luke 19:1-10*

## Bottom Line

The love of Jesus changes people.

## Monthly Memory Verse

*"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you."* • John 13:34 NIV

5 min

# Large Group Opener

5 min

## OPENER

### What You Need

No supplies needed

**HOST:** “Hi there, friends. I LOVE that I get to hang out with all of you here today as we continue to talk about ways to share the love of Jesus. Our series is called ‘Like and Subscribe: Share the Love of Jesus’ because when you see something awesome online, you like it and subscribe to it because you don’t want to miss a minute of awesomeness. And you want to share that awesomeness with your friends and family too!

“This month we’re talking about the love of God! That’s definitely not something you want to miss a second of! And it’s so amazing that you so want to share it!

“So before we hear an amazing true story from the Bible about the love of Jesus, I thought we should play a little game called ‘Like or Dislike!’

SLIDE: Like or Dislike Challenge Title

“Okay, everyone, warm up your thumbs. (*Wiggle your thumbs.*)

“Are you ready? Okay, let’s go! In a few moments, I’m going to call out the name of something. If you like that thing, give me a thumbs up, raised high. (*Do a thumbs up.*) YAY! But if you do not like that thing, I want to see a thumbs DOWN. (*Do a thumbs down.*) BOOOO. Let’s try one to practice!

“Watching football. Like or dislike?”

Encourage kids to give a thumbs up or thumbs down. Comment on the split.

“Everyone, have your thumbs at the ready? Let’s go!”

Work through the following list—or add your own, based on the likes and dislikes of the kids in your ministry. Feel free to include current trends, sports rivalries, etc. Comment on the responses as you go.

- Radishes
- LEGOs®
- The color orange
- Salt on watermelon
- Cleaning your room
- Camping
- Snakes
- Homework
- Chewing gum
- Gum on your shoe
- Waking up early
- Road trips

11 min

# Worship

3 min

## WORSHIP | This is Living

### What You Need

No supplies needed

3 min

## WORSHIP | Echo

### What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

## Memory Verse

### What You Need

No supplies needed

- Thunderstorms
- Dark chocolate
- Your birthday

"Great job, everyone! You can give your thumbs a rest now. It was so much fun to see all the things that you like ... and dislike!"

### WORSHIP LEADER (energized, affirming):

"Hey, everyone! You did such a great job in that game — I loved seeing all your thumbs flying!

This month, we've been talking about how amazing God's love is, and how when we experience it, it can change the way we live.

Life with Jesus isn't boring or ordinary — it's full of purpose and joy. So let's jump into worship together and celebrate the life we have because of Him.

Everybody on your feet — let's sing **This Is Living!**"

### WORSHIP LEADER:

"Awesome job! You sound incredible today!

That song reminds us that following Jesus changes our lives.

And today, we're going to hear a true story from the Bible about a man whose life was completely changed when he met Jesus.

His name was Zacchaeus — and when Jesus showed him love, it didn't stop there.

It changed the way Zacchaeus lived and the way he treated other people.

This next song is one we've been learning this month, and it fits today's story perfectly.

It's all about how God's love doesn't stop with us — it *echoes* out into the world around us.

As we sing, think about how God's love can change *you* and then flow through you to others.

Let's sing **Echo!**"

### WORSHIP LEADER:

"Great job — seriously, you all did amazing!

Zacchaeus didn't change because someone forced him to.

He changed because he was loved by Jesus.

And Jesus tells us to live that same way — loving others just like He loves us.

That's why our memory verse this month comes straight from Jesus Himself.

Let's get ready and say it together."  
(Transition directly into Memory Verse: John 13:34)

*SLIDE: Memory Verse*

*"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you" —John 13:34 NIV.*

"Now, repeat after me!"

*"I give you a new command."*

**KIDS AND WORSHIP LEADER:** *"I give you a new command."*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *"Love one another."*

**KIDS AND WORSHIP LEADER:** *"Love one another."*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *"You must love one another"*

**KIDS AND WORSHIP LEADER:** *"You must love one another"*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** *"just as I have loved you."*

**KIDS AND WORSHIP LEADER:** *"just as I have loved you."*

**WORSHIP LEADER:** "John 13:34!"

**KIDS AND WORSHIP LEADER:** "John 13:34!"

"I think you've got it. God wants us to show love to every single person, just like Jesus did."

33 min

## Bible Story (Live)

3 min

### INTRODUCTION

#### What You Need

No supplies needed

Make sure a table is set on stage so the Storyteller can place their Bible on it and read from it. Place a pair of sneakers and a bag of coins on the table, along with an index card with the line for the volunteer playing Jesus. Set a kids' size table on one side of the stage. Place festive fake food on the table. Place the fake plant near center stage. If you use chairs in your seating area, create a "path" up the middle for the kid actor playing Jesus to walk through.

**STORYTELLER:** "Yay! You guys! I'm so excited that we're together today learning about God!"

5 min

## GOD'S BIG STORY OPENER (OPTIONAL)

### What You Need

No supplies needed

"This month, we're continuing our series called 'Like and Subscribe: Share the Love of Jesus,' because when you see something awesome online, you totally like it and subscribe to it, and you share it with your friends and family because it's so awesome!

"This month we're talking about the love of God! That's for sure something you don't want to miss a bit of, and you totally want to share!

"This week, we're looking at something that happened to Jesus while He was on earth.

"But before we get into our true story from the Bible this week, let me tell you about something amazing we're doing this year! We're journeying through the key stories of the Bible, cover to cover.

"Why are we going to look at the story of the entire Bible? Well, part of the reason why God gave us the Bible is so we can know who He is and what He is like. He wants us to learn about Him! So hopefully, as we go through the story of the Bible, we'll learn about God."

**STORYTELLER:** "We're going to go through God's Big Story in the Bible together so we can learn about God! (*Gesture to slide.*)

*SLIDE: God's Big Story*

"Let me catch you up on where we've been in God's Big Story so far!

"You might remember that, in the beginning, God created everything. He made the world, the animals, people ... everything! God made the first people for the same reason He made all people—to be His close, close friends. But sadly, the first people God made chose to turn away from Him and sin. God wanted people to be close to Him, but they couldn't anymore. Pain, sickness, and death entered the world too.

"But God didn't want to leave things that way. So He put His rescue plan in motion right from the start!

"God was going to rescue everything through a family! God chose a man named Abraham and promised that his family would bless the whole world. Abraham had a great-grandson named Joseph, who became a leader in Egypt and saved his family—God's people. Over time, God's people grew but were enslaved by a new Pharaoh. 'Help us!' they cried out to God. God freed His people and brought them to the super-nice home He had designed for them, the Promised Land.

"After God's people were settled in the Promised Land, they disobeyed God—again and again and again. Even the kings God gave them rebelled! So, God split the nation in two—into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Prophets spoke for God saying, 'Come back to Me!' But the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive. Oh no! After years in exile, some of God's people returned to rebuild their homeland, while others stayed in foreign lands.

5 min

## SETTING UP THE STORY

### What You Need

No supplies needed

"During that sad time, God kept sending messages to His people about the Rescuer He had promised long ago. 'God's Rescuer is going to come like this!' the prophets said. But for years and years, nothing happened.

"And then it did! God sent Jesus, the Rescuer we needed, just like He promised! While Jesus was on earth, He showed us who God is because He is God!

"And that's where we are in God's Big Story!"

**STORYTELLER:** "At the end of three years of ministry, Jesus knew it was time to go once more to Jerusalem. And He knew that this time, He would give up His life for the sake of His followers, and even His enemies. But on his way there, Jesus passed through the town of Jericho.

"Now, we need some volunteers to help tell this story! I need someone to play Jesus, and someone to play a guy we're about to meet, whose name is Zacchaeus. Raise your hand if you want to do some acting!

*From the kids who have their hands raised, choose an older boy to be Jesus and another boy to be Zacchaeus. Invite both kids to the stage with you. Give the card with the line to the Jesus volunteer.*

*(To the boy playing Jesus, who is holding his card) Okay, you're going to be Jesus today! And you have a very special line to read on that card. Now I need you to go all the way to the back of the room (gesture to back of room, behind the audience), and when I cue you, you'll travel up the middle all the way to Jericho on the stage.*

*(To the other boy volunteer) "Now you are going to be Zacchaeus. (To audience.) If some of you have heard this story before, you may know something important about Zacchaeus. What did he look like? (Get a response.) Yes! Zacchaeus was very short. So we need you to get down on your knees to walk around. Can you do that?"*

*Help the volunteer get in position and give them the pair of shoes to "wear" on their knees.*

"Oh, and you'll need these shoes too. Wow ... you really have to look up to everyone! Now we know something else about Zacchaeus too.

*Hold up the bag of coins and shake it so they clink.*

"Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector! Jewish tax collectors took money from their own people for the Roman government. These men paid their own salaries from that money, but some of these tax collectors, like Zacchaeus, took so much money it was very unfair. No one liked tax collectors ... especially not a chief tax collector. So, Zacchaeus, go ahead and take your money. And we need this tree right over here.

*Hand over the bag of money to Zacchaeus. Set the potted plant in the middle of the stage.*

"Now that we've got everything set for our story, let's get started."

5 min

## ZACCHAEUS TRIES TO SEE JESUS

### What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

## JESUS INVITES ZACCHAEUS TO DINNER

### What You Need

No supplies needed

**STORYTELLER:** "On His journey to Jerusalem, Jesus and His friends approached the city of Jericho. Along the road, Jesus gave sight to a blind man, and the crowd went wild. News of Jesus' coming spread rapidly through the streets.

"Word even reached Zacchaeus, who had heard about Jesus, and maybe even that Jesus was kind to tax collectors. Zacchaeus was curious enough to make his way through the crowds until he discovered a problem. *(to audience, gesture)* Okay, I need all of you to stand up tall and cheer for Jesus! And Jesus, you can start walking very slowly up through the crowd. Yay for Jesus!

*Pause as the kids cheer for Jesus until the actor playing Jesus makes his way to the stage. Quiet the crowd, then continue.*

"But just look at this. Zacchaeus was so short that he could not see Jesus through the crowd! So Zacchaeus ran ahead and found a sycamore-fig tree near the road. *(to Zacchaeus)* Okay, scootch your way over to our plant-slash-fig-tree as fast as you can!

*Zacchaeus scoots over to stand "in" the plant.*

"Zacchaeus scrambled up the scaly branches until he had a prime box seat with a perfect view of the action!

**STORYTELLER** *(to volunteer):* "Okay, Jesus. Keep walking over here toward the tree. Pretty soon, Zacchaeus could see Jesus walking toward him. Zacchaeus leaned forward, hoping to get a good look. As Jesus drew closer, though, He looked up, directly at Zacchaeus, with deep love in His eyes.

*Gesture for the kid actor playing Jesus to stand right in front of Zacchaeus.*

"Okay, Jesus, go ahead and read your line!"

**VOLUNTEER:** "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today."

**STORYTELLER:** "Wow! Jesus wanted to come and stay with Zacchaeus! We don't know what went through Zacchaeus' mind. Maybe he thought of all the people he had wronged. Of the way he had been so focused on gaining more and more money. Of how most people hated him.

"But something about Jesus ... something in His face ... swept it all away. Zacchaeus knew in that instant that Jesus loved him, no matter what he'd done.

"With joy, Zacchaeus came down from the tree. Okay, Zacchaeus. Scoot out of that tree and lead Jesus over there.

*Gesture for Zacchaeus to lead Jesus over to the table.*

5 min

## ZACCHAEUS' CHANGE OF HEART

### What You Need

No supplies needed

5 min

## GOD'S BIG STORY CLOSER (OPTIONAL)

"Then Zacchaeus led Jesus to his home. He probably threw a ginormous feast!

**STORYTELLER:** "Not everyone was happy about it, though.

*Open the Bible to Luke 19:7-8 (NirV)*

and read.

*All the people saw this. They began to whisper among themselves. They said, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner."*

*But Zacchaeus stood up. He said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of what I own to those who are poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back. I will pay back four times the amount I took."*

"Okay, Zacchaeus, pour all that money out on the table to show how you're giving it all away!

*Encourage the kid playing Zacchaeus*

*to spill out all the coins.*

*Open the Bible to Luke 19:9-10 (NirV)*

and read.

*Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to your house. You are a member of Abraham's family line. The Son of Man came to look for the lost and save them."*

"Side note: 'Son of Man' is another name for Jesus, because He's God, but chose to be born as a human like us. It points back to something the prophet Daniel said about the Messiah. In a way, Jesus was saying: "That's Me! I'm the Messiah!"

"But did you see what Jesus did? Jesus didn't condemn Zacchaeus or immediately order him to pay everyone back. Jesus simply made it clear how much He loved Zacchaeus, and gave Zacchaeus an opportunity to make things right. As far as we know, Zacchaeus followed through and did it!

"All right, let's get a HUGE round of applause for our amazing volunteers. Especially for [the kid who played Zacchaeus] who might have some sore knees after this. You can go back to your seat!

*Lead applause and send volunteers*

*back to their seats.*

**HOST:** "Let's take a look at the progress we made in God's Big Story this week!

*SLIDE: God's Big Story*

**What You Need**

No supplies needed

8 min

**Closing**

5 min

**WHAT'S OUR PART IN THE STORY?****What You Need**

No supplies needed

"This week, we're up here in the part of this picture of God's Big Story—the picture that says, 'Jesus' Life.' Jesus Himself came to teach us about who God is!

"This week, we read about something that happened while Jesus was on earth. God spent years and years of His Big Story paving the way for Jesus to come on earth because when Jesus came, He showed everybody what God is like because He is God. God really, really wants us to know what He is like! And when Jesus encountered Zacchaeus, a man who had done a tremendous amount wrong, Jesus welcomed him. God was saying, 'I love you no matter what you've done.' Jesus' love changed Zacchaeus. And when Jesus was going around showing everyone what God is like, He never sinned. He lived an absolutely perfect life. Jesus showed God's great love when He gave up that perfect life, paid for our sin, broke that awful curse we were under, and rescued us. The God of all showed how deep His love goes by dying to rescue us all! We are so very loved by God!

"Let's put the next image on our timeline!

*SLIDE: Week 3 Timeline Image*

If you're making a timeline of printed images on your wall, take this moment to place today's Timeline Image on the clothesline.

"And this week, we saw how the love of Jesus can change people ... even people like Zacchaeus!"

**HOST:** "So what's our part in the story? Well, Jesus didn't force Zacchaeus to make big changes before coming to his house. Instead, Jesus loved Zacchaeus as he was. Jesus showed Zacchaeus unconditional love. And Zacchaeus made an incredible turnaround because he had been loved by God.

"The love of Jesus changes people! See, God's love for us is far bigger than we can ever imagine. God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to give up His life for us so we could be close friends with God again.

"It's easy to forget God's amazing love. But when you receive God's love for you every day, over time, you start to change from the inside out. Knowing that you're loved changes everything! You become more peaceful and joyful. You become more secure and confident. Then it's easier to show God's love to other people, which can change them too!

"Now, showing the love of Jesus to someone doesn't guarantee that they'll change, but it does open the door.

3 min

## PRAYER

### What You Need

No supplies needed

"You can start by making a habit every morning of asking God to show you His love. Be still for a minute or two and take some deep breaths. Let yourself rest in God's love.

*Read the room. If you think kids are still focused enough, try asking them to close their eyes and breathe deeply for 15-20 seconds while they rest in God's love for them.*

"Don't forget that when you choose to follow Jesus, God sends the Holy Spirit to live inside of you. So you can ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with God's love and show you ways to love others during your day ... because it just might make room for them to change. Let's talk to the God who loves you so much."

**STORYTELLER or HOST:** "Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to show us how much You love us. Please help each of us to know and experience Your love this week, and to allow that love to change us. Help us to spread Your love to the people around us in all we do and say. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen."