

# Big or Small — It Doesn't Matter at All



**Theme:** Our size doesn't matter to Jesus. Proper 26 (31) Year C

**Object:** A basketball and a player who could demonstrate dribbling skills, if possible.

**Scripture:** When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." Luke 19:5 (NIV)

I know that many of you like to play basketball. Basketball is a very popular sport for both boys and girls. There are several things that are very important if you want to be a good basketball player. First, you need sure hands so that you can catch the ball and dribble up and down the court. A good player should be able to dribble equally well with their right or left hand and dribble behind their back and between their legs. It also helps to have quick feet and to be a good shooter. Those are skills which many people can develop with a lot of determination and hard work.

There is another thing that is very helpful if you want to play basketball -- and it is something that you can't develop no matter how hard you work. Do you know what that is? It is very helpful if you are TALL! Most professional basketball players today are close to seven feet tall. It is helpful to be tall, but you can be successful in basketball without being tall.

Several years ago there was a basketball player by the name of Nate Archibald. When Nate finished college, most of the professional teams ignored him because they thought he was too short. In fact, his nickname was "Tiny." The Cincinnati Royals decided to take a chance on Nate and signed him to play on their team. Well, Nate made it big in the NBA because he was lightning fast, had good hands, and he was a great shooter. He played in the NBA for fourteen seasons and became known as the player who proved that a "little man" could play in the NBA. Just listen to some of the honors he won:

- He was named to the All-NBA team five times
- He was named to the NBA All-Star team six times
- He was elected to the NBA Hall of Fame

Not too bad for a man that most people thought was too short to play in the NBA.

The Bible tells us about another man who became great even though he was not very tall. His name was Zacchaeus. I know that most of you know the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was not only short, he was also hated by almost everyone because he was a tax collector. As a tax collector, he often cheated people and collected more taxes than they owed.

One day Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to town. He had heard about Jesus and he wanted to see him, but he was so short that he couldn't see over the crowd. He climbed up in a tree so that he could see. As Jesus passed by, he called to Zacchaeus, "Come down, because I am going to your house today." Zacchaeus climbed down and took Jesus to his house. While Jesus was there, Zacchaeus told Jesus that he was sorry for the wrong things he had done and that he would give half of all he owned to the poor. He also said that he would repay anyone he had cheated four times that amount. He may not have been very tall, but Zacchaeus became a giant in God's kingdom that day because he decided to follow Jesus.

You may not be very tall right now -- and you may never be very tall, but you can be a giant in God's eyes if you will follow Jesus.

Dear Lord, we are thankful that you don't care whether we are big or small. Help us to be willing to follow Jesus and stand tall for Him. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**BALL DRIBBLING:** Children can be divided into teams and take turns dribbling a ball from their team line to the other side of the room and running back with the ball to their team. The next player will then do the same until all players have had a chance to dribble the ball. Tell children it doesn't matter which team gets done first - only that they complete the game. For extra fun, use different size balls.

**BALL OVER AND UNDER RELAY:** Children will be in teams and will spread apart enough to have the first (front) player hand the ball OVER head and the next player will hand the ball UNDER (between the legs); the next player will hand it OVER and continue to hand the ball OVER and UNDER until the back player receives the ball and will run to the front of the line and continue the OVER and UNDER. The game can continue until all the players have been at the back of the line and run to the front at least once or as time allows! Tell children our size doesn't matter when we play this game and to listen carefully to our lesson today about Size not mattering.

**STAND TALL:** Children can spread around the room and squat or lean over and walk around a designated area until the teacher shouts STAND TALL! Children will stand up TALL and "freeze" in that position until the teacher says to UNFREEZE and children will continue to walk around in leaning over or squatting to the STAND TALL and freeze, etc.

**ZACCHAEUS SKIT:** Give all the children a part to play in today's Bible story - some being the people who are following Jesus, someone will be Jesus and someone will be Zacchaeus. Tell children to finish the "skit" with singing ZACCHAEUS and perhaps present it to another Sunday School class.

**FOLLOW JESUS FOOTPRINT:** Give children construction paper to trace and cut out one of their feet. If "feet" stickers are available, let children put stickers or feet drawings on the BIG FOOT and write FOLLOW JESUS. Place all the feet in a "walking pattern" on the classroom wall.

**NAME PLATE:** Children can be given construction paper and stickers, markers and glitter (if desired) to make a name plate and glue to heavy card stock or card board (from cereal boxes, etc), to glue their name plate onto. Name plate will have child's name in big bright colors and in smaller letters, the children will write JESUS KNOWS MY NAME. Tell children that Jesus knew Zacchaeus' name and knew all about him.

**ZACCHAEUS TREE:** Provide supplies for children to build a tree with craft sticks, chenille wire, cut out leaves or cloth leaves from an imitation plant, etc.. Glue the parts of the tree onto a piece of construction paper. Give children an ink pad and let them put a "fingerprint" on one of the branches of their tree and draw the body parts of Zacchaeus from that fingerprint, as children desire! Children can write our prayer for today or parts of our lesson, such as "We are thankful Jesus that you don't care if we are big or small. Help us to be willing to follow Jesus and stand tall for Him.

**TABLE PLACARD:** Children can be given heavy card stock and fold the card in half so it will stand on a table or the child's dresser. Write LITTLE IS BIG WHEN GOD IS IN IT, or other words and lessons from today story. Let children color and decorate the card with markers and stickers as well. INSIDE the table card, children can write

today's Bible verse.

**TREE CLIMBING BIBLE MEMORY:** Children can scatter around the classroom and pretend to be climbing a tree as they recite today's Bible verse. They can recite the verse all together or one word per child as they continue to "climb".

## A Little Man with a Big Problem



**Theme:** God's forgiveness. Proper 26 (31) Year C

**Object:** A periscope. (You can make your own.)

**Scripture:** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:10 (NIV)

Have you ever been to a parade where you couldn't see over the person in front of you? It isn't much fun to go to a parade if you can't see the marching bands, the floats, or the fire trucks with their flashing lights, is it? When that happens, a periscope may be just what you need. The periscope has two mirrors in it so that you can look in the bottom and see out the top. It allows you to see over tall objects or even around a corner. Periscopes are used in submarines so that the people in the submarine can see what is happening above the water. I have seen people using these at parades and at sports events where they may have difficulty seeing above the crowd.

Today's Bible story is about a man who went to a parade, but couldn't see above the crowd. The main attraction in this parade was Jesus. He had become quite famous because he had performed many miracles. He had raised Lazarus from the dead and had restored sight to a blind man named Bartimaeus, so when he entered the city of Jericho, the atmosphere was very much like a circus parade. People lined the streets hoping to get a glimpse of Jesus. One of the people in the crowd was a man who was very short. He was so short that he couldn't see above all the people in the crowd. You probably know this man's name, don't you? That's right, it was Zacchaeus. He didn't have a periscope to help him see above the crowd, but he really wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed a tree and waited for Jesus to pass by.

As Jesus traveled through the streets of Jericho, he came to the place where Zacchaeus sat up in the tree. Jesus stopped, looked up in the tree, and he said, "Zacchaeus, you come down, for I am going to your house today."

The people in the crowd were shocked! You see, Zacchaeus was one of the most hated men in all of Jericho. Why did the people hate him? Because Zacchaeus was a little man with a great big problem! He was a thief and a cheat! He was the chief tax collector and he had become very rich because he cheated people by collecting more taxes than they owed and keeping it for himself. The people could not believe that Jesus would go to the home of a man like that!

Zacchaeus knew that he had cheated people and when he and Jesus arrived at his house, he confessed and said that he was sorry for what he had done. He said to Jesus, "I am going to give half of all that I own to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Because Zacchaeus was sorry for what he had done and confessed his sin, Jesus forgave him

and said, "Today salvation has come to this house." Yes, Zacchaeus was a little man with a big problem -- sin! But he met Jesus and his life was changed. It doesn't matter if you are short or tall, when you meet Jesus, he will change your life too.

Our Father, when we meet Jesus it is a life-changing experience. Thank you for your love and forgiveness. Amen.

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 19:1-10

**SCAVENGER HUNT:** The teacher will HIDE pictures around a designated area with objects about our story today. Ex: picture or plastic little tree, a plastic little man, a plastic little group of people (from dollar store); play money, parade items, etc. Bring items back to classroom and talk about the lesson of Zacchaeus.

**LITTLE MAN PICTURE:** Draw a "little man" in lower left corner of a poster board and the word SIN in the upper right corner in BIG letters. Let children write words about our story in various colors around the poster picture and discuss SIN and FORGIVENESS. (Words such as sin, forgiveness, Zacchaeus, parade, tree; cheating, Jesus, etc)

**SIN & FORGIVENESS CHART:** On a chart or chalkboard, write SIN in big letters with "BIG PROBLEM" (in red marker) written underneath and on the other side of the chart, write FORGIVENESS with BIG ANSWER (in red marker) written underneath. (SIN - BIG Problem; FORGIVENESS - Big Answer). Have children write or give ideas to put under the SIN column and other answers to write under the FORGIVENESS column - such as what we do to SIN or displease God and ways that we are FORGIVEN when we confess our sin!

**LEAVES HUNT:** If possible, let the children go outside and dig through a pile of leaves during class. The teacher can HIDE 2 cards in the leaves.... one with the word SIN on it and the other with the word FORGIVENESS. Let the children hunt until they find the cards and then have a class discussion about the two words they found. If time allows, children could each pick two good leaves and bring back into the classroom to put UNDER a piece of white paper and color over the top to get the shape/form of the leaf and then write SIN on one colored leaf and FORGIVENESS on the other leaf to take home as a reminder of today's lesson.

**COINS PAY BACK:** Give half of the class 2 coins each. The other half of the class can PAY BACK times 2 and then switch players and PAY BACK times 4, as in the story. Discussion about Zacchaeus and his confession and forgiveness.

**ZACCHAEUS TREE ART:** The teacher will have a very LARGE tree and branches and round green swirls colored on the poster board. Children can have fun writing ONE word each from the Bible verse around the green part of the tree and write the Bible verse on the trunk of the tree! Then the children can take turns pointing to the words on the tree in the correct order to learn the Bible verse together! The FIRST child who can point and recite the Bible verse by memory will be allowed to draw a LITTLE "Zacchaeus" sitting in the tree!

**PIN ZACCHAEUS ON THE TREE:** Have the children draw branches on a wall or very large poster boards taped together. Use sponges to add painted leaves to the branches of the tree. The children can then play PIN ZACCHAEUS ON THE TREE to see how close they can get (blindfolded) to putting the little man on a tree branch. There don't have to be any winners but children will enjoy seeing where Zacchaeus is sitting. The large tree and leaves can left on the wall to be enjoyed by the class for weeks to come, if teacher desires!

**ZACCHAEUS HAND AND ARM TREE:** Provide the children with a long piece of construction paper and trace the child's arm and opened hand onto the paper. Have the children color or paint the arm and hand brown and use a green ink pad to use their fingers to print leaves on their tree. The teacher will give each child a picture of Zacchaeus sitting so that the children can glue the little man to a tree branch (their outstretched thumb).