

ZACCHAEUS – A STORY ABOUT LIFE CHANGES (KS1 or 2)

Hot-seat Zacchaeus. Ask the children to prepare questions they would ask him if he walked in the class room, e.g.,

- Why did you want to see Jesus?
- Why did you work for the Romans?
- What was the biggest change after you met Jesus?

Explore whether Zacchaeus sticks to his resolution to change his life and if not, what stops him?

What changes would the children most like to make to their own lives? Why?

Christians believe that God accepts everyone regardless of what they have done, who they are or where they were born – and that with God's help, lives can be changed for the better.

The story below can be found in Luke chapter 19 in the New Testament of the Bible.

Jesus travelled to lots of places and one of those places was Jericho. Now in Jericho there lived a man named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich because he was a cheat. He charged people too much. Everyone knew he did but because he worked for the Roman soldiers there wasn't much they could do about it except hate him even more.

Now Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus and wanted to meet him and see what he looked like. So when Jesus arrived in Jericho, like everyone else, Zacchaeus went out on to the streets. Now you need to know one other thing about Zacchaeus. Not only was he a cheat and worked for the Romans but he was also very short, and when he went to see Jesus lots of other people were there too, and there was no way they were going to let him through to the front to see Jesus properly. So there was only one thing for it. Zacchaeus ran.

Concept – Change and rebirth

Away from the crowd to where he hoped Jesus was going to come. Then he climbed a tree and sat, waiting. At least he'd be able to see the top of Jesus' head from where he was. And the tops of the heads of all the other people who were following him.

When Jesus reached the tree where Zacchaeus was, he stopped walking. So did the crowd.

Jesus looked up. So did the crowd.

Jesus stared. So did the crowd.

Jesus took a breath. So did the crowd.

Then Jesus spoke. And the crowd listened.

"Zacchaeus," Jesus said, "hurry down! I want to stay with you today."

Zacchaeus gulped. So did the crowd.

Jesus was going home with that little cheat who worked for the Romans.

"That man Zacchaeus is a sinner and Jesus is going home to eat with him!" someone shouted angrily.

What Jesus said to Zacchaeus that day we shall never know, but we do know one thing. At one point Zacchaeus stood up and announced, "I will give half of my property to the poor and I will pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated." Now that must have been some conversation!

Think of a modern day equivalent and draw a time line showing what happened before, during and after the 'change'. Use colours to show feelings different people had – Zacchaeus, the crowd, Jesus.

Can having a religious faith change people's lives in any way? How? Why?

