

Merge Kids Camp Small Group

For Leaders:

Each lesson is a good amount of material. The best way to get the most out of it and serve the kids in your group is to read through all of the material, highlight things you know you want to cover, and make specific notes for your group.

Day 2 Overview: Jesus is Greater. Look to Him.

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Supplies: Bible

Main Point: When we turn our eyes away from ourselves and look to Jesus, we find salvation and a new life with God.

Challenge: Do you understand your need for salvation in Jesus? Do you have new life in Him? If not, do you want to trust in Jesus and follow Him as King?

If so, are you living a holy and obedient life?

Day 3 Overview: Part of the Team

Scripture: Acts 16:11-15

Supplies: Device to play sounds, 9-12 piece puzzle

Main Point: God gives us good gifts and abilities to share with others, live for Him, and share the good news of Jesus.

Challenge: If you're a follower of Jesus, how are you working with others to live for Him and share the good news of salvation in Jesus?

If you have kids who love to read aloud, have them look up the passages and read them.

Day 2 Small Group Lesson

Title: Jesus is Greater. Look to Him.

Bible Passage: Luke 19:1-10

Main Idea: When we turn our eyes away from ourselves and look to Jesus, we find salvation and a new life with God.

Icebreaker: I Spy (About 10 minutes)

Supplies: Chair or other furniture that a kid can stand on.

Say: If you were trying to see something but you were either too short or too far away to see it, what would you do? (Climb onto something or someone to get taller, get some binoculars, move closer, etc.)

If you want to see a parade, but the crowd is taller than you, you might ask your mom or dad if you can get on their shoulders. If there's something cool in the distance, you might move closer to it or use some binoculars to get a good look at it. There are things you can do to help you see better so you don't miss out.

To help us think about that, we're going to play I Spy with a twist.

(Have everyone sit down. Ask one kid to stand on the chair or furniture. He or she will say "I spy with my little eye something....(green or starts with the letter..., etc.) The rest of the group must stay seated while they look around and guess what has been seen. Once the item is guessed, ask another kid to climb up and "spy" something. Take turns as time allows.)

Ask: Would it have been easier to guess if you could've stood up to see better?

Today, we're going to learn about a guy you've probably heard about before. His name is Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who was short and rich. One day, he heard about someone coming through town that he just had to lay his eyes on.

Jesus Looks Up: (About 20-25 minutes)

Have everyone turn in their Bibles to Luke chapter 19. Read Luke 19:1-5.

Ask: In what city is Jesus when He meets Zacchaeus? (Jericho)

Jericho is the last big city on the road to Jerusalem. At this point in Jesus's life, He is on His way to Jerusalem, where He'll spend His last week on earth before He's arrested and killed. Jesus is pretty famous in this area because of all the teaching and healing He's been doing. So, it's no shock that there's a large crowd gathered along the road to see Him.

Ask: Who is Zacchaeus? (A Jewish, rich, chief tax collector working for Rome)

Luke says that Zacchaeus is a rich, chief tax collector, because he wants to make sure the hearer of this true story understands just how crooked and deceitful Zacchaeus is. The Jews hated tax collectors because they were fellow Jews who worked for their enemy. Zacchaeus probably rose to the rank of chief by taking a lot more money from the people than Rome required. Yet, Zacchaeus does whatever he can to see Jesus.

Ask: What does Zacchaeus do to see Jesus? (He runs ahead of the crowd and climbs a tree)

Zacchaeus has put himself where he can physically see Jesus. A grown man in expensive clothes hugging a tree branch to get a glimpse of this Teacher who has been doing miracles, preaching about God's kingdom, and hanging out with sinners.

Ask: What does Jesus say to Zacchaeus? (Come down because I'm staying at your house today)

Zacchaeus had never met Jesus, yet Jesus knew his name. Jesus knows your name, too. Let's see Zacchaeus' response.

(Read verse 6)

Zacchaeus quickly descends the tree and joyfully welcomes Jesus. He probably hadn't had any good company in years. Now, the great teacher that everyone's talking about is coming to his house. Let's finish the story.

(Read verses 7-10)

Zacchaeus had a reputation for being a very sinful man who disobeyed God's Law. He had missed the mark by a long shot. But because he took his eyes off himself and his money, looked to Jesus, repented (turned away) from his sin, and committed himself to God, he experienced salvation from his sin and adoption into God's family.

God saved Zacchaeus after Zacchaeus put himself in a position to see the Lord. He wanted to see Jesus, so he took action and did whatever it took to get a glimpse. After meeting Jesus, he knew that Jesus was greater than the rich life he had built. Zacchaeus knew that he needed Jesus because he could not change his life himself.

Today at Merge, you have the opportunity to put yourself in a position to look to Jesus and commit to live for Him. Like Zacchaeus, you have missed the mark of perfection required to have a right relationship with God. But through Jesus, you can hit the target and be reconciled to God (have a fixed and right relationship with Him).

Through Jesus's perfect life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead, the sin disease is cured, and all those who trust in Jesus are given new life in Him. Jesus completely changed Zacchaeus' life that day in Jericho, and He wants to use your life for His glory, too.

To help us remember the true story of Zacchaeus and Jesus, we're going to play Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Tree.

Activity: Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Tree

Have two kids come to the front. Explain that you're going to call out a body part, and they'll put their hands on whatever you call out. When they hear "tree," they will try to be the first to hold a tree pose. The first to form "tree" will get to answer a Bible story question.

Call out "head," "shoulders," or "knees" in a random order faster and faster before calling out "tree." The two kids should quickly respond to each call out by putting their hands on that part. Watch to see who forms "tree" the fastest.

Bible Story Questions:

1. Where was Jesus traveling when He met Zacchaeus? (Jericho)
2. What was Zacchaeus's occupation? (Chief tax collector)
3. Why was Zacchaeus considered a sinner by many people? (Because he was a tax collector and took more money than he should have)
4. Why couldn't Zacchaeus see Jesus when He passed through the crowd? (Because he was short)
5. What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus? (He climbed a sycamore tree and put himself in a position to see Jesus)
6. What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus when He reached the tree? ("Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.")
7. How did Zacchaeus react to Jesus's invitation? (He welcomed Him gladly)
8. How did the crowd react when Jesus went to Zacchaeus's house? (They muttered and said Jesus had gone to be the guest of a sinner)
9. What did Zacchaeus promise to do in response to Jesus's visit? (Give half of his possessions to the poor and repay anyone he cheated four times the amount)
10. What did Jesus say had come to Zacchaeus's house that day? (Salvation)

Challenge: Think About It

1. Are you in a good position to see Jesus? Or is there someone or something distracting you? Is there something in your life that you need to move to see Jesus better?

2. If you've committed to live for Jesus, how is your life different from those who do not follow Jesus?
3. If you have never talked to someone about being forgiven of your sin and following Jesus with your life, what's holding you back?

Close in Prayer:

Thank God for salvation through His Son, Jesus, for the ability to live for Him and His glory, and for the opportunity we have at Merge to learn about and respond to the good news of Jesus. Ask God to help us understand and respond to all that we are learning. Praise Him for His awesomeness as our Creator and Savior.

****Note About Salvation:**

Tonight there will be an opportunity for children who have never surrendered their life to Christ to do so at the end of service. We will instruct them to find an adult from their church who will take them outside and talk about what the next steps for them will be. During these conversations, it's important to remember that there is no magical prayer of salvation. Salvation is an act of grace. Kids who appear ready should be encouraged to talk to God themselves to tell Him that they are sorry for their sins and that they trust in Jesus as the King of their lives. If you do not feel prepared to lead that conversation, please find a Merge staff member and we would love to give you some ideas on how to best lead a child through that conversation. You can also ask your Children's Pastor for help during that time. Start praying now for the decision children in your small group for this exciting moment.

Day 3 Small Group Lesson

Title: Part of the Team

Bible Passage: Acts 16:11-15

Main Idea: God gives us good gifts and abilities to be used with others to live for Him and share the good news of Jesus.

Icebreaker: Listening (About 15 minutes)

Supplies: Sounds on a device such as birds chirping, ocean waves, engine, etc. Include alarm or warning sounds.

Ask: Why is listening important?

Say: I have some sounds that I'll play one at a time. As soon as you recognize the sound, shout out what it is.

(Play several animal or nature sounds one at a time. Then, play an alarm or warning sound.)

Ask: What did the alarm or warning sounds make you think of?

Why should we pay extra attention to warning sounds? What other things or people should we pay close attention to? What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Today, we're going to learn about someone from the Bible who listened eagerly to what Paul said about Jesus, believed in Jesus, and immediately joined the Christ-followers in the mission of Jesus.

Part of the Team: Lydia's Conversion (About 20 minutes)

Yesterday, we talked about being in a position to see Jesus. Today, we're focusing on teaming up with other followers of Jesus to live on mission. God has given us talents, abilities, resources, and other Christ-followers to help us and others follow

Him. We see this in Lydia's response to the good news of Jesus. You may have never heard about Lydia. She's not mentioned very much in the Bible, but her story shows us what it means to use the gifts and resources you've been blessed with in partnership with other believers.

(Read or have someone read Acts 16:11-15)

Paul and his friends were traveling to tell people about Jesus. They went to a city called Philippi. On the Sabbath (a special day of rest and worship), they went outside the city to a river to pray because there was no synagogue (a Jewish place of worship and prayer). There, they met some women, including a woman named Lydia, a wealthy businesswoman who sold purple cloth, which was very expensive and special at that time. Lydia was not Jewish (one of God's chosen people), but she was seeking God. She had lots of success and money, but she was searching for something more.

Lydia eagerly listened to Paul when he talked about Jesus. The Bible says that God worked in her heart, and she believed in the good news of salvation. Then Lydia and everyone in her house believed and were baptized.

But this true story doesn't stop there. Lydia invited Paul and his friends to stay at her house. She wanted to help and to serve them. Lydia likely had a big house with many servants and a full pantry of food. God had surely blessed her, and she now knew why: to provide what she could to the mission of Jesus. Lydia immediately realized that she was now part of a spiritual community of people who help one another as they live for and serve the Lord. She understood her role in the family of God.

Lydia's house is probably the first location of the Philippian church. Later, Paul would write a letter to this church that we call the Book of Philippians.

Paul had many ministry partners, some like Lydia in various cities who hosted churches, and others who traveled with him as he went from city to city sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Just like climbers do not usually climb alone, we don't live for Jesus alone. Climbers listen to each other and use their perspectives, angles, and gear as they're climbing to make sure the whole group makes it to the top. As we follow Jesus, we use our God-given skills, resources, relationship with God, and each other to help us and others know Jesus and grow as His followers.

God led Paul to the river in Philippi that day. He had already been working in Lydia's heart for her to seek Him, believe the good news of Jesus, and give her life to His mission. She looked for the Lord, heard the gospel, responded with belief, and teamed up with fellow Christ-followers.

Think About It:

What is your response to the good news of Jesus that you've heard this week? Who can you team up with who'll help you follow Jesus?

Discuss It:

How do we know that Lydia listened to Paul rather than just hearing what he said?

What did Lydia do after she believed in Jesus?

How was God at work in this true story? (He led Paul to the place, He prepared Lydia's heart and caused her to understand the good news of Jesus)

How can you listen to God today?

Who are some people that you can partner with who'll help you follow Jesus?

What can you do in your home, school, or church to help others follow Jesus?

Activity: Part of the Puzzle

Supplies: 9-12 piece puzzle (can be blank)

Pass out one puzzle piece to each kid and leader.

Ask: What are some games, activities, or jobs that require two or more people?
Why can't those things be done by just one person?

Say: When Jesus saves a person, He gives them the Holy Spirit, who helps them understand the Bible, gives them spiritual gifts, and unites them to other believers. If you are saved by and following Jesus, you are a part of God's family who works as a team to care for one another and share the good news of Jesus with the world.

You each have a puzzle piece. On its own, your piece isn't doing very much. It's still a puzzle piece, but it's obvious that it's supposed to be connected to other pieces.

To put the puzzle together, you'll need to contribute the piece you've been given into the center to combine with others' pieces. Let's work to put the puzzle together.

(Have them work together to complete the puzzle)

Just like you each had to contribute the piece you've been given to form the puzzle, we contribute the gifts, skills, and resources we have with other believers' gifts and resources to work together in living for Jesus and sharing Him with others. God's Word is clear that Christians are more effective when we're working together.

But it starts with believing in and following Jesus. Then, the power of the Holy Spirit will help you love God and love others.

Challenge: Think About It

If you're a follower of Jesus, how are you using what God has blessed you with to help yourself and others know and follow Jesus?

How are you serving your church?

Close in Prayer:

Thank God for the good things He's blessed you with. Ask Him to help you eagerly listen to Him and use the good gifts to serve Him. Ask Him for people in your life who'll help you follow Jesus. And ask Him to make you into a helper for others as they follow Jesus.