** BIBLE 101**

Unit 4: Fisher of Men – The Making of Disciples

*Zacchaeus – The Seeker*

**A Note to the Teacher:** Even students who have no idea who Zacchaeus is as a Biblical character may have heard the song about the wee little man climbing up a sycamore tree. While not traditionally considered a disciple, the story of Zacchaeus teaches us the importance of seeking Jesus in our lives, and the dramatic way in which seeking him changes us.

This lesson uses a simple science experiment featuring paperclips and magnet wands to show what happens when we seek Jesus. Students may have questions about the word “seek” itself. At the elementary level, explaining that seeking Jesus simply means looking for how Jesus would help or lead or teach us in a particular moment, by praying or reading scripture or talking to others, is sufficient.

**Gathering**

As students enter the space, gather them in a seated circle. **Ask, “Have you ever been to a parade? Maybe at an amusement park, or after the Red Sox win, or even the Fourth of July parade here in town? What is it like when the parade gets close and everyone is scrambling to see the floats and people?”** Give some time for students to answer.

**Say, “Today’s story takes us a to a parade nearly 2,000 years ago. Jesus is traveling through a city named Jericho. Now Jesus would not have been alone. Remember that he had asked 12 men to travel and work with him – those are the 12 disciples that the Bible tells us about. They would also have had a few animals to carry supplies, and likely some others who walked along with them asking questions or hoping to meet Jesus. So as Jesus enters the city of Jericho, it looks like a parade is coming, and Immanuel – God with us – is the star.**

**Can you imagine what it was like in Jericho as people heard that Jesus was in a parade outside? Everyone would have rushed out of their homes and stores to see! The streets would have been filled with people hoping to get a glimpse of Jesus.”**

Once you have set the scene, read the story of Zaccheus found in Luke.

For grades 2-5, have students turn to Gospel of Luke, chapter 19 in their Bibles. For prek-grade 1, open the teacher’s Bible to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 19. You may choose to read directly from the Bible or to paraphrase.

*Read Luke 19:1-10.*

**Say, “Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. He *really* wanted to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was an important government official, but in that moment he did not care what people thought of him. He climbed a tree so that he could see over the crowd. As soon as Jesus spotted him in the tree, he stopped, and told Zacchaeus that he would visit him at his house that very day. Zacchaeus was thrilled. He went home to prepare.

But others were upset. Tax collectors were not respected people; after all, they took money from those in need and gave it to the government. The Jews thought it was shameful for Jesus to spend time with a sinner. But Zacchaeus repented. He not only vowed to give away half his wealth, but to repay anyone he had cheated. Jesus said this was why he had come, to seek out and save the sinner.”**

Spend a few moments discussing the story, and the lesson that it teaches us today:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose Zacchaeus out of the crowd to visit?
2. What happened to Zacchaeus when Jesus visited him?
3. What would you do if Jesus came to visit you?

To help illustrate the story, hang a paper tree on the classroom wall. Explain that the streets were packed with people, all crowded together, pushing and shoving, trying to get a glimpse of Jesus. **Say, “Zacchaues was short – he knew that there was no way he was going to be able to see, but he *had* to see Jesus as he walked by. So rather than stand around feeling sorry for himself, or joining the crowd pushing and shoving, he climbed a tree.”** Hang a paper Zacchaeus in the tree on the wall. **Say, “Zacchaeus sought Jesus, and Jesus recognized his efforts.”**

**Say, “That is the lesson that Zacchaeus teaches us about disciples. Disciples *seek* Jesus, even when it isn’t easy. A good disciple looks for Jesus in the good times and the hard times of their lives. And, when they do, Jesus shows up in big and unexpected ways!”**

**Magnetic Seekers**

What better way to explain how Jesus pulls closer those that seek him than with magnets!

**Say, “When Zacchaeus climbed the tree, he wanted a chance to look at Jesus. He never expected that Jesus would speak to him, let alone come to his house! That is how it is when we seek Jesus. When we look for Jesus in our lives – Jesus’ guidance in making a decision, or Jesus to comfort us when we are scared, or Jesus’ wisdom about how to live in the world – Jesus not only gives us what we are looking for, but pulls us even closer to him. The more we seek Jesus, the closer we get to him.”**

Explain that this morning’s project will use magnets to help us understand what our seeking and Jesus’ pulling us closer looks like.

Give each child a paper clip and 4 squares of paper. On each square, they will write or draw a scenario in which they might seek Jesus.

**Say, “On each square, write or draw a time in your life when you might seek Jesus. For instance, you might write ‘When I am scared or worried,’ or ‘When I meet a homeless person on the street.’”** Help students complete their four squares of paper. You may want to continue to discuss scenarios as a class while students work for inspiration.

As students finish with their squares, help them to use them to wrap the paper clip in four separate layers. **Say, “Now, we are going to wrap our paper clips in our papers. We want to make sure we wrap them four separate times so that we have a layer for each of our scenarios.”**

When everyone has finished wrapping their paper clips, give each student a large magnet wand. **Say, “Now it is time for a little science experiment! Our magnet wands represent Jesus. We are the paperclips, and each of the papers we just made represents a time when we have to do the hard work, like Zacchaeus, of seeking Jesus.”**

Have students wave their wands over their wrapped paperclips, about 6 inches above them. Notice that the magnet wand does not pick up the paper clip.

**Say, “Now, let’s imagine that as we go through our lives, our first scenario happens, and we seek Jesus. We pray or talk to someone about our faith or read the Bible. Go ahead and unwrap one layer of paper to show that you are seeking Jesus.”** After removing a layer of paper, have students wave their wands over their paperclips again. What happens this time?

Continue unwrapping and waving the magnet wand over paperclips until there are no papers left and the magnet wand easily picks up the clip.

**Say, “As we kept peeling layers of paper off of the paperclip, the magnet kept drawing the paperclip closer and closer faster and faster. That is exactly what happens when we seek Jesus. The more we seek Jesus in our lives, the closer and tighter Jesus pulls us to him. Just like Zacchaeus, when we seek Jesus, Jesus pulls us closer and changes our lives more than we could imagine!”**

**Closing**

Have students help clean up any scraps of paper and return their paperclips and magnets to the lesson tray.

If time allows, teach them the song “Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man.” A video of the song can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkd-QFD7vMA

Corrie arrives to teach music at 11:20am. At that time, students gather in a seated circle near the classroom couch. If time allows, have students help cleanup before heading to choir practice.