

The Cheater Who Received a New Heart!

1. Have you ever felt cheated and mistreated by someone? They may have said or done things that were very hurtful to you and maybe you have not been able to forget what they have done. Maybe you have also hurt others. Do you think a cheater can receive a new heart?

2. A man named Zacchaeus had a reputation for always hurting people by cheating them. One day he had a change of heart. His lifestyle changed and his life was different after that! He lived 2000 years ago, but his story is still being told around the world. Here's what happened.

3. Zacchaeus lived in Jericho, a small Jewish town. "... He was one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business, and he had become very rich." NLB* He was always cheating people by making them pay high taxes. Part of the money, he gave to the Roman Government for whom he worked, but part he kept for himself. That is how Zacchaeus became wealthy.

4. No one liked Zacchaeus. His neighbors looked on him as a traitor. He was a Jew, but was working for the Roman Government. The Romans were ruling over the land of Israel and making life difficult for the Jews. Zacchaeus was not a nice person to be with and so he did not have many friends. He was lonely and did not have peace in his heart.

5. One day many people from the surrounding area, gathered together in the town where he lived. The large crowd was following a man named Jesus. They wanted to listen to His teachings and see what miracle He would do next. Zacchaeus, the tax collector, "... tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree beside the road, so he could watch from there." NLB*



5. "When Jesus came by, He looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. 'Zacchaeus' He said, 'Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in *your* home today!' "NLB* Zacchaeus was shocked! "How did Jesus know my name?" he asked himself. He could hardly believe what he had heard. "Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy." NLB*

6. But the people around who heard what Jesus said were displeased and grumbled. They could hardly believe that Jesus chose to go to this sinful man's house, of all places. They were upset that the great Teacher who had come to their town was going to spend time with this notorious sinner, of all people.

7. As the tax collector and Jesus talked, Zacchaeus sensed a change in his heart. He opened his mouth and told Jesus that he would give half of his possessions to the poor. He added, "I will pay back the money I have taken from those I have cheated by taking too much tax money." When Jesus heard what Zacchaeus said, He said, "Salvation - a change of heart has taken place in this house today." After that, Zacchaeus was a different man. With God's help, he stopped cheating his neighbors.

Luke 19:1-9

*Quotation of Luke 19:2-6 was taken from The Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.

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Listening Questions: (Teacher: Read the story aloud before giving a copy to the students.)

- What was the short man's occupation? Who did he work for?
- Who came to visit the town where Zacchaeus lived?
- What happened to Zacchaeus that day?

Comprehension Questions:

A. Describe Zacchaeus. Tell about him in the following ways:

- Physically:
- Socially:
- Financially:
- His Occupation:
- His Reputation:



B. Why did the large crowd follow Jesus?

C. What did Zacchaeus want to do the day Jesus came to his town?
What problem did he have that made it difficult for him to do that?
What did he do to solve his problem?



D. What happened when Jesus came to where Zacchaeus was sitting?
What did he say to Zacchaeus? How did that make Zacchaeus feel?
What happened to Zacchaeus when Jesus talked with him at his house?
What does this tell us about Jesus -- what kind of a person is He?

E. When the people saw what Jesus did and heard what He said to Zacchaeus,
what did they do?
How did they feel?
What did they say to each other?

F. What happened inside the heart of Zacchaeus the day Jesus came to his house?
What did he decide to do?

Something to Think About and English Conversation Practice: Discussion Questions

- Zacchaeus had cheated and hurt many people. Describe how they must have felt towards him whenever they saw him walking down the street of their small town.
- How do you think he felt when people did not like him?
- Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?
- How do you think Jesus knew the name of the man he saw sitting in the tree?
- What do you think caused Zacchaeus to pay back the money he had taken from people?