

## 2 It Is Good to Be a Friend of Jesus

### Scripture

Luke 19:1-10; John 1:12; Romans 4:7-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:1

### Memory Verse

“Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV).

### Bible Truth

Friends of Jesus have a new and changed life.

### Important Words

**Christian**--A person who has received Jesus as Savior and Friend.

**Forgive**--To treat someone who has done wrong as though they did not do wrong.

**Pardon**--To free a person who has done wrong from the punishment he or she should have.

**Savior**--Jesus, God’s Son. He died so all people can be forgiven and live as God’s children.

### Teacher Bible Study

This lesson tells how God changes us. He does three things for us when we ask Jesus to be our Savior.

1. **God takes away our sins.** Sin is disobeying God. It is knowing what God wants but choosing not to do it. Telling lies is sin because God says to tell the truth. Killing people is sin because God says, “Do not kill.”

All people have sinned. God would be right to punish us for our sins. Instead, God forgives our sins when we ask Jesus to be our Savior. Romans 4:7-8 talks about this.

“Happy are they whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned. Happy is the person whom the Lord does not consider guilty” (ICB).

When God forgives our sins, He does not think about them any more. He treats us like we had never done anything wrong. We do not have to feel badly about those sins any more.

**2. God helps us love and obey Him.** Before we become Christians, we cannot love and obey God. After we become Christians, we can. The Bible story tells how God changed Zacchaeus in this way.

Before Zacchaeus became a friend of Jesus, he took money from other people. When Zacchaeus became a friend of Jesus, he gave the money back. He said, “I will give back even more than I took.” It was God who changed Zacchaeus this way.

**3. God makes us part of His family.** God is our Father in Heaven. Jesus is our brother. All people who love Jesus are our Christian brothers and sisters. John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1 talk about being God’s children.

“Some people did accept him. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God” John 1:12 (NIRV).

“The Father has loved us so much! He loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children” 1 John 3:1 (ICB).

Romans 8:15 says we can call God “Father, dear Father” (ICB).

This is a special gift God gives to His children.

Some children do not have any Christians in their birth families. This is hard. But the Bible has good news for these children. Christian children belong to God's big family. They can receive love and help from this new family.

Being a friend of Jesus is the best thing in the world. This is the truth you want your class to learn today. Tell your class how glad you are Jesus is your Friend. Tell them how He changed your life. Pray for every boy and girl. Ask God to change the lives of these dear children.

**Teacher Help.** Don't teach in a hurry. You may take more than one class time to teach the lesson.

## Begin the Lesson

Choose the activities you need to begin the lesson. Use as many as you need. You do not have to use them all.

## Talk About Friends

Read or say to the children, **I will read four sentences. Every sentence has one word that is the same. I am not going to say that word. I will clap my hands instead. Listen carefully to all the sentences. See if you can tell what the missing word is.**

- It is fun to play with friends.
- You can tell things to friends you do not tell other people.
- Friends often do nice things for each other.
- It is good to have friends who love you.

Praise the children if they guess the word. Let each child say the name of a friend. Say,  
**Today we will learn about our best Friend, Jesus. We will learn why having Jesus for a Friend is so good.**

**Teacher Help.** If you have many young children in your class, guessing the word might be too hard for them. Say the word “friends” when you say the sentences. Then let children tell you the word “friends” is in every sentence.

## **Good Friends**

Have the children stand in a circle and hold hands. Stand in the circle with the children. Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle.

Lead the children to walk in a circle and sing a fun song. A song about friends would be good. Then stop singing. The child in the middle of the circle must say something about good friends. (Possible answers: “Good friends play with you.” “Good friends share their food.” “Good friends love you.”)

Have the child trade places with a child in the big circle. Play the game again. Play until every child has a turn in the center of the circle.

At the end of the game, say, **Having friends is good. Friends help each other. They show love to each other. Today we will learn about our best Friend, Jesus. We will find out why Jesus is such a good Friend.**

**Teacher Help.** If your class is large, choose 8-10 children to play the game. Other children may watch. Or, if you have adult helpers, divide the children into as many groups as you have helpers. Let all the groups play at the same time. If children do not want to hold hands, do not insist that they do.

## Draw Pictures

YOU NEED paper and pencils or crayons. Ask each child to draw a picture of a good friend.

Let the children show their pictures. Ask each child, **How does \_\_\_\_\_ show you that he or she is a friend?** Let each child answer. When they are done, say, **All of us like having a good friend. Jesus is our best Friend. Today we will learn how Jesus, our Friend, helps us.**

**Teacher Help.** You may not have paper and pencils to do this. Let the children talk about their friends.

## The Bible Lesson

Choose the activities you need to teach the Bible lesson. You do not have to use them all. But be sure to tell the Bible story.

## Remember Lesson 1

YOU NEED a piece of paper or a stick. If you have paper, put it on the floor or the ground. Or, use a stick to draw a square on the ground.

Have the children make a circle. Show them how to march in a circle that goes across the paper (square). Say, **When I clap, you march across the paper (square). When I stop clapping, stop marching. The one standing on the paper (square) will answer a question.**

Use these questions to help children remember Lesson 1.

- **Who were the very first people?** (Adam and Eve)
- **Did Adam and Eve obey God? Yes or No?** (No)
- **Finish the sentence. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they**
  - a. laughed**
  - b. sinned**
  - c. loved God**
 (b. sinned)
- **What is sin?** (Disobeying God. Knowing what God wants, but choosing not to do it)
- **Who has sinned?** (All people)
- **Can we be God's children when we have sin in our lives?** (No)
- **Who did God send to earth to take away our sins?** (His Son, Jesus)
- **How did Jesus show God's love while He lived on earth?** (Fed people. Healed people. Taught people. Loved people.)
- **What did Jesus do so we could have our sins forgiven?** (He died on the Cross.)
- **Did Jesus stay dead?** (No. God made him alive again.)
- **Where is Jesus now?** (In heaven)
- **What must we do to become God's children and Jesus' friends?** (Tell God we are sorry for our sins. Ask Jesus to be our Savior.)

## **The Bible Story**

YOU NEED picture(s) of Jesus and Zacchaeus, if you have them.

Say, **Being friends with Jesus is the best thing in the world. When we are friends of Jesus, our lives change. We become different from the way we were before. Our Bible story today tells how Jesus changed a man named Zacchaeus.**

**You can help me tell this story. Every time I hold up my hand, say the word “Jesus.” Let’s try this now.** Hold up your hand. Help children say **Jesus** all together.

The word Jesus has a line under it every time in the story. This shows you when to hold up your hand.

### **Jesus Changed Zacchaeus**

Zacchaeus lived a long, long time ago. He lived when Jesus was on earth.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He was the most important tax collector in his town. Other tax collectors worked for Zacchaeus.

People did not like Zacchaeus because he did something bad. People did not know how much their taxes should be. So Zacchaeus asked for too much tax money. He kept too much money for himself. Zacchaeus was rich because he took too much money from the people.

One day, Jesus came to Jericho. This was the town where Zacchaeus lived. Zacchaeus wanted to see and hear Jesus. But Zacchaeus was short. He could not see Jesus. He could only see other people.

Suddenly, Zacchaeus saw a big tree. “I could see Jesus from the tree,” he thought. He climbed up into the tree. Now he could see Jesus.

Jesus came near the tree. Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus in the tree. Jesus loved Zacchaeus. Jesus wanted to help Zacchaeus become a good person.

Jesus called to Zacchaeus. “Zacchaeus, come down right away. I am going to your house today,” Jesus said.

Gladly Zacchaeus came down from the tree. “I am so happy you want to come to my house,” he said to Jesus.

The other people did not like this. They were angry. “Jesus is going to the home of a sinner,” they said. They forgot they were sinners, too. All people have disobeyed God and done wrong.

That day Jesus and Zacchaeus became friends. Jesus told Zacchaeus how much God loved him. Zacchaeus did not want to do wrong any more. Right away he started doing what was right.

Zacchaeus said, “I will give back the money I should not have taken from people. I will give back more than I took. I will also give half of my money to help poor people.”

Jesus was very happy. Zacchaeus was changed. From now on, he would love and obey God.

“Today God has forgiven you,” Jesus said to Zacchaeus. “That’s why I came to earth. I came to help people become children of God and My friends.”

Luke 19:1-10

## **“I Remember”**

YOU NEED a ball or a piece of cloth and some string. If you do not have a ball, do this. Roll a piece of cloth into a round ball. Tie it together with string.

Have the children stand in a line that faces you. Throw the ball to one child. Say, **What do you remember from the story of Zacchaeus?** The child will answer by telling something he or she remembers. Then have the child throw the ball back to you.



Play this game until every child tells something about the Bible story. Tell children to try to say something different from what other children said.

Say, **God forgave Zacchaeus for doing wrong. He helped Zacchaeus to change. God does this for all people who ask Jesus to be their Savior. People who become friends of Jesus can love and obey God. Jesus is the best Friend we can have.**

## Color a Picture

YOU NEED the student sheet and crayons.

Give children time to color the picture of Zacchaeus and Jesus. While they color, talk about the story. Read the short story below the picture. Or, let the children tell you what they remember.

When the children finish coloring, ask these questions.

- What bad thing did Zacchaeus do before he became a friend of Jesus? (Took money from people)
- How did Jesus help Zacchaeus change? (Zacchaeus gave back the money he took. He wanted to help poor people.)
- Will Jesus help you change just as He helped Zacchaeus? (Yes.)

## Dirty or Clean?

YOU NEED a dirty glass or cup full of dirty water. You also need two pans of clean water and a cloth.

Show children the dirty glass full of dirty water. Ask, **Would you want to drink the water in this glass?** Let children answer. Most children will say “no.” Ask, **Why did you say**

**“no?”** (The glass and the water are dirty. The water would not taste good. It might make people sick.)

Say **People who have sin in their lives are like this glass of dirty water. Their lives are full of bad things. Can you think of some things that make people bad on the inside?**

Let the children answer. (Lie, steal, hurt others, say bad words)

Put the glass in clean water and wash it. Wipe it dry with a cloth. Fill it with clean water. Show the clean glass of water to the children. Ask, **Would you want to drink water from this glass?** Let children answer. Most children will say “yes.” Ask, **Why did you say “yes”?** (The glass and water are clean. The water is good for you.)

Say, **People who ask Jesus to be their Savior and Friend are like this glass of clean water. God forgives us for doing wrong. He takes away all our sins. He makes us clean inside. God also helps us stop doing wrong things. He helps do what is right so we can stay clean inside.**

## **One, Two, Three**

Say, **God does three good things for us when we become friends of Jesus. I will use my fingers to tell you about them.**

1. Hold up the finger next to your thumb. Say, **First, God forgives our sins. He takes them away. He does not think about them any more. He treats us like we had never done anything wrong. We don’t have to feel badly about those sins any more.**

2. Keep up the finger next to the thumb. Put up the middle finger. Say, **Next, God changes us inside, so we can love and obey Him. That is what He did for Zacchaeus. That is**

**what He does for us. Our memory verse says, “Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV).**

3. Keep the two fingers up. Put up the finger next to the little finger. **God also gives us a new family. In this new family are all the people who are friends of Jesus.** Name some Christians your children may know. Say **All these people belong to God’s family. Now they are your family, too. They love you. They want to help you live as a friend of Jesus.**

Do this to help children remember what you have said.

- Ask one child to stand by you. Tell this child to hold up the finger next to the thumb.

Lead the other children to tell that God forgives our sins.

- Have the child choose another child. Have both children hold up the finger by the thumb and the middle finger. Help the other children tell how God changes us.

- Have the second child choose a third child. All three children hold up three fingers. The other children tell that God gives us a new family.

Play this game many times. For more fun, let children choose which finger(s) to hold up. Children do not have to hold up their fingers in 1-2-3 order.

## **Welcome to the Family**

Use this game to help children understand God gives us a new Christian family.

- Choose three or four children to sing a song. “Jesus Loves Me” would be good. Or, choose another song your children know.
- When they finish, choose another child to say, “Can I sing with you?”
- The children will answer, “Do Jesus’ friends love Him?” The new child will say “Yes.”

- The group of children will say “Jesus’ friends are part of God’s family.” They invite the new child to join the group and sing the song again.

Do this game many times. Then say, **When we become friends of Jesus, God gives us a new Christian family. Our new family loves us and helps us to live the way God wants us to live.**

## More Good News for Friends of Jesus

YOU NEED the student sheet and pens or pencils.

The student sheet tells other good things God does for friends of Jesus. On the sheet are little pictures. Below each picture is a letter. Show these to the children.

Also, on the sheet there are sentences with empty lines. Below the empty lines are little pictures like the ones above. Help the children print the right letters above the pictures to make words. Then let children take turns reading the sentences.

Here are the sentences with the right answers.

1. God is always with you. God is with you when good things happen. He is also with you when bad things happen. He helps you.

2. You can talk to God any time. You can tell God anything you need to tell Him. God hears your prayers.

3. God helps you to obey Him. He even helps you want to obey Him.

4. God is always sad if you disobey Him. But He will forgive you if you ask Him.

5. God is making a special home for you in heaven. You will go to live with God when you die.

**Teacher Help.** Explain that heaven is where God and Jesus live. If you do not have the student sheet, tell these facts to the children.

## Memory Verse

Say, **Our memory verse helps us remember something very important. It tells us friends of Jesus have new and changed lives. Let's learn this verse.**

Say the first word of the memory verse. Have children repeat that word. Say the word again and add one or two more words. Have the children repeat these words. Keep doing this until you are saying the whole verse. Then ask children to say the verse alone. Or let them say the verse in pairs.

Say, **It is good to be a friend of Jesus. Friends of Jesus have a new and changed life.**

## End the Lesson

Choose the activities you need to end the lesson. Use as many as you need. You do not have to use them all.

### “I Am Glad”

Ask children to finish this sentence.

“I am glad Jesus is my best Friend because \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Pray Together

Close the lesson by praying together. You may pray this prayer. Or, pray one line at a time and have the children repeat your words.

Dear God,

Thank You for sending Jesus to be our best Friend.

Thank You for forgiving our sins.

Thank You for helping us change so we can love and obey You.

Thank You for the Christian family You give to us.

Thank You for being with us always.

Help us to love and obey You always.

Amen.

Be sure children take their student sheets when they leave class.

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