



Weekly Resources for Schools

PHASE: PRIMARY

HOW DO WE GET BACK ON TRACK?



KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

The story of Zacchaeus in the New Testament is a message for us all with regards to reconciliation. We all make mistakes, but it's what we do after that makes the biggest difference. We can get back on track and put it right if we choose to.

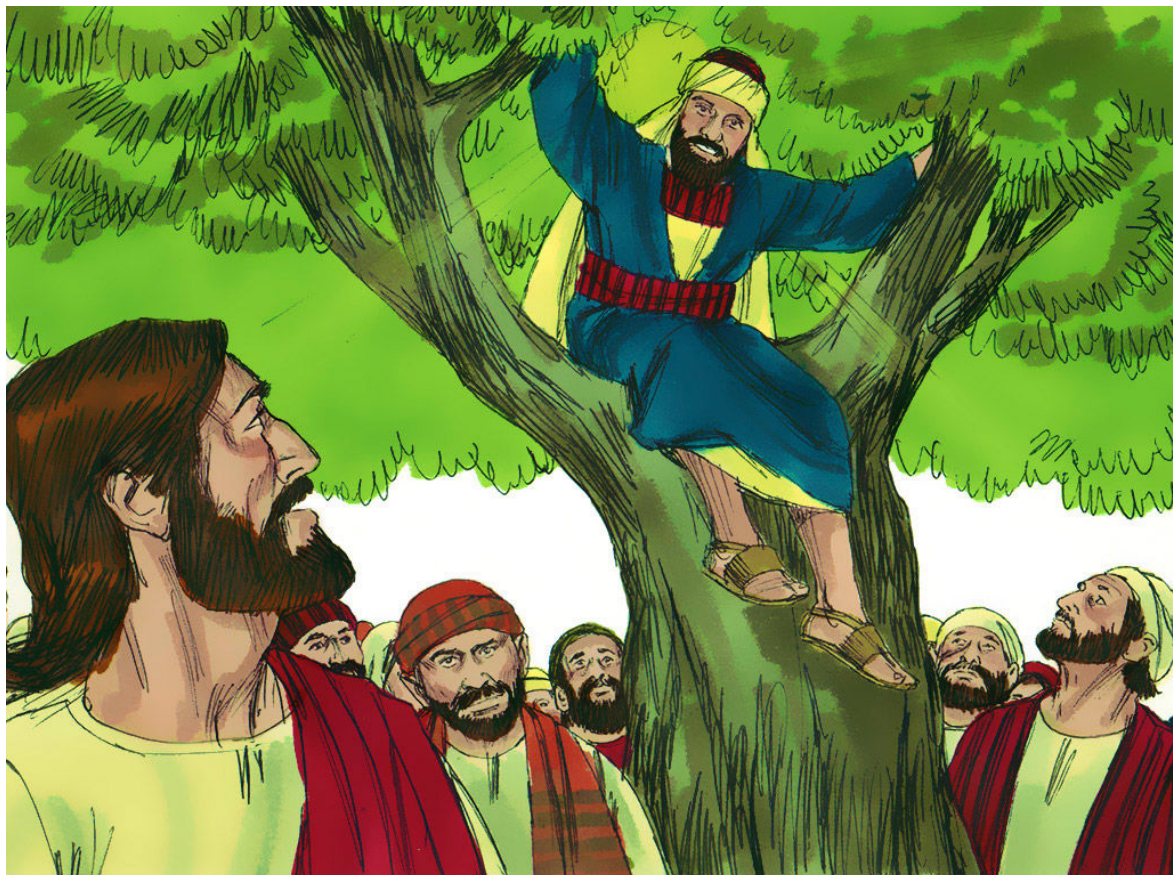
Even Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector who was deceiving people into overpaying, had good inside him, something that sought out Jesus when he arrived in his town – climbing up a tree to catch a glimpse! Inspired by Jesus' words, Zacchaeus sought to repair what he had damaged through his heavy taxation and to rebuild his relationships with the people he had hurt. Even though he had made a lot of mistakes he still wanted to put them right. How can we put things right when we make a mistake?

'Tomorrow is always another day to make things right' - Lauryn Hill

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

The Story of Zacchaeus – [Luke 19:1-10](#)

"If I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."



Gathering

Think about a time when you made a mistake. It's often painful to do isn't it? We all make mistakes. We hurt people when we didn't mean to. Sometimes we knowingly do something wrong because in that split second, we choose badly or forget what our true values are. Adults and children do this.

If you would like to, you might like to join in this gathering prayer. Christians believe that as we consider our mistakes, we do so within the safety and comfort of a loving God:

I come before God the Father who has made me in His image,

Jesus the Son who loves me without question,

And Holy Spirit who gives me the strength to make my wrongs, right.

Amen.

Engagement

Read the story of Zacchaeus in your Bible (Luke 19:1-10). There are some great photographs showing a retelling of the story here: <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-zacchaeus/> Perhaps you could read the story and then retell it using the photographs. A video retelling can be found [here](#).

Which of the photographs do you think shows the most significant moment in the story and why?

This is the story of a man who has done wrong things and treated people badly, even though they were his fellow citizens. Instead of helping the people of Jericho, he chose to oppress them alongside the Romans, taking more money than he should in taxes. He made this wrong choice over and over and over again. Because of this, Zacchaeus was not at all liked by his fellow Jews and they thought of him as a 'sinner'. When Jesus came to Jericho, Zacchaeus was interested to see what he looked like and to hear what he had to say. He climbed a sycamore tree because he was too small to glimpse Jesus over the crowd. What he lacked in height he had made up for with a large amount of bad deeds! But still, he wanted to see and he wanted to listen. He didn't dream that Jesus would stop and talk to him, but He did! In fact, He asked him to come down from the tree because he wanted to be a guest in the home of Zacchaeus.

How do you think the crowd felt at that point?

Jesus wanted to eat with a known sinner who had treated them all very badly! The crowd was shocked and Zacchaeus was shocked too. Sometimes Jesus really surprised people.

Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house and Zacchaeus was so moved by Jesus and his words that he **repented** (that's an important word meaning that he changed his mind and said sorry). He knew just being sorry was not enough. He needed to repair the damage. So, he told Jesus that he would give half of his possessions to the poor and if he had cheated anybody out of taxes he would pay them back four times the amount. He was not just making it right, he was making it better!

This story is very important for Christians. It not only tells us not to cheat or trick people or to do them harm, it also tells us what we should do if we do hurt someone and we want to repent (turn around and get back on track):

- **Change your mind and say sorry** (this is repentance)
- **Make it right** (return what was taken, repair what was broken, soothe what was injured)
- **Make it better** (if you can, do something that really communicates that you understand you did wrong and now you want to show the opposite and do good, generous things)

Jesus was pleased. He told Zacchaeus that salvation had come to his house. That meant he had chosen the right things and could follow Jesus with peace in his heart that he had repented and repaired his mistakes. Sometimes we have to 'climb a tree' and look at what we have been doing, even if we have been doing it a lot, and ask for help to find a way to make it right again.

Response

Have you ever sat and listened to Jesus' words? It could be someone reading them from the Bible, or singing them in a song, or some people even think that Jesus has things he wants to say to straight into our hearts.

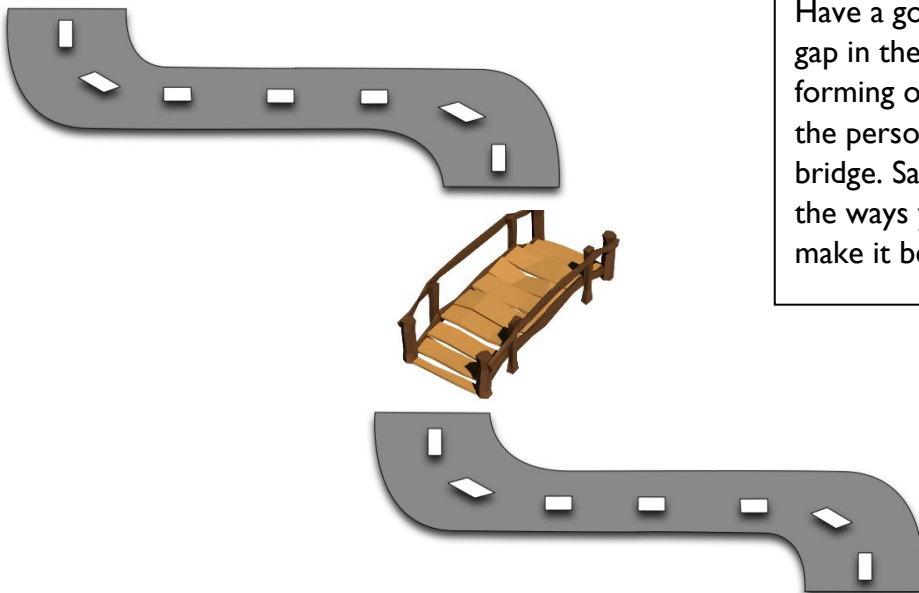
When Zacchaeus listened to Jesus' words something amazing happened. They made him want to change! He was on a long, ongoing path towards harm and bad treatment of others and his encounter with Jesus switched him onto a new path! Suddenly, he did not want to harm people anymore. In fact, he wanted to put it right!

This is the 'Reconciliation' statue in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral:



This statue represents two people coming back together after the Second World War. Some people say it reminds them of a bridge. It is a good visual example of repenting and repairing. The two figures are leaning on each other from a distance, showing they depend on each other. Without the other accepting the apology they would collapse. They have their hands holding each other's heads, showing they are ready to listen to each other, to hear the other's thoughts and feelings. This is what Zacchaeus did. He asked the people to forgive him. He wanted to repair his wrongs.

Repenting and repairing is like a bridge. When you take a wrong path and end up facing a big gap caused by your mistakes, you can build a bridge.



Have a go: Picture your mistake like a gap in the road. Now imagine a bridge forming over the gap. Picture you and the person you harmed making a bridge. Say you are sorry. Think about the ways you can make it right and make it better.

Do you need to get back on track?

Making a mistake doesn't mean we are bad people and it does not change how much God loves us. Jesus was going to Zacchaeus's house anyway, even before he had changed his mind! Did you know 'Zacchaeus' actually means 'pure or innocent'? Zacchaeus had been making choices that didn't match who he was. Jesus' words made him want to change.

In the Lord's Prayer it says:

'Forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us.'

It is a constant rhythm of forgiving and being forgiven that gets us back on track.

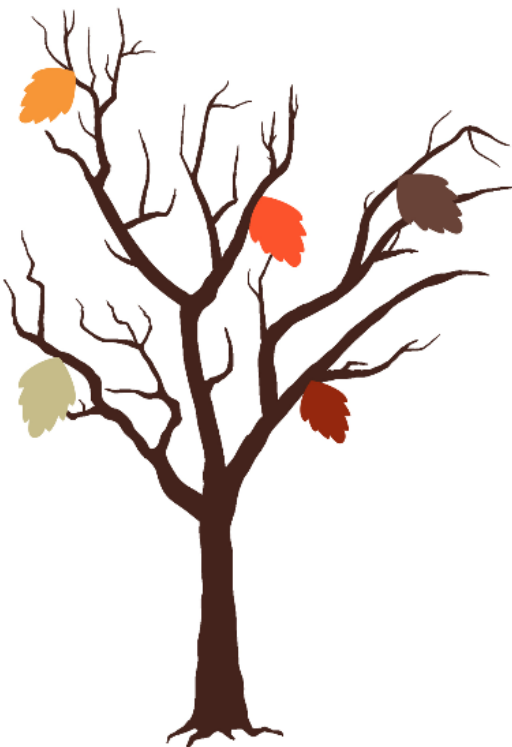
Now you have imagined your bridge forming over your mistake, why don't you go and do the things you need to do to make things right and make things better? You can get yourself back on track!

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Find a tree. Can you imagine what you could see from the top? What might you be able to see from up there that you can't see from the ground? [Don't climb the tree, which might not be safe. Use your imagination!]. When Zacchaeus had a problem, he climbed a tree so he could see further and clearer. Do you have a problem that needs some clearer thinking? Draw a tree, label your problem, imagine possible ways of fixing it and write these on the leaves.



Talking to grown-ups can really help us with our problems. They often have experience that can help us and wisdom that can lead us. Talk to an adult about how they build bridges when they make mistakes and hurt people. What tips do they have for you on making it right and making it better?

ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

St Ignatius' **EXAMEN** prayer was designed to help people 'get back on track'! It has 5 steps, so you might like to count them on your fingers.

1. GIVE THANKS for who you are; that you are wonderful and full of potential!
2. ASK FOR HELP to look back on where you might have gone wrong today.
3. REFLECT on your day and think about the things that brought you joy and peace 😊, and the things that didn't feel quite as good ☹.
4. SAY SORRY for the things you did today which hurt others or made them feel sad.
5. DECIDE how you will make it right and try and do better tomorrow.

To discover more about using the Ignatian Examen with children, listen to this [podcast](#).

Bible Paving Stones

Did you know the Bible is described as being like a lamp for our feet?

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

Psalm 119:105 *New Living Translation*

Reading the Bible can really help with finding the right path and building bridges when we make mistakes. Try reading some each day. Here are some verses to get you started:

Philippians 4:8

Galatians 1:10

John 15: 12

Colossians 3:23-24

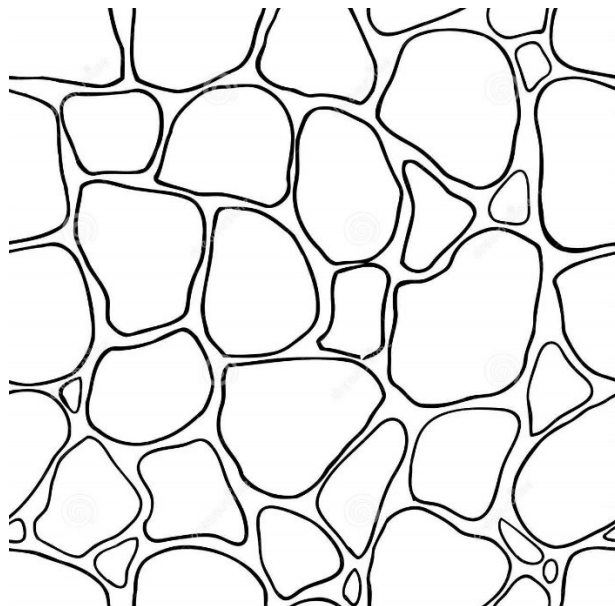
Matthew 6:6

Micah 6:8

1 Corinthians 13:4-7



You could write these down to help you remember them. Perhaps even write them on shapes like paving stones and build up your path to follow when things are tricky.



CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES

The story of Zacchaeus reminds us that we sometimes need to make a change so that we are back on track. It doesn't matter how far down the road we go. We can repent (change our minds) and repair (make it right, make it better).

Can we say sorry without making it right?

Yes, you can change your mind and choose another direction, but if you want to build healthy relationships with others and be known as someone of good character, you also need to make it right and try to make it better. That makes it much more likely you are going to travel onwards on your path surrounded by friends.

Why do we try to make it better if we have already made it right?

We can all imagine a better world, can't we? When we try to make it better we use our generosity and our kindness to inch just a little bit closer to that better world. Jesus called this the Kingdom of God.

Does Jesus change people's minds?

Christians believe that Jesus' actions and words are very inspiring for people. They believe that Jesus shows us how to live and he shows us that we are loved, which helps us to love ourselves and want to be the best version of ourselves. However, Christians also believe that we have 'free will', which means it is up to us if we want to change our minds or not. It is our choice. If we have made mistakes and lost our way, Christians think that turning to Jesus can help us to get back on track.



INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?