

Jesus Stories for Friends

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- ❖ **Jesus and the Children**
- ❖ **Jesus Teaches the People**
- ❖ **Jesus and the Man Who Could Not Walk**
- ❖ **Jesus Sees Zacchaeus**

These are stories about Jesus, written for Friends by a trained Godly Play® storyteller and trainer. They are not part of the Godly Play® story collection, nor published as Faith & Play™ stories, but are written – and meant to be told – using that same method and approach.

Jesus and the Children

Sources:

Mark 9:33-37, 42 and 10:13-16; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17
The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volumes 2 and 3 by Jerome Berryman

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Materials:

- Brown or tan underlay
- Free-standing people figures to represent both adults and children (10-15 of varying shapes, sizes and colors)
- Small basket or box that holds additional child-size figures (optional)



Watch where I go to get this story, so that you will always know where to find it. This is a story about Jesus and the little children.

Get story materials and return to your place in the circle. When the children are ready, get out the (brown or tan) underlay and spread it out.

There once was someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people followed him. You know his name: Jesus. As the people followed him, he would speak about a kingdom. Sometimes he called it the kingdom of heaven, and sometimes the kingdom of God.

Now, this kingdom was not like any kingdom the people had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom they had even heard of. It was a mystery to them. Jesus said, “This kingdom is not far away. It is right here, right now, closer than breath. It is all around you and it is inside you.” And he didn’t just talk about this kingdom; he showed people, again and again, what the kingdom is like.

Sometimes what Jesus showed the people was hard for them to understand. Even today, we are still trying to understand.

One time, Jesus was teaching the people and many people came. Parents kept bringing their children to him so that he might touch them and say a prayer. More and more children came, even little babies.

Place Jesus figure a little to your left of the center of underlay. Place parent/child figures on the underlay (right of your center) and move parent/child figures across the underlay toward Jesus. Gather the crowd to Jesus' right, with a few of the children in front of Jesus.

Sometimes Jesus put a hand on their shoulders and asked them about their day. Sometimes he picked them up and held them. Sometimes he gently put his hands on them and prayed with them.

Gently touch each of the several children in front of Jesus, one at a time.

When the disciples--the people who followed Jesus every day--saw all the children, they spoke very sternly to the parents. "Stop bringing all these children to Jesus! Don't bother him like this any more! Don't you know that he has more important things to do?"

Place a hand between Jesus and the crowd, like a barrier.

Jesus was sad and angry when he heard what the disciples said.

Remove your hand.

"No, do not stop the little children from coming," he said. "The kingdom of God belongs to them, and to other children like them. And if any grown-ups want to get into the kingdom, they have to become like little children, too."

The children gathered around Jesus. One by one, he picked them up in his arms and blessed them.

Move all of the child figures from the crowd toward Jesus until he is encircled by children. Gently cup one hand over each child in the sign of blessing. Take your time. (Or pick up each child figure, place it in the palm of one hand, and make the sign of blessing over it with the other hand, then return figure to the underlay. Proceed individually until each child has been picked up and blessed.)

[Optional: If the circle is settled, you might ask each child if they would like to place a figure in the story. Pass around a small basket or box with additional child-size figures, and allow children to place one in the story.]



I wonder what part of this story you like best.

I wonder what part is most important for you right now.

I wonder where you are in the story, or what part is about you.

I wonder if there is any part we could leave out and still have all we need.

I wonder what it might mean for the kingdom of God to belong to you.

(Or, depending on the age of the participants, I wonder what it might mean to become like a little child.)

I wonder what it feels like to be held and blessed by Jesus.

Jesus Teaches the People

Sources:

Matthew 5-7; also drawing from Luke 10:25-28; 12:32; 14:7-11; 17:20-21; and 18:9-14
The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volumes 2 and 3 by Jerome Berryman

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Materials:

- Brown or tan underlay
 - Green hill (felt or other cloth) to place on top of underlay
 - People figures (10-15 of varying shapes, sizes and colors)
 - Figures made from felt or wood representing concepts and images: a heart, 3-part heart from the Godly Play® “Ten Best Ways” story, heart representing simplicity from *Love’s Way* (Faith & Play story), dove, small mirror, a tree or flower, the Earth
- *Note: many of the pieces can be borrowed from other Godly Play® and Faith & Play stories; this becomes an unspoken message of the connectedness between all the stories.
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Watch where I go to get this story so that you will always know where to find it. This is a story about how to live in peace, beauty, and goodness.

Get story materials and return to your place in the circle. Begin when the children are ready.

There once was someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people followed him. You know his name: Jesus. As the people followed him, he would speak about a kingdom. Sometimes he called it the kingdom of heaven, and sometimes the kingdom of God.

Spread out brown/tan underlay, and green “hill” on top of it.

Place a figure to represent Jesus at the “top” of the hill overlay. As you continue with the next section of words, place more people figures on the hillside, all over it in pairs and small groups.

Now, this kingdom was not like any kingdom the people had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom they had even heard of. It was a mystery to them. Jesus said, “This kingdom is not far away. It is right here, right now, closer than breath. It is all around you and it is inside you.” And Jesus didn’t just talk about this kingdom; he showed people, again and again, what the kingdom is like. When he taught people, they listened because his words and his actions matched.

Sometimes what he taught the people was hard for them to understand. At times, the words opened to them; other times the words stayed closed. Even today we keep coming back to the words. We never know when or how they might open to us.

One time Jesus was teaching a large group of people. Listen. Listen to what he said.

God loves you more than you will ever know. God's love is deeper than any ocean and bigger than the night sky. God is like the best mother, or the best father, ever. *Place heart along bottom section of underlay.*

You don't have to have all the answers. You don't always have to be right. You don't have to be the best. Love yourself, love other people, and love God. This is the way to be full and happy. It is always enough. *Place heart in three parts from Godly Play® "Ten Best Ways" story along bottom section of underlay, next to other heart.*

Be gentle. Show kindness. Know what it means to be simple and generous and humble. There is great strength in these things. *Place heart from "Love's Way" representing simplicity (person holding heart) on underlay.*

Love your enemies. Be kind to people, even when they are not kind to you. *Pick up white dove and hold it gently in your hands.*

Pray for people who hate you or who are mean to you.

When you forget to act in love, God loves you and forgives you. When other people forget or refuse to love, God still loves them and forgives them. Forgive other people when they are not kind to you. *Place dove on underlay.*

Treat other people the way you want them to treat you. *Place a small mirror on underlay.*

Do what is beautiful. Do what makes for peace. Honor what is true. Goodness will grow. *Place flower or tree on underlay.*

The kingdom is all around you and it is inside you. Some day God's kingdom will be full and complete on earth. Pray for this. Want this more than anything. Work for it. Live and love for it. *Place Earth on the underlay.*

All of you are light for the world. Let your light shine. *Place flame on underlay.*

Pause.

I wonder what you like best about what Jesus taught.

I wonder what is most important to you about these words.

I wonder what is most difficult for you.

I wonder if there are any words we could take out and still have all we need.

I wonder how to live in the way of beauty, love, and goodness when someone is bullying.

I wonder what you can do today to make the peace and goodness grow.

I wonder what the world will be like when God's kingdom is full and all grown up on this earth.

Example of materials for **Jesus Teaches the People:**



Jesus and the Man Who Could Not Walk

Sources:

Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26; Matthew 9:1-8; John 9:1-3

Following Jesus, by Sonja M. Stewart, pp. 69-71

The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volumes 2 and 3 by Jerome Berryman

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Materials:

- Brown or tan underlay
- A small box, painted to look like stucco or stone, and open at the back (the side facing the storyteller), with stairs going up the left or right side to a flat roof. In the front are a door and a couple of windows that enable the children to see inside.
(see notes in story about roof of house)
- Potted plants for outside house and on roof (optional)
- People figures (10-15 of varying shapes, sizes and colors)
- Small mat for carrying figure, made of felt or heavy wool, with a small wooden rod on each long side so that it can easily be moved in your hand, and also rolled up later on

Watch where I go to get this story so that you will always know where to find it. This is a story about an amazing healing.

Get story materials and return to your place in the circle. When the children are ready, get out the underlay and spread it out.

There once was someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people followed him. You know his name: Jesus. As the people followed him, he would speak about a kingdom. Sometimes he called it the kingdom of heaven, and sometimes the kingdom of God.

Now, this kingdom was not like any kingdom the people had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom they had even heard of. It was a mystery to them. Jesus said, “This kingdom is not far away. It is right here, right now, closer than breath. It is all around you and it is inside you.” And Jesus didn’t just talk about this kingdom; he showed people, again and again, what the kingdom is like.

Sometimes what he showed the people was hard for them to understand. We are still trying to understand today.

One time Jesus was speaking to people in a house.

Place house on underlay. Take your time as you build the roof. The roof is flat and is made of sticks or slats. Place Jesus figure inside the house along with several other people figures.

The house filled with people. Where did they all come from? After a while, it was a crowd. People looked in the door. People looked in the windows. No one else could get inside.

One by one, place about 5 people figures in the house at the door and windows, then another 5-10 or so outside the door and at each of the windows.

There were rich people and poor people, big people and little people, young and old. Some of the people who came were sick. They hoped Jesus might heal them.

Indicate different figures as you describe them.

Now this happened long ago, and in those days, people thought that if you were sick it was because you had done something bad. If you could not see, or could not hear, or could not walk, people thought you

had done something *very* bad, or perhaps your parents had done something very bad. Jesus said no. This is not the way it is. This is not true. But some of the people thought these things.

As Jesus was talking to the people, a group of people came toward the house. Four of them were carrying a man on a mat. The man was paralyzed; he could not walk. All day, he lay on his mat. The only way he could go anywhere was if friends carried him. The friends carrying him this time knew that Jesus would know what to do.

*Take figure on mat out of story basket or tray and move it toward the house.
(The children can imagine the friends).*

When they got to the house, they could not get inside. There were too many people. What should they do? They went up to the roof . . . and started to take it apart! They worked very carefully.

*Begin removing slats and putting them on another part of the roof until you
have an opening large enough to accommodate the figure and mat.*

The friends made an opening in the roof. They lowered their friend on his mat down into the house until he was right in front of Jesus.

Lower the mat into the house.

Jesus looked up and saw the friends. He saw what they had done. When he did, he saw the hope and love and trust in their hearts. He then said to the paralyzed man, “Friend, you are right with God. You are right with people. All is well with you.”

Some of the people were confused. Many were surprised. Some got angry. They thought the man could not walk because he had done something wrong.

Then Jesus told the man to stand up, pick up his mat, and walk home. And that is what he did! He rolled up his mat and walked out of the house. The people in the house were amazed. They said, “We have seen very strange things today.” All the way home, the man who had not been able to walk gave thanks to God.

*Take man off of mat and stand him in the house. Roll up the mat and move
the figure with the mat out the back of the house to a far corner of the
underlay (children’s side), or across the underlay to the story basket or tray.*

I wonder what part of this story you like best.

I wonder what part is the most important for you this time.

I wonder where you are in the story, or what part is about you.

I wonder if there is any part we could leave out and still have all that we need.

I wonder how the paralyzed man felt when he was being lowered from the roof down into the house.

I wonder what the man and his friends will do next.

I wonder what it feels like to be right with God and with people—for all to be well.

(or, I wonder what the world would be like if everyone were always right with God and with other people.)

Example of materials for **Jesus and the Man Who Could Not Walk:**



Jesus Sees Zacchaeus

Sources:

Luke 19:1-10

The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volumes 2 and 3 by Jerome Berryman

*Note: In the part of the story where Zacchaeus announces restitution of any injustices, most English translations read that he **will give** to the poor the money he has wrongly taken. The verb used in the Greek text suggests present, active and continuous action, not future action only. In other words, one way to read it is that it is his custom to give half of his wealth to the poor. The two endings of this story reflect the two possible readings. When telling this story to young children, you might want to use only the first ending. When exploring the story with older children, or with children who are already familiar with the story, it will likely be beneficial to use both endings.*

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Materials:

- Brown or tan underlay
- Curved felt path in contrasting shade of brown or tan that reaches across the underlay
- People figures (10-15 of varying shapes, sizes and colors)
- “Tree” made with wooden block and greenery; needs to have flat place where Zacchaeus figure can be placed in the tree

Watch where I go to get this story so that you will always know where to find it. This is a story about what happened when Jesus saw Zacchaeus.

Get story materials and return to your place in the circle. When the children are ready, get out the (brown or tan) underlay and spread it out.

There once was someone who did such amazing things and said such wonderful things that people followed him. You know his name: Jesus. As the people followed him, he would speak about a kingdom. Sometimes he called it the kingdom of heaven, and sometimes the kingdom of God.

Now, this kingdom was not like any kingdom the people had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom they had even heard of. It was a mystery to them. Jesus said, “This kingdom is not far away. It is right here, right now, closer than breath. It is all around you and it is inside you.” And he didn’t just talk about this kingdom; he showed people, again and again, what the kingdom is like.

Sometimes what Jesus showed the people was hard for them to understand. Even today, we are still trying to understand.

One day Jesus was visiting a town called Jericho. Many people gathered around to see him and they followed him as he walked through the town.

Lay down brown/tan underlay and path.

Place Jesus figure and five or six other people figures around and behind him.

Place a tree beside the path ahead of Jesus.

Now at this time, the people of God were not free; all of their land belonged to the Romans. The people had to do what the Roman soldiers told them to do. The Romans needed money to help pay for all the soldiers. So the Romans made each of the people of God give them some money, called taxes. The people hated these taxes.

Zacchaeus lived in Jericho. His job was to take the people's tax money and give it to the Romans. He was not a Roman. He was one of the people of God, but this was his job. He was rich. People did not like him. They thought he was rich because he cheated, took too much money from the people, and kept some of it for himself. They did not trust him.

And there is something else you should know about Zacchaeus. He was very short.

Take Zacchaeus figure out of basket or tray and hold it in your hand.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he could not see over people's heads. What could he do?

Place Zacchaeus figure next to the figures around Jesus.

Zacchaeus had an idea. He ran ahead and climbed up a tree. This way, when Jesus came down the road maybe he would be able to see him.

Place Zacchaeus figure in tree.

Jesus and the people came closer, step by step. And then they reached the tree.

Move the Jesus and people figures down the path toward the tree.

When he got to the tree, right away Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus. He called him by name. "Zacchaeus," he said, "hurry on down. I am going to your house today." Zacchaeus was so happy that he almost laughed. He quickly climbed down the tree and greeted Jesus. They began to go towards Zacchaeus' house.

Move Zacchaeus figure out of tree and place it in front of Jesus. Begin moving the pair together down the road.

The people grumbled and mumbled. "Zacchaeus is a bad man," they said. "Jesus should not be spending any time with him."

Zacchaeus stopped. Standing right in front of Jesus and the people, he said, "Listen. I give half of all my money to the poor. And if I have ever cheated anyone, I will pay that person back four times as much."

Place Zacchaeus figure so that it faces Jesus and the people.

Jesus said, "Listen. The kingdom of God is here. Zacchaeus is part of our family, too. Come welcome him into the circle."

*Move people figures into a circular configuration, with Zacchaeus and Jesus included.
Pause for a brief moment to reflect on the story in silence.*

I wonder what part of this story you like best.

I wonder what part is the most important to you right now.

I wonder what part of the story is about you.

I wonder if there is any part of the story we could leave out and still have all we need.

I wonder what it feels like to have a place in the circle.

I wonder how you help to welcome people into the circle.

(Continue the story if you're working with older children or adults.)

Here is a different way to end this story. Listen.

Put Zacchaeus back in the tree and place Jesus and the people beside it.

When Jesus got to the tree, right away he looked up and saw Zacchaeus. He called him by name. "Zacchaeus," he said, "hurry on down. I am going to your house today." Zacchaeus did not know what to think. He wasn't expecting this. He had a big house with fancy things in it, things that cost a lot of money. He was rich because he really had taken too much money from the people and kept the extra money for himself. He carefully climbed down the tree and greeted Jesus. All the people watched him. Zacchaeus led Jesus to his house. The people followed.

Move Zacchaeus figure out of tree and place it in front of Jesus. Begin moving the pair together down the road, with the people following behind.

The people grumbled and mumbled. "Zacchaeus is a bad man," they said. "Jesus should not be spending any time with him."

When they got to the house, Zacchaeus and Jesus went inside. The people continued to grumble and complain.

Set Zacchaeus and Jesus figures aside. The house can be imaginary, or you might use a table to suggest both a house and a meal.

We do not know exactly what happened in the house. Perhaps it was like this. Every time Zacchaeus looked at Jesus it seemed that Jesus's heart was filled with love. When Zacchaeus looked into his own heart, what he saw made him sad. The love in his own heart was so weak and small. He wanted it to grow. Zacchaeus knew what he had to do. He took a big breath, and then led Jesus outside and stood in front of all the people.

*Move the Zacchaeus and Jesus figures back to the road where the people are.
Place Zacchaeus and Jesus next to each other and facing all the people.*

The people looked at Zacchaeus and waited. Many of the people crossed their arms and frowned. They did not like Zacchaeus. They did not trust Zacchaeus. But something inside Zacchaeus had changed. He felt lighter. He felt more free. He could feel the love in his heart growing. Speaking in a clear voice so that everyone could hear, he said, "From this moment on, I will give half of all my money to the poor. And if I ever cheat anyone again, I will pay that person back four times as much."

Jesus said, “Listen. The kingdom of God is here. Zacchaeus is part of our family, too. Come welcome him into the circle.”

Move people figures into a circular configuration, with Zacchaeus and Jesus included.

Now I wonder which ending you like best.

I wonder which ending feels more important to you right now.

I wonder where Zacchaeus got the courage to make his big change.

I wonder when you have forgiven someone, or when you have asked someone to forgive you.

I wonder what helps the love in your heart to grow.

