Real friends stick up for each other.

Bible Verse
“There are ‘friends’ who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Students will see how quickly rumors can spread, learn how Jesus saw the good in people, and commit to sticking up for their friends.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
Jesus visits Zacchaeus’ home. When Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house, many people were likely critical of him. Tax collectors were tainted by their association with the Roman government and usually cheated the people to make themselves rich. People probably doubted that Zacchaeus could ever change. They doubted that someone as bad as he was could respond in love to Jesus, but that’s just what he did.

His decision to give up his wealth to help the poor and to make restitution for anything he had taken wrongfully was an expression of love in response to Jesus’ love for him. Jesus loved him first and Zacchaeus responded.

That’s the way it works with us, too: Jesus loves us first, and then we respond, loving him in return. You can help your students respond to Jesus in love, just as Zacchaeus did!

Another Scripture used in this lesson is Matthew 5:43-47.

Prayer
- Read 1 John 4:19.
- How does this verse connect with this week’s story?
- How do this verse and the Bible story connect with your life?
- Pray: God, help me to respond to you with the kind of love that you have showed to me. Help the students in my class begin to respond to you in love as I teach them…
Lesson 10

Before the Lesson

Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.

Make photocopies of the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your students.

Pray for your students and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.

This Lesson at a Glance

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Welcome

As kids arrive, ask them which “Fun at Home” activities they tried. Ask questions such as “What did your family members say they’re looking forward to in heaven?” and “Which Bible characters did you talk about meeting in heaven?”

Tell kids that whenever you ring the clanging bell, they are to stop talking, raise their hands, and focus on you. Explain that it’s important to respond to this signal quickly so the class can do as many fun activities as possible.

Attention Grabber

One Big Ball of Gossip

**SUPPLIES:** none

Form a circle, and give each student a piece of clay. Say: I want you to make up a silly story about me and spread it to others. I’ll begin by telling a part of the story. Then I’ll pass my piece of clay to the person on my left. That person will add to the story and pass the clay again. I’ll start by telling you that yesterday I woke up at my usual time. When the story comes to you, you might add something like, “Then she ate peanut butter soup for breakfast.” Then add your piece of clay to mine, and pass it to the person on your left. When everyone has added a piece to the story, the last person will share the whole story with the class.

Have the last person give you the ball of clay. Then have that person tell the whole story.

Ask: • Was the story we just heard a true story? Why or why not? (Yes, because you really did get up on time; no, we all made things up to add to it.)

Say: Stories that aren’t always true but that people tell anyway are sometimes called rumors.

Ask: • How was our story like rumors people sometimes tell? (Sometimes rumors start out to be true, but people add their own details; people hear things and then tell other people; people don’t stop to think if something is true before they pass it on.)

• What happens when people spread rumors? (Sometimes the stories they tell aren’t true; they usually hurt people’s feelings.)

Hold up the ball of clay. Say: This ball started out as a little tiny piece of clay. But as we added to the ball, it grew and grew, just like rumors sometimes grow. Rumors usually hurt people’s feelings, and often they aren’t even true. Real friends don’t listen to rumors. • Real friends stick up for each other no matter what other people say. Let’s talk more today about what it takes to be a real friend.

Return the clay to its container, and place it out of sight.

**BIBLE POINT**

It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point over and over throughout the lesson will help kids remember it and apply it to their lives.

Participate in activities, don’t just observe. Your enthusiasm will draw kids into an activity and help them see you as a friend, not just someone in authority. Get down to kids’ eye level so they don’t think of you as just another adult, but as an accessible, caring friend.
Lesson 10

Bible Exploration & Application

Before and After

SUPPLIES: Bibles, CD player

Say: Today we’re going to hear a story about a man whose life was changed by his friendship with Jesus. We’ll hear the things people might have said about this man before and after he met Jesus.

Play “Zacchaeus, Part 1” (track 14) on the CD. Then ask:

• How do you think Zacchaeus felt when he heard people grumbling about him? (Upset; angry; sad.)

Form pairs. Distribute Bibles, and have kids read the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10. Encourage kids to take turns reading the verses.

After kids have finished reading, ring the clanging bell, and wait for kids to respond. Then play “Zacchaeus, Part 2” (track 15) on the CD.

After the story, have kids discuss the following questions with partners. Pause after you ask each question to allow time for kids to discuss their answers.

Ask:

• How do you react when you hear your friends grumbling about you? (I get mad; I’m hurt; I feel like saying bad things about them.)

• How do you react when your friends say encouraging things about you? (I feel good; I’m happy; I feel like they’re really my friends.)

• What did Jesus say or do to encourage Zacchaeus? (He told him to come down from the tree; he asked him to dinner; he ate at his house; he called him a true son of Abraham.)

• If Zacchaeus were your friend, how would you encourage him? (By telling him he was a good person; by spending time with him.)

After about five minutes, ring the clanging bell, and wait for kids to respond. Invite pairs to share their insights with the rest of the class.

Say: Even though Zacchaeus had done many wrong things, Jesus saw the good in him. Jesus didn’t care what other people said about Zacchaeus because Jesus was a real friend. ►Real friends stick up for each other.

Jesus Is Coming to Dinner

SUPPLIES: Bibles, paper, markers, tape, snacks, chalkboard and chalk or newsprint

Before class, gather ingredients for snacks that kids can help prepare, such as cheese and crackers or mini-bagels and cream cheese.

Say: Zacchaeus must have been surprised when Jesus spoke to him. Ask a volunteer to read Luke 19:1-6 aloud. Then say: Imagine that Jesus just told us he is coming here, to our classroom, in 10 minutes!

Ask: • How are we going to get the room ready? (Clean up; decorate; get some food.)
Form three groups. Have one group straighten up the room and arrange the furniture as if for a dinner party. Give the second group a handful of metallic ribbons, several 2- to 3-foot pieces of the paper streamer roll, paper, markers, and tape. Have them decorate the room and make a banner welcoming Jesus. Have the third group prepare the food.

While kids are getting the room ready, write the following questions on a chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint taped to a wall. After 10 minutes, ring the clanging bell, and wait for kids to respond. Have everyone sit in the area prepared by Group 1. Ask Group 3 to serve the food. Be sure to compliment Group 2 on the decorations. As kids are eating, discuss these questions:

- **What other ways could we make Jesus feel welcome in our room?** (Read the Bible; offer him a chair; talk to him.)
- **If Jesus were sitting next to you, what would you say to him?** (I’d thank him for loving me; I’d ask him what heaven is like.)
- **What do you think Zacchaeus learned from his meeting with Jesus?** (To look for the good in people; that Jesus was a true friend.)
- **What would you do if you found out Jesus was coming to your house tomorrow?** (Clean up my room; be nice to my sister; read my Bible; pray.)
- **Even though we can’t see Jesus, he’s always with us. He wants to be part of our lives. How can we welcome Jesus into our lives?** (By doing what Jesus wants us to do; by showing love; by being a good friend.)

Say: **Zacchaeus didn’t expect Jesus to come to his house, but meeting Jesus was the best thing that ever happened to him. Jesus was a real friend to Zacchaeus, even though Zacchaeus wasn’t too popular with other people. We can be real friends, too. We can welcome Jesus by following his example and being a friend to other people.**

Collect the paper streamer roll and metallic ribbons for use in future lessons. Have kids help you clean up any leftover food.

**Jesus Visits Zacchaeus’ Home**

**Give a Good Word**

**SUPPLIES:** Bibles, chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and marker

Say: **Even though other people thought Zacchaeus wasn’t very nice, Jesus still loved him and wanted to be his friend. Jesus wants us to treat everyone with love and respect, even people we don’t really like. Let’s read what Jesus says about this in the Bible.**

Form trios. Distribute Bibles, and have kids look up **Matthew 5:43-47.** Have each trio pick a Reader to read the verses, an Interpreter to summarize the verses in his or
her own words, and an Encourager to make sure everyone gets a turn to respond to discussion questions about the verses.

While kids are reading the verses, write the following questions on a chalkboard or a sheet of newsprint. When kids have finished reading, ring the clanging bell. Wait for kids to respond, and then have them discuss the questions in their trios. Remind the Encourager to help everyone participate.

Ask: **Why is it so easy to love your friends?** (Because they like to do the things I like to do; because they’re nice to me.) **Why is it hard to love your enemies?** (Because they’re mean to me; because I don’t like them.)

• **What do you think would happen if you started being nice to your enemies and praying for them?** (They might be nice to me; God would help me not to hate them.)

After several minutes, ring the clanging bell, and wait for kids to respond. Invite partners to share their responses with the rest of the class. Say: **It’s natural to like some people more than others. The people we like best usually become our friends. It’s easy to show love and respect to our friends. But it’s not so easy to show love and respect to people we don’t like. We’re going to practice that now. Don’t say anything out loud, but think of a person at school you don’t really like. Then in your trios, take turns filling in this sentence without mentioning the person’s name: “I’m thinking of someone it’s hard for me to like because...” You’ll have about two minutes. Go.**

After two minutes, ring the clanging bell. Wait for kids to respond, and then say: **With the same person in mind, take turns filling in this sentence: “Some things I could learn to like about that person are...”**

After two minutes, ring the clanging bell. Wait for kids to respond, and then say: **With the same person in mind, take turns filling in one more sentence: “One thing I could do to show love to that person is...”**

After two minutes, ring the clanging bell, and wait for kids to respond. Then ask:

• **Was it easy or hard to think of things you could learn to like about that person? Explain.** (Hard, because I kept thinking of all the reasons I didn’t like him; easy, because I just thought of the things I like about my friends.)

• **Why is it important to treat other people with love and respect?** (That’s what Jesus would do; that’s the way I’d want to be treated.)

Say: **It’s really hard to see good things in people we don’t like, but that’s what Jesus wants us to do. Everyone thought that Zacchaeus was mean and rotten, but Jesus saw that he could change. Sometimes if we stick up for people we don’t really like, we discover they’re not so bad after all. We might even want them to become our friends. **Real friends stick up for each other.**
HANDS-ON BIBLE

Give each pair of students half a cup of fat-free milk in a small bowl, two tablespoons of vinegar, a spoon, a strainer, two paper towels, a clean bowl or cup, two teaspoons of water, and one teaspoon of baking soda. Make sure kids have their Hands-On Bibles.

Have students turn to Proverbs 18 in their Bibles and complete the “Stick Together” activity found near there. When kids are finished, ask:

- What happens when you glue two objects together? (They stick together; I can’t pull them apart.)
- How is that like true friendship? (True friends stick up for each other; true friends can’t be separated by gossip or lies.)

Closing

The Friendship Chain

SUPPLIES: Bibles

Have kids sit in a circle. If you have more than 10 students in your class, form two circles for this activity. Say: The Bible talks about real friends. Turn to Proverbs 18:24. Have a volunteer read the verse aloud while others follow along in their Bibles. Then say: Real friends stick up for each other.

Give each person a stacking clown. Say: Jesus was a real friend to Zacchaeus, and we can be real friends to one another. To remind us to be real friends, let’s join our stacking clowns to create a friendship chain. When the chain comes to you, say one way you can be a better friend, and add your stacking clown to the friendship chain. Then pass the chain to the person on your left.

As the chain gets longer, it will eventually break. If your chain breaks, point out to kids that friendships are fragile, just like the chain. Then have the next person put the chain back together before adding his or her stacking clown.

When you’ve completed your friendship chain, collect the stacking clowns for use in future lessons. If no one else uses your room, leave the chain assembled, and hang it on a wall or bulletin board. Close with prayer, asking God to help kids stick up for their friends this week.
Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Hands-On Fun at Home” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with your kids. Encourage kids and parents to use the handout to spark meaningful discussion on this week’s topic.
Lesson 10

Real friends stick up for each other.

Bible Basis: Jesus visits Zacchaeus’ home.

**Bible Verse:** “There are ‘friends’ who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

**“Stick-Em Up” Prayers**
Ask your parents to get you a pad of self-stick notes. On each note, write the name of one friend and one way you can stick up for that friend this week. Each day, stick one of your notes to your dresser or mirror to remind you to pray for that friend. When you pray, ask God to give you the courage to stick up for your friend.

**Check It Out**
- **Read 1 Samuel 20:1-42.**
  What made Jonathan a good friend? How can you be a friend like Jonathan?
- **Read Proverbs 17:17.**
  How can you help your friends in times of trouble?

**Faith Walk**
One night at dinner this week, ask your parents about the friends they had when they were your age. Ask them who their best friends were and what they did together. Did they help their friends through any tough times? Are they still friends today? Why or why not?

**Stick-Together Snack**
Make this simple snack anytime you want a nutritious pick-me-up. Spread peanut butter on two pieces of bread, and then add a sliced banana to one piece. Top with the other piece and enjoy! As you savor your snack, think about how friends stick together just like the peanut butter sticks your sandwich together.