Session 12

**Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree to See Jesus**

*Luke 19:1-10*

**Worship Theme:**

Jesus changes our lives.

**Weaving Faith Into Life:**

Children will praise Jesus for reaching out to them and changing their lives.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Sequence</th>
<th>What Children Will Do</th>
<th>Supplies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Praise God!</strong>&lt;br&gt;(up to 25 minutes)</td>
<td>Sing&lt;br&gt;- “I Am the Way” (John 14:6) (track 12)&lt;br&gt;- “For the Son” (Luke 19:10) (track 7)&lt;br&gt;- “To God Be the Glory” (track 15)&lt;br&gt;- “His Mercy” (Titus 3:5a) (track 5)&lt;br&gt;- “Love Each Other” (John 15:12) (track 9)&lt;br&gt;- “The Plans I Have for You” (Jeremiah 29:11) (track 22)</td>
<td><strong>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Songs From FaithWeaver&lt;br&gt;<strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong>&lt;br&gt;CD player, 2 clear pitchers, water, coarse sand, coffee filter, coffee cone, spoon</td>
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**Preschool**

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<tr>
<th>Session Sequence</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Learn the Point!</strong>&lt;br&gt;(up to 25 minutes)</td>
<td>Go Dough&lt;br&gt;Watch ingredients change into modeling dough.&lt;br&gt;Sculptors of Change&lt;br&gt;Use Go Dough to create props for telling the story.&lt;br&gt;Human Statues&lt;br&gt;Pretend to sculpt their bodies.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong>&lt;br&gt;2 cups water, 2 cups salt, 1 tablespoon oil, 5 cups of flour, extra flour, ½ cup cornstarch, food coloring, measuring cups and spoons, 2 bowls, 2 spoons&lt;br&gt;<strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong>&lt;br&gt;3 ounces of Go Dough per child</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Learn the Point!</strong> <em>(up to 25 minutes)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Real Zacchaeus</em></td>
<td>Play a game to learn about Zacchaeus, and then share how Jesus has changed them.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> Bibles, photocopy of Zac answer cards (p. 162), 3 men’s shirts, sheet, 3 pairs shoes, scissors, pens, paper</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>A Heart That Grows</em></td>
<td>Watch a video clip and compare the changes Jesus makes with the change shown in the video.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> <em>Dr. Seuss</em>’ <em>How the Grinch Stole Christmas</em> DVD, TV, DVD player, 4 Hershey’s Kisses per child, bag</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Change of Heart</em></td>
<td>Think about changes Jesus makes and see a visual representation of them.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> Poster board, scissors, tape, crayons, pennies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Pray!</strong> <em>(up to 10 minutes)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Offering</td>
<td>Offer their gifts to God.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> Offering bowls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sing-a-Prayer</td>
<td>Sing their thanks for the ways Jesus changes them.</td>
<td><strong>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</strong> <em>Songs From FaithWeaver:</em> “I Am the Way” (John 14:6) (track 12) <strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> CD player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Colors</td>
<td>Pray about changes and express their faith with a sign.</td>
<td><strong>Classroom Supplies:</strong> Colored poster board, scissors</td>
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* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together. Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Let’s Learn the Point! Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.
Although we hear and tell the story of Zacchaeus often, we seldom realize its full significance. It occurred at the end of Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem, near the end of his ministry. It is seen by some as the climax of Jesus' ministry, a supreme example of salvation being offered to the less than desirable. Jesus took decisive action in reaching out to Zacchaeus, which resulted in Zacchaeus' joyful repentance.

Tax collectors are disliked today, but they were even more despised by the Jews of Jesus' day because they represented Roman oppression. Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector, but also a chief tax collector, which meant that he dealt and contracted directly with the Romans. This would have made him the richest and the most despised of tax collectors. He would have been seen as a traitor and as someone who rejected the Hebrew faith and God. Few would have believed that Zacchaeus' sins could be forgiven. Even the wives and children of such tax collectors would have been treated poorly by the Jews.

It was not mere chance that Jesus looked away from the throng of people who surrounded him and looked directly up into the tree to see this seeker who wanted to see Jesus for himself. Zacchaeus didn't even have to say anything when Jesus spotted him; Jesus already had a plan for Zacchaeus.

Jesus' invitation to Zacchaeus surprised everyone. The people were stunned that Jesus would invite himself to the home of someone like Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was stunned for the same reason! Everyone would have expected Jesus to keep himself pure from association with a sinner such as this tax collector. But Jesus wasn't concerned about people's errant expectations. He was concerned about drawing sinful people to faith in him.

After spending some time with Jesus, Zacchaeus was apparently convinced that Jesus was who he said he was. Some question if Zacchaeus' pronouncement that he would give away his riches indicates he was saved by his good deeds. However, we know that salvation is by faith alone. Thus, Zacchaeus' decision to repay those he had cheated must have been a result of his trusting in God's grace—a proof of a changed heart. Jesus' declaration that Zacchaeus had received salvation confirmed what had happened in Zacchaeus' heart and the fact that God would accept even a despised tax collector if he placed his faith in Jesus!

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**Bible Background for Leaders**

**Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree to See Jesus**

*Luke 19:1-10*

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**Devotion for Leaders**

Jesus doesn't force anyone to follow him. He wants us to love him as he loves us. Jesus repeatedly confounded the “clean” and “righteous” people by taking special notice of “sinners” such as Zacchaeus. What does this tell us about God?

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** We sing songs about Zacchaeus being a “wee little man,” but the truth is that he probably wielded great power over others as a chief tax collector. He was also “unclean” for cooperating with the Romans. Yet Jesus dared to eat with the unclean Zacchaeus and to declare that the hated tax collector was also a “son of Abraham.” If nothing else, perhaps this account of Jesus and Zacchaeus can give us reason to pause the next time we dare to think ourselves better or “cleaner” than someone else.
Why We Worship for Leaders

We’re all faced with a life that veers out of control from time to time. We may lose control when curve-ball circumstances shoot our way. At other times, our own brokenness, or sin, throws us off course. People struggle every day with the call to lead holy lives, and this struggle reveals our deep need for daily redemption. Jesus changes us instantly and then continuously. Our only response can be to worship him.

Jesus is constantly in the process of changing us in ways that we cannot change ourselves. He helps us want to be different. He loves us to a better place. We respond with wonderment and obedience, and we are led to new plateaus of worship. As you worship today, join your children in praising God that you are no longer what you were and that you’re on the path to what you will someday be through Christ who strengthens you.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Let’s Praise God!—Set out two clear pitchers, some coarse sand, a spoon, and a coffee cone with a filter. Fill one pitcher with water.

The Real Zacchaeus—Photocopy the Zac answer cards (p. 162).

A Heart That Grows

• Rent the animated Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Set up a TV and DVD player, and fast forward to the section where the Grinch realizes the error of his ways. Watch the segment at least once before worship so you’ll be familiar with it.

• Put Hershey’s Kisses in a bag, making sure you have at least four for each child. Put the bag out of sight.

Change of Heart—Cut a large heart shape from poster board for every 6 to 10 children. Try to have extra black crayons among the crayons you provide.

New Colors—Cut small strips from poster board that is colored on one side and plain on the other. You’ll need a strip for each child. Tack the strips to a bulletin board so that the plain side faces out. If your room doesn’t include a bulletin board and tacks, put tape at both ends of each strip so that the tape faces opposite directions, and tape the strips to a wall.

Preschool Activities—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

Web Help—Get bonus leader tips and ideas at kidsownworship.com.

1 Let’s Praise God!

Play Songs From FaithWeaver, Winter 2010-2011 as children arrive. Greet them by name, and say to each one, “Think of an animal that changes.”

When everyone has arrived, begin worship.

Say Hello, everybody! When you came in, I asked you to think of an animal that changes. I’d like to hear what you came up with.

Allow several children to share.
Those are some pretty amazing changes, but today we’re going to talk about the most amazing changes of all: the changes Jesus makes in our lives! Looking in the Bible, we see that Jesus changed the lives of nearly everyone he met.

**Ask**
- Who are some people mentioned in the Bible whose lives were changed, and how did Jesus change them? (The disciples’ because they went with Jesus; the blind man who could see.)
- How is Jesus changing lives today? (Jesus still heals people and changes their lives; Jesus helps people stop stealing.)

**Say**
Jesus changes lives because he is God’s Son. When people meet Jesus, they begin to understand that God loves them. Who could be the same after that? This song reminds us that God gave us a way to be with him forever. That way is Jesus. Jesus’ coming to the world changed everything, including us.

Sing “I Am the Way” (John 14:6).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Say**
The changes Jesus makes in our lives are reasons to celebrate! He is the King of kings, God’s only Son, yet he loves you and me. That’s a great thing! Let’s celebrate.

Sing “For the Son” (Luke 19:10).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Say**
People who met Jesus were changed by the words of truth they heard him say. They were changed by his healing touch. They knew that Jesus brought God’s power to them. When we realize that Jesus brings God’s power to us, too, our hearts are full of praise. The changes he brings are exciting! Let’s give him praise.

Sing “To God Be the Glory.”

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Say**
Jesus teaches us right from wrong. God’s Spirit lives within us. It helps us know the right thing to do and it helps us want to do the right thing. We call that change purifying. God takes the bad stuff out and makes our hearts pure. Let’s take a look at how something becomes purified.

We know that there are some bad thoughts and feelings that slip into our heads and hearts. For example, when someone pushes you in line at school, what are some bad thoughts or feelings you might have?

As children name things, put sand into a pitcher of clear water. Stir the sand, and allow the children to observe the sand drifting in the water.

**Ask**
- What would you think about drinking this water? (No way!)

**Say**
That may be how God feels about receiving praise from a dirty heart. Let’s see what purifying does.
Place the coffee filter and cone over the second pitcher, and allow one of the kids to slowly pour the sandy water through it.

**Ask**
- **How is this like what God does for us?** (God filters the bad stuff out of our thoughts; God helps us have good thoughts.)
- **How can we be purified?** (We can ask God for help; we can do what Jesus says to do.)

**Say**
When we ask God to purify our hearts, we are asking him to change us—to remove all the yucky stuff that gets into us so that we can give him pure praise. Let’s sing a song about God’s mercy because he works in us to make us more like him.

Sing “His Mercy” (Titus 3:5a).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Say**
Jesus changes our lives by showing us how to become God’s children. We have an almighty God who loves us and calls us his children. He adopts us. We are changed from being kids from down the street to being sons and daughters in God’s great family. Because we are God’s family, we need to love each other.

Sing “Love Each Other” (John 15:12).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Say**
As God’s children, we can depend on him to forgive our sins and heal our hurts. God comes to us and offers to change our lives and make us better people. And God has good plans for our lives.

Sing “The Plans I Have for You” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

**Pray**
Thanks, God, for loving us and changing our lives. We worship you as the one true God who leads us and calls us your own children. Change us however we need to be changed so that you will be pleased with us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

**2 Let’s Learn the Point!**

**Preschool Activities, pages 163-164**

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let’s Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.
**Elementary Activities**

*The Real Zacchaeus*

Ask for eight volunteers. Two children will hold the sheet behind the table. Six children will work in pairs to make human puppets.

Designate a Partner 1 and Partner 2 in each pair. Have the 1s tuck the back of a shirt collar under their chins and put shoes on their hands. Have the 2s stand behind their partners and put their arms into the shirt sleeves. Have the holders hold the sheet up behind the table so you can cut three slits an equal distance apart. Ask 1s to put their head and hands through the slits. Ask 2s to slip only their arms through the slits. (See the diagram.) When everyone is in place, three potential Zacchaeuses will be “standing” on the table side by side. Encourage the kids to ham it up with facial expressions and hand motions.

Give each Zac an answer card. Each “puppet” will introduce itself as Zacchaeus and answer audience questions using the information on the cards.

While the “Zacs” are getting ready, distribute Bibles, pens, and paper, and ask the rest of the class to read Luke 19:1-10. Ask children to write the answers to these four questions: What is Zacchaeus’ occupation? What is Zacchaeus’ hometown? Who is Zacchaeus’ best friend? What is Zacchaeus’ biggest problem?

**Say**

Today, we’ll discover which of these little men is the real Zacchaeus. Guest number one, please introduce yourself. (Pause.)

Guest number two? (Pause.) Guest number three? (Pause.)

Audience, you may ask each Zac one of these questions: What is your occupation? What is your hometown? Who is your best friend? What is your biggest problem? Then you’ll vote to determine who is the real Zacchaeus.

Choose different children to ask questions, then have the audience vote. Have the two “imposters” leave the table stage as you interact with the “real” Zacchaeus.

(continued on page 165)
Preschool Activities

Zacchaeus Climbs a Tree to See Jesus

Luke 19:1-10

Worship Theme:

Jesus changes our lives.

Easy Prep for Leaders

Go Dough—Gather and display the ingredients for the Go Dough recipe. You’ll also need two bowls, two spoons, measuring cups, and measuring spoons.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Go Dough</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 cups water</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 cups salt</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tablespoon oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 cups flour</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ cup cornstarch</td>
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<td>food coloring</td>
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Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the Faith-Retriever puppet today in these ways:

• Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
• Have Theo read aloud the ingredients for the Go Dough.
• See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today’s worship session.

Preschool Leader Tip

If you have more than 12 preschoolers, you may want to help them form groups to make several batches of the Go Dough. You can send the dough home with the children in resealable plastic bags.

Go Dough

Say

Today we’re going to talk about changes. Look at all the ingredients I’ve collected. What’s this? Pick up one item at a time, and ask children to identify it by name and tell about it. Let the children touch and describe each item except the food coloring.

These ingredients could become many different things, but I have a particular plan in mind. Let’s change one thing at a time. Pour the water into the bowl. Ask the kids for suggestions about what to put into the water to change its color. Mix in the salt, oil, and food coloring. Ask the kids to note all changes.

Mix the flour and the cornstarch together in a separate bowl.

Ask

• Does the flour look different now? Is it changed?
• Are little changes as important as big changes? Why?

Say

This little change was important. By mixing the dry ingredients first, we can be sure that the little bit of cornstarch gets all through our mixture.

Ask

• What do you think will happen when we mix the dry stuff and the wet stuff?

Mix a little of the flour mixture into the wet ingredients, then ask the kids to describe what happened. Let the kids continue adding a small amount of the dry ingredients at a time. Encourage them to evaluate the changes each time. When the dough becomes too stiff to stir, use your hands to work the ingredients together. If the dough is too sticky, add more flour. When all the dry ingredients are worked into the dough, give each child a portion to knead. Then have children return the dough and blend the portions together.

Ask

• Which change do you think was the most important?
• When did the changes start?
• Do you think the changes are over yet?

Say

We made this dough to be just what I wanted. Each little change made it a little better. Some of the changes were easier to see than others, but I needed every change to make the dough just what I wanted.

Our Bible story is about a man who was changed. When he met Jesus, Jesus changed his life. Let’s use this dough to tell how Jesus changes our lives.
**Preschool Activities**

**Sculptors of Change**

Give each child and yourself about 3 ounces of the Go Dough.

*Say* As I tell this story, I’ll stop sometimes so you can change your dough into something that’s part of the story. You’ll have just a little time each time I stop the story.

This is a story about a short little man. Make a man who’s shorter than you are. Encourage the children to shape their dough with you.

Look at all these little men! The man in our story was named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He took money from people for rulers of the land, but he kept some of the money for himself. The more money he kept, the richer he got, and he liked it that way. The more money he kept, the less money others had, and he liked it that way. Make some money for Zacchaeus with your dough. Encourage the children to shape their dough with you.

One day, Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to town. Use your dough to make something that reminds you of Jesus. Encourage the children to shape their dough with you.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he was afraid that all the taller people would block his view.

Jesus knew Zacchaeus was in that tree. Make a tree with your dough. Encourage the children to shape their dough with you.

But Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus and smiled! Jesus said he would go to Zacchaeus’ house to eat. Use your dough to make a plate for Jesus. Encourage the children to shape their dough with you.

While Jesus was with Zacchaeus, he changed Zacchaeus’ heart. Zacchaeus felt bad about all the money he had taken from others. He wanted to pay back all the extra money he had collected. Shape your dough into money, and pay it back to me. Walk among the children, and collect all the dough.

*Ask* What do you think changed Zacchaeus from a greedy guy into an honest man?

Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus! Jesus can make greedy people generous, and he can make mean people nice. Jesus can make us whatever he wants us to be, just as you made your clay what you wanted it to be. Jesus is a people-sculptor. Let’s play a people-sculpting game.

**Human Statues**

*Say* I’ll call out something, and you make your body like that thing. Are you ready?

- Make yourself a rock.
- Make yourself a bird.
- Make yourself a table.
- Make yourself an elephant.
- Make yourself a mountain.
- Make yourself a rabbit.
- Make yourself kind.
- Make yourself loving.
- Make yourself a giving person.

*Ask* Was it easier to think of how to make yourself a bird or how to make yourself kind?

*Say* We can pretend to be rabbits, rocks, or elephants. We can’t really make ourselves into those things, even though it’s fun to try. But we can’t even pretend to make ourselves the things that Jesus wants us to be: kind, holy, or generous. Those are inside things.

*Ask* Who can change things inside us?

*Say* What are some other things Jesus wants us to be inside?

*Pray* Thank you, Jesus, for changing us. We want to be just what you want us to be. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Zacchaeus, why don’t you ask the kids to come up here. Just motion to them with your arm. You know, Zac, you seem less than satisfied with your life. I think one of your fellow contestants may have the answer for you, though. He talked about his best friend, Jesus. Apparently, you haven’t met Jesus yet. You know, Jesus can change lives. Jesus is coming to your hometown, Jericho. You might have to climb a tree or something to see him, but I think, if you just met him, things might be a lot different for you. Maybe some of our audience members can share a little about how Jesus has changed their lives.

Allow kids to share their stories. Then let “Zacchaeus” be seated.

Some of you probably know what happened to Zacchaeus. He did climb a tree, and he did meet Jesus. His life was changed completely. Let’s watch a video clip about another unhappy character and what happened to him.

* A Heart That Grows

Show the video clip from Dr. Seuss’ How the Grinch Stole Christmas. The clip shows how the Grinch’s life was changed by Whos.

- Why do you think we saw the Grinch’s heart grow when he changed? (It needed to be bigger for all the love he felt; he became normal.)
- What was the turning point for the Grinch? (When he listened to a Who; when he cared.)
- How do you think the Grinch felt about his old life after the change? (He probably felt sorry; he probably didn’t like the person he used to be.)
- How does Jesus change us? Is it similar to or different from the way the Grinch was changed? (Similar because we want to be better; different, because the Grinch learned about Jesus.)
- What do you think were some of the Grinch’s thoughts about his new life? (He was happy; he wanted to be a good friend.)

Jesus can change us in forever-and-no-turning-back ways. The best thing about the change that happens when we first meet Jesus is that it’s only the beginning of the changes he wants to make in us every day. Because our hearts are changed, we are ready to behave differently, just as the Grinch did and just as Zacchaeus did. Because Zacchaeus was changed, he took money from his money bags to pay back everyone from whom he had stolen. He paid them back four times over! I think Zacchaeus may have left something for you.

Give each child four Hershey’s Kisses.
*Change of Heart*

**Say**  There are many attitudes that separate us from God and darken our hearts.

Set out the poster-board hearts and crayons. Have kids work together in groups of six to ten, using crayons to cover the hearts with bright colors.

**Ask**  What are some things that darken our lives? (Being sick; when friends are mean.)

Have kids use black crayons to completely cover the bright colors on their hearts as they talk about things that darken their lives.

**Say**  But when we meet Jesus, he changes our lives—sometimes all at once as he did in Zacchaeus’ life, sometimes a little at a time.

**Ask**  What are some ways we meet Jesus? What can we do to bring Jesus into our hearts? (When we come to church; when people love us; when we read the Bible.)

Give each small group a penny. Have kids take turns in their groups naming ways to meet Jesus or ways to bring Jesus into their hearts. As a child names something, the child should use the penny to scrape off a patch of black crayon to show the color underneath.

**Say**  Jesus makes the change, and everyone around us can see the results. Let’s thank God that Jesus changes our lives.

**Let’s Pray!**

The Offering

Hold up the empty offering bowls.

**Say**  In a way, we are like these offering bowls. Before we put our faith in God, we’re empty. Then Jesus fills us with his love, forgiveness, and grace.

Take the offering, then combine all the contents in one bowl.

**Say**  Sometimes when we pray, we put our hands together like this. Put your palms together. This time, though, we’re going to hold our hands like this. Cup your hands together in a bowl shape. Look at that empty space in your hands, and remember that Jesus changes us from empty to full as we changed the empty offering bowl to a full one.

**Pray**  Dear God, change us into the people you want us to be, and use this money we bring you to bring changes in the lives of others. In Jesus’ name, amen.
Sing-a-Prayer

Say Jesus changes our lives in so many ways. The Bible says that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. That means he can change us from being lost to knowing the way. He can change us from knowing a lie to knowing the truth. He can change us from being dead inside with sin to being alive inside with his grace and love. Jesus changes our lives in some wonderful ways. Let’s pray this song to God as we sing it.

Sing “I Am the Way” (John 14:6).

Lyrics are in the back of this book.

New Colors

Ask • Is there something in your life that you would like God to change?

• Is there anything you need God’s help with?

Say Let’s take a moment to be quiet. In your heart, tell God about your needs. Then come up and turn one of these strips over to remind you of the change Jesus will make in your life when you trust him.

Pray Jesus, thank you for changing our lives and helping us to become the people you want us to be. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Extra Impact

Use strips of origami paper with a different design on each side. When children turn the strip, they will see the change in design. Also, on the side of the strip representing the new change, write, “God can change you” or “God wants the best for you.”