

SHORT CHANGED - FAMILY SERVICE

So you've used **SHORT CHANGED** and you're looking at what to do next. This document will outline one way that you could follow this up - with a family service reflecting on the story of Zacchaeus. Doing this could have many benefits, including continued engagement with children and their families, and involving members of your congregation who were unable to be a part of **SHORT CHANGED**.

The content of this family service will focus on recapping the story of Zacchaeus and what it means to us in our relationship with God. This is not a paint-by-numbers style service plan, but instead some suggestions, thoughts and ideas which may help you to plan a service which will work well in your local setting. Feel free to take the content here at face value, or to adapt it as you feel is necessary.

Ensure that all of the children who took part in **SHORT CHANGED** and their families are invited back to the family service. It may encourage them to attend if they know that the children will be included - why not recap one or two songs from the show, interview a few children about their experiences and what they learnt, and display crafts that children have made throughout the week?

Songs from **SHORT CHANGED** you could include:

In That Tree
Seek and Save

Congregational songs that you could include:

SASB 139 - He came to give us life in all its fullness
SASB 453 - Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone) - Chris Tomlin
When I Was Lost (There is a New Song) - Kate Simmonds

Suggested Activity - Hide and seek story:

Hide a variety of objects around the room that will help tell the story of Zacchaeus. Send children to find the items and bring them to the front. Ask the children to order the items and use the props to retell the story of Zacchaeus.

Money - this could be more than one lot of money, maybe several bags of chocolate coins could be hidden.

Branches - not too big and can be artificial or real. When collected the branches could be bound together to make a tree.

A tea pot, a couple of mugs, a table cloth and a packet of biscuits

A map of the area with Jericho marked on it.

If there is room to hide them, a set of steps or if not a picture of some to remind us how short Zacchaeus was!



SHORT CHANGED - FAMILY SERVICE

Suggested Thoughts

Ensure each person is given a few post it notes and a pen.

Zacchaeus was a man who was despised by the people around him. He had cheated them, he had been mean and greedy and people were not happy with him. Let's think for a moment what words we could use to describe Zacchaeus.

(allow time for people to write some words down, designate a space where people can stick them if they choose to - ie a flipchart)

(Read the post it notes out)

These words are quite difficult words to hear aren't they? Do we think that Zacchaeus deserved these names?

I guess in the beginning of the story we are introduced to a man who probably did deserve these names. He really wasn't very fair to his neighbours was he? Have we ever come across people like Zacchaeus? People who were unkind, selfish or mean? How did they make you feel? Did you want to use these kind of words to describe them?

In truth, we do meet people like Zacchaeus in our lives. They can make us feel fed up, angry, mad, hurt, the list could go on. What we probably don't think about when we face a person like that is why they act the way they do. What has caused them to be so unkind?

There are lots of reasons why someone might behave like Zacchaeus did. Their own life may not be the happiest experience and they may be quite sad and scared in lots of ways. Their insecurities come out in different ways to how others might behave. Perhaps someone is bullying them and it makes them act in an unpleasant way to others. Perhaps they just want someone to give them some attention, they want to be noticed and so they are mean in order to get that attention. Maybe they feel it's better to have some attention for something horrible than no attention at all.

The bible doesn't tell us much about Zacchaeus does it? We know that he wasn't well liked for the way he treated his fellow villagers. He wasn't very popular and people didn't want to be associated with him. But we have no idea why he behaved like he did and stole from so many people.

What we do know is the difference that Jesus made to Zacchaeus once they met. Somehow Zacchaeus knew that he needed to see Jesus. He went all out to get a glimpse of the man he had heard everyone talking about. I wonder if he thought about the consequences of taking that one little glimpse? What a difference it made to him that day! From the moment that Jesus called out to Zacchaeus sitting in the tree, his life was different. He was noticed by someone and not necessarily for a bad reason at this point. I wonder how he felt as he walked through the village with Jesus? We don't know what was said as they sat and ate together. These are the bits of the story that we can just imagine. What we do know is that when they left Zacchaeus' house, Zacchaeus knew exactly what he should do!



SHORT CHANGED - FAMILY SERVICE

Zacchaeus' life was changed for the better and people noticed him now for good reasons.

He was the man who met with Jesus and was transformed. He was the man who went from being a thief to being generous. He was the man who went from being mean to being kind.

I wonder what a difference it made to Zacchaeus and to the people around him? I wonder then if Jesus can still make a difference in the lives of people?

At the beginning of this thinking time, we thought about people we have met who are a bit like Zacchaeus. Do you think that Jesus could help them to change their lives around? Can Jesus make a difference in our lives too?

Unlike Zacchaeus, it is very unlikely that we will physically meet Jesus. He probably won't walk into our town, or school, or street, but yet we can still meet with Him. We can still talk to Him and we can tell others about how Jesus can still make a difference in their lives too.

There are many, many people who could tell you how they have met with Jesus in recent times and how they have been changed for the better.

(A video or testimony could be used here)

The same Jesus who met with Zacchaeus so many years ago still meets with people today. But instead of meeting us face to face he meets us in our hearts. He hears our prayers. When we choose to accept him he still changes lives.

Over the next few minutes, we will listen to some music and reflect on our lives. If Jesus has changed your life for the better, then take this time to thank him. If you want to meet with Jesus and ask Him to help you turn your life around, you can take this time to talk to Him. If you want to commit to pray for someone who you feel needs to meet with Jesus, you can do this too.

Suggested Prayers:

Jesus, I want to thank you for the difference you make in my life. Thank you for changing me into a better person. As we go through life together, help me always to make the right choice and to live for you.

Jesus, I want to know you better and I want you to change me so that I live for you. Help me make my life reflect who you are in this world. Help me to show kindness and love to all those around me. Help me make my life better.

Jesus, I know someone who needs you in their life. This person is sad and hurting and needs you to make the change in their life. I commit to praying for this person and I promise to show you to them through the way I live my life. Help them to see you through me and help them to come close to you. I will pray for this person, so that they will come to know you.

