

Ideas for Adapting Scripture Passages

When sharing scripture with young children, there are some essential elements to keep in mind that ensure children’s enjoyable engagement with the text. A common starting point for teachers is to find children’s versions of Bible stories - but many of these can be unsuitable. Often a more effective process is for teachers to adapt the texts themselves. Following is a simple three step process to use when adapting Bible stories for young children with Luke 19:1-10, the story of Zacchaeus:

1. Read the original text from the Bible. The online New Revised Standard Version Bible at www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm can be downloaded and printed.
2. As you read the text, highlight ideas and details that are essential to the story and those that are not. Cross through non-essential details.
3. For those details necessary to the story, consider how they can be rewritten in more accessible ways for young children without distorting the original text.

ORIGINAL BIBLICAL TEXT

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, ~~because he was going to pass that way.~~ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back ~~four times as much.~~” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, ~~because he too is a son of Abraham.~~ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

ADAPTED TEXT

Zacchaeus lived in Jericho. He collected taxes from everyone and had become rich.

One day Jesus visited Jericho. Zacchaeus wanted to see him but because he was short he had to climb a tree to see Jesus.

When Jesus came by he stopped and said to Zacchaeus, “Come down Zacchaeus for I am coming to your house today.”

The crowd grumbled, “Why does he want to go to that man’s house. He takes our money.”

Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “I will give half of everything I own to the poor and pay back anyone I have cheated.”

Then Jesus said, “Today forgiveness has come to you.”

