

the
tree

GO CLIMB
A TREE





GO CLIMB

THEY ALWAYS called me Shorty. Maybe that's why I'm so scrappy—all those fights in school.

If you're not short, you don't understand how hard it is. Not just people making fun of you, but always having to crane your neck, stand on tiptoe, look up to everybody except children.

You get sick of it.

But there's a good side, too: You learn to take care of yourself, to watch out for Numero Uno. And that's where I've towered over most other people. When I say, "This is how much tax you owe," people listen—and pay. Not just because I've got the whole Roman Empire behind me, but because I'm tough.

This has made me a wealthy man, head of all the tax collectors in Jericho. You understand, don't

you, that if Rome sets the tax at so much per person, we can increase it as much as we think the guy can pay—and keep the difference? And believe me, there is a difference.

So I was walking to my office one day when I heard this crowd. I knew it was big from how much noise there was. But even when I came up to the crowd, I couldn't tell what was going on. I heard them yell, "Jesus! Hey, Jesus, over here!" but I couldn't see anything. When I tried to get to the front, this big guy said, "Stop pushing, Shorty, or I'll punch your head down into your shoulders."

Then I saw it: a tree. I had





A TREE

***He made
me feel
as tall as
He was.***

Bible Fiction

always been good at climbing, so I was in the lowest branches in the shake of a lamb's tail. And I could see. There, about 50 feet away, was Jesus.

He must have seen me up there because first thing I knew He was pushing His way through the crowd to my tree. They opened up a path for Him.

He was standing 10 feet below me, looking straight up at me. *What's He going to say*, I asked myself. He probably knew I was a tax collector, a cheat, a fraud. If He said, "Hey, you fraud, you collaborator with the Romans," that crowd would have torn me to pieces.

Instead He said, "Come on down. Hurry up, because I'm going to stay in your home

today."

He didn't need to tell me to hurry. I jumped right down in front of Him—I've always been good at jumping.

There was a low rumble that started at the tree—those who could hear what Jesus said—and spread through the crowd. "A tax collector, a sneaky little tax collector. Jesus is going to his house to spend the day." They muttered things like that.

He came home with me, and my wife put on a big feast for Him. He talked to my whole family and our servants. But especially to me.

You know what? He made me feel as tall as He was. At the same time I felt like a worm, crawling along the ground. I'd never seen myself as I really was before,

Continued on page 6.



Out of His TREE

Bible Study

zo, tell me. . .

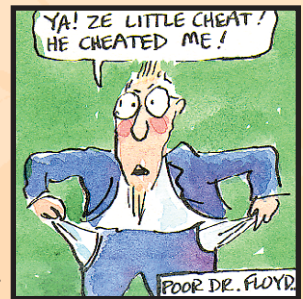
Remember Zacchaeus, the little guy in the tree? He was a real crook until he met Jesus. Boy, did he change!

Suppose he'd gone to a psychiatrist about his problems. Imagine his going to that famous doctor, Shrink'em Floyd.



THE REAL STORY

Of course there were no psychiatrists in those days. Here's the real story based on Luke 19:1-10. Read the passage and complete this cartoon Bible study to find out just what made Zacchaeus change his ways.



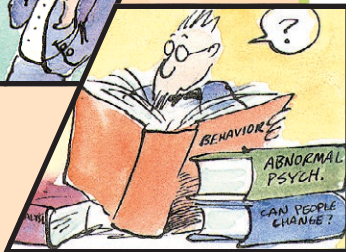
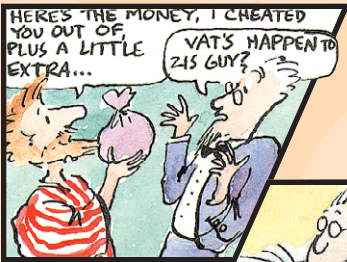
1. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?

2. Surprise! Jesus actually wants to eat dinner with this little cheat.

Draw expressions on the faces of the people in the crowd when they saw this. Then write a caption to describe this scene in Luke 19:5-7.



Good News! Jesus loves everyone! Zacchaeus was not a nice person. When everybody else hated him (with good reason), Jesus loved him. Zacchaeus discovered someone who would meet his deepest needs. Who needs money when you've got the real thing?



3. This is a switch! Read verse 8 and fill in Zacchaeus's speech balloon to explain why he gave all that money away.

4. Draw your own picture to show what people must have thought of the new Zacchaeus.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

LUKE 19:1-10

¹Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

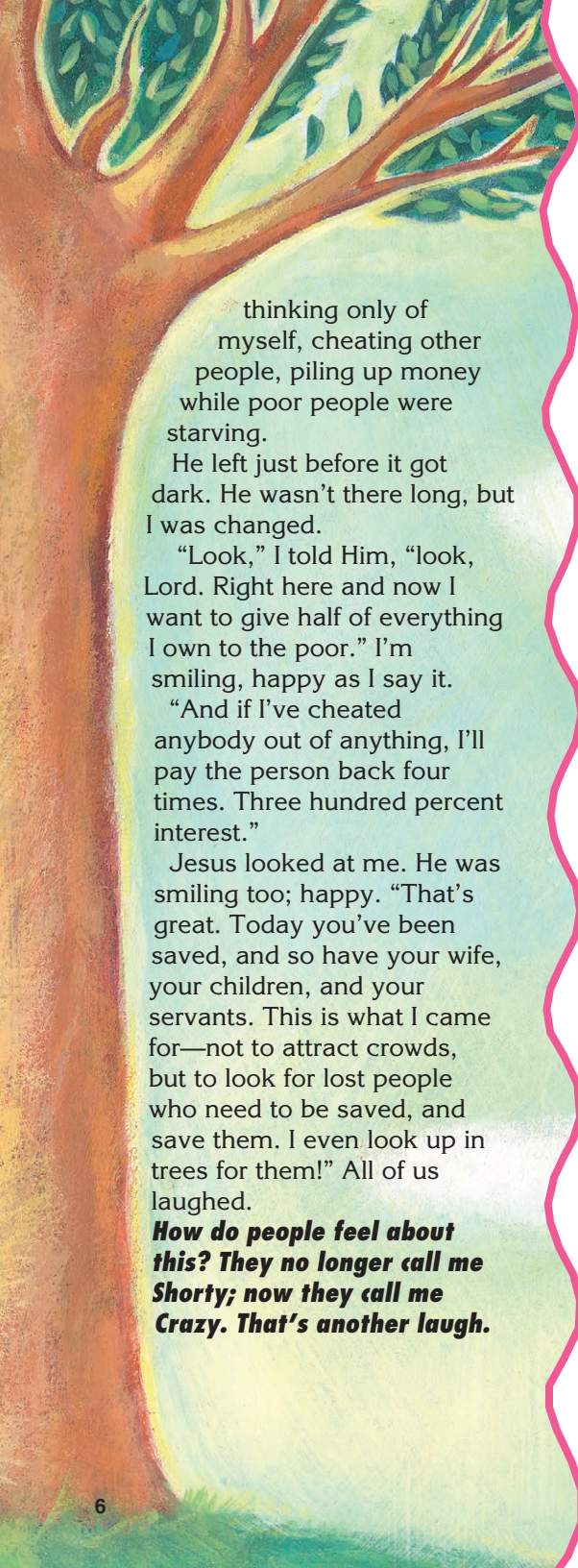
⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

• Imagine you're the famous Dr. Floyd. Write your report describing Short—er, Zacchaeus.





thinking only of myself, cheating other people, piling up money while poor people were starving.

He left just before it got dark. He wasn't there long, but I was changed.

"Look," I told Him, "look, Lord. Right here and now I want to give half of everything I own to the poor." I'm smiling, happy as I say it.

"And if I've cheated anybody out of anything, I'll pay the person back four times. Three hundred percent interest."

Jesus looked at me. He was smiling too; happy. "That's great. Today you've been saved, and so have your wife, your children, and your servants. This is what I came for—not to attract crowds, but to look for lost people who need to be saved, and save them. I even look up in trees for them!" All of us laughed.

How do people feel about this? They no longer call me Shorty; now they call me Crazy. That's another laugh.



THE KIDS of the Ziegler Street Church youth group are very generous. Inspired by Zacchaeus, who gave half of his possessions to the poor, the group decided to give what they had to support the ministries of their church. They were short on funds, but tall in heart. So each one gave what he or she had.

Can you zero in on who gave what? If you know the key to matching the person with the gift, you'll zip through this in no time flat. (Hint 1: Their names have nothing to do with how the gifts are matched. Hint 2: Ziggy gave the wreath. Hint 3: What rhymes?)

GIFTS

GIVERS



ZENOBIA



ZIGGY



ZOE



ZEKE



ZACHARY



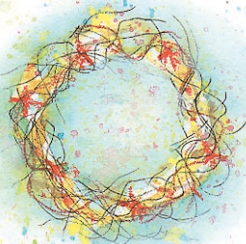
ZINA

CHAIR
I heard that Mrs. Bartle needed another rocker. I found this at a garage sale. I hand-painted it. Now it's as good as new!



BOOKS
For the church library

WREATH
This wreath can be used to decorate the church.



RYE BREAD
For the food pantry

PLASTIC BLOCKS
For the nursery



DOLLARS
For missions



everyday devos

Do you sometimes think you're the most interesting person you know? No matter how charming and witty you might be, God is pleased when you turn your interests to others, too.

Not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.

—Philippians 2:4

OUTSIDE INTERESTS

MONDAY

Read Philippians 2:4. Think of someone you know from school, church, or even a family member who might be going through a rough time. Pray for that person all week long, asking God to show you how you can help.

TUESDAY

Read Philippians 2:3-4. Draw or write a description of a person who does things for selfish reasons, and of a person who looks out for others' interests. What are the differences between your two descriptions?

WEDNESDAY

What needs do you have? It's okay to take care of your needs as long as you don't become selfish. Talk to God about your needs, as well as the needs of the person you thought of on Monday.

THURSDAY

"Let's see, I have track, drama, homework, and Thursday middle school group." Does life seem busy for you these days? Do you have time for others? Get together with someone just to talk.

FRIDAY

Read Romans 15:2. Draw a pie cut into two pieces. Shade in the pieces to show how much time you spend on yourself compared with how much time you spend on others. Do you need to divide your pie more evenly? Ask God to help you look out for others.

SATURDAY

Read Philippians 2:4 again. How well do you know the other people in your Sunday school class? To show your interest in another person, write out two or three questions to ask him or her, and then ask your questions tomorrow before class begins.

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