

# Bullying Hurts

By Beth Beall

Bullies have been around for a long time. In this activity we'll read a story about a bully in the Bible, and think about why that person might have bullied others. Then we'll have the option to think about the effects of bullying, or to create an anti-bullying superhero.



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## For

Just for Kids

## Season

Fall

## Needed

Bible story (page 3), paper, markers/pencil/pen, optional: playdough or clay

## Activity Plan

1. Begin with a prayer. You may use the words here, or use whatever words are in your own heart.

*Loving God, you created us to take care of one another. Help us to put an end to bullying and to live in your loving care. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who knows what it feels like to be bullied by others. Amen.*

2. Read the Bible story on page 3, below.
3. After reading the Bible story, spend time thinking about one or more of these questions. You might think about them on your own, or talk about them with a friend or parent.
  - I wonder why Zacchaeus bullied people? I wonder how he felt when he bullied them? I wonder how the people felt when they were bullied?
  - I wonder if you have ever been bullied or seen someone be bullied? (Here is one definition for bullying: "Bullying is hurting someone on purpose, either with words or actions.")
  - I wonder if you've ever bullied someone?
  - I wonder why Zacchaeus was so eager to see Jesus?
  - I wonder why Jesus treated Zacchaeus the way he did?
4. Choose one or both of the following activities. You may do the activities on your own, or with a friend or parent.

- **The Scars of Bullying.** Find an unused sheet of paper, without any creases in it. Next, crumple it up as tightly as you can. Throw it across the room if you'd like! Then stomp on it. Stomp on it with all your might! Really mess up that crumpled ball of paper, but be careful not to rip it. Now, pick up that paper. Unfold it and smooth it out.

Your challenge: try to make the paper look like it did before.

Hmmm. If you say "I'm sorry" to the paper over and over again, does that make the creases go away?

Let's imagine that the piece of paper is a person who has been bullied. When a person has been bullied, they carry the scars of that pain for a long, long time.

On your crumpled paper, write a prayer to Jesus. You might use these words, or create your own:

*Jesus, you were bullied by people who did not understand you. Help me to stand up for those who are bullied. Help me not to bully others. You loved Zacchaeus. You love each of us. Help us to live as your children. Amen.*

Perhaps you will want to put your paper in a place where you can look at it sometimes.

- **Create an anti-bullying superhero.** You may draw your superhero on paper, or use playdough or clay to make a 3-D superhero.

Begin by creating the body. (If you are drawing, a stick figure is fine.)

Now comes the fun! Think about all the different parts you want your superhero to have. Perhaps a cloak? A shield? A mask, boots, belt? Here's the key: every part of your superhero's costume should give him/her power to combat bullying.

For example, maybe you want to give your superhero . . .

- a cloak that lets them fly away quickly from bullies
- a powerful tongue that lets him/her disarm a bully with humor
- a shield for protection
- Boots to jump large distances to get help when someone is being bullied
- special gloves that extend kindness.

Be sure to give your superhero a name. Have a great time!



# A Bully in the Bible

*an adaptation of the story of Zacchaeus, from Luke 19*

A long time ago, the Roman Empire was the largest and most powerful empire in the world. People throughout the empire had to pay taxes to the Roman government. LOTS of taxes. Some of the taxes went to projects such as creating buildings that all of the people could use. But most of the taxes were turned into gifts that the Emperor gave to a small number of his favorite people. The rest of the people in the empire lived very difficult lives with very little money.

There was a man named Zacchaeus (zak-EE-us) whose job was to collect taxes from the people in the town of Jericho. Nobody in Jericho liked Zacchaeus. He bullied people into paying their taxes. And even when they paid what they had to, Zacchaeus bullied them for MORE money. "Why should we give you any more money?" the people asked. "Can't you see that we are already poor?" they cried out. But Zacchaeus didn't care. He said to them, "If you don't give me all the money I ask for, I will tell the Roman soldiers that you haven't paid anything at all. Then you will *really* be in trouble. " Zacchaeus kept the extra money for himself, and over time he became very rich. *Nobody* liked Zacchaeus the bully.

One day Zacchaeus heard that the teacher Jesus was coming into town. People were so excited. They lined the streets as if for a parade. Everyone wanted to see Jesus! Zacchaeus tried to nudge his way into the crowd, so that he could see Jesus too. But no one would let Zacchaeus in, because nobody liked him. "Go away," one person said to him. "Why don't you just go home and count all your money? We don't want you here," another one said. Zacchaeus wouldn't give up. He kept trying to get a place in the crowd so that he could see Jesus pass by. Finally, Zacchaeus saw a tree, and quickly scrambled up its branches. He found a sturdy branch to sit on, and waited to see Jesus.

At last, people started to shout, "Here he comes! Jesus is here!" As Jesus walked down the street, he stopped to talk with people. He gave them loving hugs, listened to them, and laughed with them. Then Jesus looked up and saw the tree where Zacchaeus was sitting. "Hello, Zacchaeus!" shouted Jesus. The people in the crowd wondered why Jesus was speaking so kindly to Zacchaeus. Didn't Jesus know what a bully Zacchaeus was?

"Zacchaeus," continued Jesus, "Come down from that tree. I want to eat lunch at your house." Zacchaeus practically ran down that tree. Zacchaeus felt so happy inside. He proclaimed, "Jesus, I have done many wrong things. I've bullied people and cared only for myself. I am going to give away half of everything I own, because I don't need to be so rich. And I am going to pay people back the extra money I took from them."

Jesus said, "Now you understand that living in God's Kingdom means caring for others, not hurting and bullying them. You are a child of God, and now you are going to live like one. This is a wonderful day!"

