

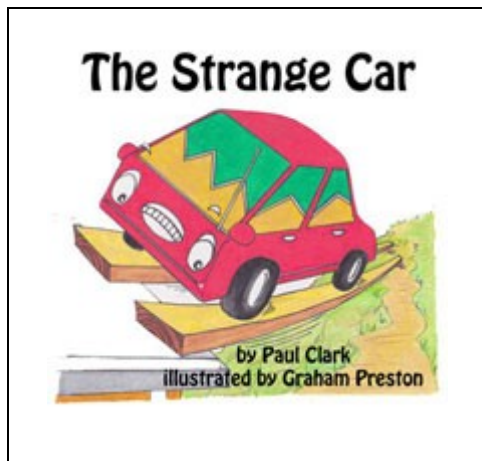


Even Before Publishing

Writing for the Word



Teacher's Notes and Ideas



TITLE – The Strange Car

AUTHOR – Paul Clark

ILLUSTRATOR – Graham Preston

ISBN: 9781921633119

Recommended Retail: \$5.95

Recommended Age: Between 3 and 9

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Introduction

The Strange Car is a retelling of the classic event from the New Testament; the restoration of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector, who famously climbed a tree to see Jesus.

Story Summary

The story of *The Strange Car* is told within a particular community – a community of cars who frequent a local church car park. Each car has their own personality and problems. The stories are told by the old and wise Model T Ford, [Old Mr T] who is a grandfather type figure. The stories are told within specific situations that arise in the cars' lives.

In this story, a new and different car is spotted in the church car park. This car is recognised as a modern, electric car. The new car's presence plays on the fears of the usual cars. They believe electric cars will make them obsolete. They fear the change she represents. Her presence signals their doom! They behave in ways that are nasty to the new car believing wrongly, that if they chase her away, all these fears will not be realised.

Old Mr T tells them the story of Zach, a car that was a little different, and owned by a Parking Inspector. Zach was also disliked by those around because of his difference and because his owner had a scorned occupation. We find out that the hatred of those around Zach had caused him to become, bitter and twisted, indeed, to become what the other cars feared.

Even when Jesus arrived in town, a popular figure, the other cars exclude Zach and pay back evil with evil. Such is Zach's desperation to see Jesus that he comes up with a risky plan just to catch a glimpse – doing something no car would normally do.

The ridicule of Zach by the other cars is confirmed when they see Zach on the roof, yet Jesus reacts differently. He holds out a hand of acceptance to Zach, one that even Zach knew he didn't deserve.

This acceptance brings about a transformation. Zach is a little kid again, showing his new friend his favourite spots. He owns up to his past mistakes and now wants to be like Jesus. He gives and makes amends, blessing rather than cursing those around him.

Jesus is overjoyed – he reports that's why he came, to seek the lost, left-out, over-looked.

The story has an immediate impact on the cars. They realise that their nastiness to a stranger was not how Jesus would have them be, and indeed will only end badly. They show grace and acceptance and not only gain a new friend, but gain insight into the world of electric cars that seems to ease their fears.

Key Learning Areas / Values addressed/ethics explored

Depending on the age of the children this story has a wealth of depth. Sometimes it's better just to let the story flow and wash over the children. It might be very difficult for them to articulate the

themes of the story using the right words – but they can feel it and experience it and let it soak into their souls – creating a culture for them. This is perhaps more how Jesus taught the crowd.

A key learning is on grace and acceptance. Jesus demonstrated in the story, that acceptance and grace have a restorative effect, while shunning and condemning only harden hearts – both the heart of the one shunned and those doing the shunning. Showing undeserved favour, when the one receiving knows it is undeserved, heals.

The lesson intrinsically calls the hearer to also show acceptance to those who are different, as the cars in the car park themselves live out this lesson. Jesus is shown as a person who was on a mission to find the missing.

Themes

Themes in this story are;

- Acceptance: as a powerful way to restore broken relationship. This is not acceptance of faults, but acceptance of a person as having intrinsic worth.
- Fear of difference and the unknown; Fear is often a common reaction to difference and the unknown, but it is not the best reaction. Seeking to understand is a healthier response.
- Difference; This story can challenge the idea of homogeneity. Part of the fear for the old cars towards the new car is because she is different. Yet this is such an ironic statement. The ‘original’ cars in the car park are all different [ute, motorbike, tractor, truck], there is no standard. The picture on 12 of the cars lining up to see Jesus is a case in point, all the cars are different!
- Faith; In our society *faith* is often associated with caution and a conservative approach. Yet Zach’s driving onto a shed roof was risky even foolish – yet it was the act of faith that Jesus noticed. Faith, biblically speaking, is closer to *risk* than *caution*. While we would not want to promote fool-hardy approaches to life, we would want to promote a life of faith as a life of spunk, not a life of cowardice.
- Environmental Issues; The story can be used to explore the issues surrounding Climate Change as Lin Su is an electric car, in a petrol world. Just as the cars reacted with fear to the new car, so this issue can produce fear in us as it brings in the unknown. What will the future hold? What will the world be like? Will we survive? This issues need to be explored seriously and sensitively with young children. You must always bring a message of hope to young people. This story shows that finding out more puts an end to our fear. Things may change, but change is not always bad, indeed change can be very good. Rather than the end of the world, Climate change is a doorway to a new world if we react positively to the challenge.

About the author

Paul Clark, born in Melbourne, now a Minister in Qld, has lived and ministered across four states as both a Youth Worker and Minister. He is married to Becky and they have two wonderful children, Jenny & Simon.

Paul trained and worked as a high school computer teacher in NSW before jumping into the deep end of full-time ministry. Nicknamed 'The Puppet Minister' because of his love of puppets, he is in reality passionate about the gospel and finding 'new ways to tell the old story.' He's very passionate about making the Gospel 'good news' - not boring news, and helping the church be more like Jesus.

He has been awarded the 'Outstanding achievement' award in the Community Services Section of the Young Australian of the Year awards, and has published a collection of 5 drama and puppet books to date, as well as the Car Park parables DVD and book series. He has taken his puppets to remote areas with the Mt Isa school of the Air, and done school tours to over 7000 children. He runs a 'Creative Ministry Group' as part of his church, seeing children and youth performing and using technology to show and tell the good news.



About the illustrator

Graham Preston is a Brisbane based illustrator, father of 7 and spends much of time serving Right the Life Australia. He has illustrated a number of kids books and his comics have appeared in a range of adult and children's newspapers and books.

Related text/resources

Luke 19:1-10.

Zac the Taxman. by Andrew MacDonough. Lost Sheep™ [Another Children's book]

Other Car Park Parables Books and DVD's.

Other possible topics depending on the book:

Cars! Storytelling. Climate Change. Environmental action – ie hybrid cars.

Specific activities for certain curriculum

Other books in the series coming soon

Visit www.carparkparables.com for a full list.

The Prodigal Ute [Book], The Missing Motorcycle [Book], Old Mr T and Friends [DVD – includes this story].

Blackline masters/colouring pages other photocopy-able resources

Trevor Truck's Activity Book contains colour-ins, find-a-words, mazes, and other resources that can be used in a classroom context. Please contact the publisher to obtain copy approval.

www.carparkparables.com has downloadable activities that are being added to all the time.