

Week 11 Day 4 | *New Testament Heroes: Zacchaeus*

The story of Zacchaeus is one of the more famous stories in the Bible, thanks in part to the children's song. If you're unfamiliar with this classic Sunday school staple, it goes like this:

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man
and a wee little man was he.
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
for the Lord he wanted to see.*

*And as the Savior passed that way
He looked up in that tree.
And He said, "Zacchaeus, you come down!
For I'm going to your house today!
For I'm going to your house today!"*

We can learn a lot from this little guy, especially what is left out of the song.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Well, people didn't like tax collectors due to the very nature of their job. Many tax collectors abused their position as a way to increase their personal wealth. They mercilessly overcharged their neighbors, keeping the excess for themselves. So when Luke 19:2 states that Zacchaeus was a "chief" tax collector and was rich, it's fair to assume he took advantage of his position. If people didn't like Zacchaeus, who could blame them?

For some reason, though, Zacchaeus wanted to know more about Jesus. In verse 3, we read, "And he was seeking to see who Jesus was...." Certainly, Jesus drew a crowd and perhaps Zacchaeus was merely curious. However, based on Zacchaeus' response to Jesus later on, my guess is that God was stirring in Zacchaeus' heart. Perhaps this was God planting the seeds of true life change.

Similarly, God might be doing the same with your heart even now. You sense His moving in your life, though you're unsure how or why or with what exactly. The question then becomes, how are you going to respond?

Let's look at how Zacchaeus responded. Luke 19:4 tells us that before he climbed the tree, "... he ran ahead...." Zacchaeus was determined! Neither the height, nor the size, nor the pace of the crowd was going to stop Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus. He ran and scurried up that tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

We should ask ourselves: do we truly seek Jesus with determination? Will we stop at nothing to see Him, know Him, and learn more about Him? Are we striving to see what He can do in our lives, including our fitness lives?

After Zacchaeus perched himself in the tree, we read in verse 5 that Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

Zacchaeus' response is stellar:

*"So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully."
—verse 6 (ESV)*

Jesus tells Zacchaeus to hurry and Zacchaeus hurries. Complete obedience. Not only does he obey completely, He does so joyfully.

How do you respond when you "hear" from God, in Scripture, through friends, convictions from the Holy Spirit, at

church, in a book, or wherever? Once you know what you're supposed to do, how do you respond? When He tells you to "hurry," do you take your time? We might already know what God would have us do, including where our fitness is concerned. Yet we only respond partially and begrudgingly. Rather than committing to clean eating with a grateful heart, we reluctantly eat an occasional salad. Instead of faithfully and joyfully pursuing exercise, we consider retail therapy at the mall to be our workout for the day.

This is not how Zacchaeus would have embraced his fitness. He would have passionately, earnestly, and joyfully pursued God-honoring body stewardship. Little Zacchaeus sets a big-time example.

In verse 7, we see the crowd's reaction: "And when they saw it, they all grumbled, 'He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'" People didn't like Zacchaeus and they didn't like that Jesus wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus. However, that didn't matter to Zacchaeus . . . or to Jesus.

Many people won't like it when you want to make a life change with your fitness either. This may be especially true when you want to include Jesus in the process. That shouldn't matter to you, because it doesn't matter to Jesus. Besides, you never know . . . the excitement rekindling here in Week 11 of this journey could speak to others. God could use your example to convict them or as a catalyst for them to get started with their fitness. Or better yet, God could use you to get them to seek Jesus in all areas of their life, including their fitness.

Moving on to Luke 19:8, we see a changed man: "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.'" Zacchaeus, the disliked, tax-collecting sinner, went all-in.

As Jesus goes on to tell us in Luke 19:9, salvation had come to this house!

Let's recap: We need to seek Jesus with determination. When He talks, we should respond completely and joyfully. We don't concern ourselves with what the world thinks because we don't live for the world. When we commit, we do so authentically.

Our response to God's calling should be fervent, complete, and joyful. The same should be said about our fitness. We are not honoring God if we're grumbling and half-hearted in our efforts. As always, honoring God with our bodies begins by honoring Him with our hearts.

So take a cue from Zacchaeus. Be passionate, earnest and joyful in your pursuit of the Lord . . . knowing you will be going to His house someday.

Prayer

Father, thank You for getting me this far, not just in my fitness, but in my life. Will You forgive me when I don't obey You fully, fervently, and joyfully? Help me always stay determined, faithful, and authentic in my walk with You. Amen.

Meditation

I will seek You passionately, joyfully, and completely.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Pick a meal to fast from for the day. The hunger you feel is a reminder to be praying for a fully surrendered life. As you pray throughout the day, be sure to ask God what He'd like you to learn from this exercise. We don't just pray. We pray and we listen.