

3 Ways You Can Simplify Your Life and Welcome Jesus In

I remember as a kid hearing the story of Zacchaeus and singing the song about him in Sunday school. Recently I was reading the story again and was struck by Zacchaeus' exuberance in welcoming Jesus.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who was quite wealthy living in Jericho. He had heard much about Jesus, so when he heard Jesus was going to be coming through his city he felt eager to see if everything he had heard was true. As Jesus made His way through the city, the crowd was so large following him that Zacchaeus, who was quite short, couldn't even catch a glimpse. So he raced ahead of the crowd and climbed into a tree so he would be able to see Jesus walking by (Luke 19:1-4). When Jesus got to the spot under the tree, He looked up and told Zacchaeus to come down because He wanted to visit with him in his house. Zacchaeus "scurried down the tree and came face-to-face with Jesus" (Luke 19:6, TPT). Luke continues by telling us that "Zacchaeus joyously welcomed Jesus and was amazed over his gracious visit to his home" (Luke 19:8).

I'm no longer a kid, but I still love this story so much! Though the religious leaders criticized Jesus for spending time with Zacchaeus, no one could rob Zacchaeus of the joy he experienced welcoming Jesus into his home. As I've been thinking about this story, I am reminded that welcoming Christ's presence into our everyday life brings great joy. It's a joy that can't be robbed by life's circumstances or challenges.

Like Zacchaeus:

We need face-time with Jesus. Zacchaeus hurried down the tree to come face-to-face with Jesus. You can sense his enthusiasm

and excitement at being with Jesus. It's easy after walking with the Lord for years to lose the passion we once felt to be with Him. Our to-do list and the general worries of life can crowd out the space we'd give to Him. Even good things can rob the time our souls need with Jesus. Here's the thing: No one can love you like Jesus can. In order to experience His love moment by moment through the day, you need time with Him. If someone says they love you, but they never prioritize time with you, it's difficult to believe their words. Just like we spend "FaceTime" on our cell phones with friends and loved ones, we need to prioritize face-time with Jesus. Ask God this week to stir up in you a renewed passion and excitement to spend time with Jesus.

We need to joyously welcome Jesus into the moments of our day. As you move through your day, train yourself to be aware of your thoughts. As you grapple with decisions, big or small, welcome Jesus into your decision-making process. As you drive in your car, welcome Jesus into your drive time. Practice stopping through the day and praying, "Lord Jesus, I welcome You into this moment." There is an ancient prayer written by, Mary Mrozowski called "The Welcoming Prayer." Part of the prayer reads:

Welcome, welcome, welcome ...

I let go of my desires for security.

I let go of my desire for approval.

I let go of my desire for control.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.

I open myself to the presence of God and the healing action and grace.

We need to let go of anything that gets in the way of our

devotion to Christ. For Zacchaeus, this meant giving away half of all he owned to the poor. Wow. Stop and think about that. Zacchaeus was so wowed by his time with Jesus that he exuberantly gave away half of what he owned! In our lives, we own much. This represents the radical work that Christ desires to do in our lives. It's a commitment that says, "Jesus, I want You and Your presence more than anything. Help me to prioritize You in every day. Rekindle in my heart that deep passion and desire for You."

Friend, take some time to read Luke 19:1-10. Don't miss the deep lessons about welcoming Jesus even though you're familiar with the story. Then consider: what's one way you can simplify your life to welcome Jesus more exuberantly? {eoa}

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