



August 1  
2015

## SPIRITUAL REVIVAL EMPHASIS

# Overcoming Obstacles

### I. Introduction Zacchaeus, an overcomer of obstacles

“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’ But 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.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’” (Luke 19:1–10, NIV).

Zacchaeus was a rich man from Jerusalem, a man who collected taxes for the Roman government for a living, but who is best known as a man who overcame obstacles and became a disciple of Jesus. As a chief tax collector, he

would have had more prestige than Matthew himself, but he had heard others talk about Jesus and had made the determination to meet Him personally. When the awaited moment finally came to see Jesus face to face, Zacchaeus faced three big obstacles:

1. The multitude. It seems hard to believe that those who followed Jesus with enthusiasm and fervor would be the same ones responsible for blocking Zacchaeus’ view. They were the ones who did not allow Zacchaeus to see Jesus. What a major lesson we can learn from this!
2. His stature. This second obstacle was Zacchaeus’ own. His own nature put him forth as a man of small stature. However, he remedied that instantly. He climbed the tree and from there he had the best view of Jesus possible at that moment. I’m sure that if Jesus happened to walk in right now or if we saw Him walking on the streets, we would do everything in our power to see Him up close.
3. The call to discipleship. The Lord called Zacchaeus. Jesus invited Himself over to Zacchaeus’ house. In response, Zacchaeus opened his heart to the Master and received immediate restoration (*All the Men in the Bible*, Zondervan, 1988).

**OPENING  
HYMN:**  
#615 “Rise Up,  
O Church of God”

**SCRIPTURE  
READING:**  
Luke 19:10:  
“For the Son  
of Man has come  
to seek and to  
save that which  
was lost.”

**CLOSING  
HYMN:**  
#610 “Stand  
Like the Brave”

**SERMON**

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## II. The mission of children's and youth ministries is one of salvation

The gospels reveal to us a Jesus who, as He was on earth, constantly took care of the needy, loved those who were rejected, and did not show partiality toward people. Because of the treatment He gave to Zacchaeus, kind and devoid of all prejudice, he was able to respond generously with what he had; his response went even further and he offered restitution of that which he had improperly obtained. The tax collector was too short to see above the multitude, but his desire to meet Jesus was so great that he used creativity to reach his objective. A sycamore tree is much like a short oak tree, with a thick trunk and branches, so Zacchaeus had the perfect angle to see Jesus.

Jesus took the initiative and called Zacchaeus. Not only did He call him, but according to the culture in that region, He gave him a seal of love and acceptance when He told him that He would go to his home. The multitude reacted with a show of astonishment and skepticism. Jesus then took the opportunity to demonstrate once again the nature of His mission. Zacchaeus' attempt has become something more.

Zacchaeus responded by coming down from the tree and receiving Jesus with joy—the joy pouring forth from a man who had honored God's wish despite the protests of many around him. We don't know how much time passed between the moment when Zacchaeus came down from the tree and when he pronounced the words, "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," but we do know that a rich man responded with faith after being touched by Jesus. Although he didn't need to give as generously as he said he would in order to be accepted by God, he became a man with his heart in the right place, with correct priorities in relationship to God's priorities. Zacchaeus became an exemplary disciple.

Jesus' announcement, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (v. 9) talks about this man's legacy. The blessing God

was granting to him had been obtained through faith. Jesus' mission had also been fulfilled, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (v. 10).

## III. Conclusion

When we talk about Children's Ministry and its beginnings in the Adventist Church, we talk about 1985, when the department was created, and 1995, when its first director was chosen, but the Adventist Church has concerned itself with a ministry to children since the 1800<sup>s</sup>.

More and more, we see the importance of carrying out a saving ministry that helps in the comprehensive education of children. Above everything else, children's and youth ministries are based on the ministry of Jesus on earth:

1. He blessed children and prayed for them,
2. He affirmed children,
3. He became a friend of children, and
4. He participated with children.

The example from the story of Zacchaeus reveals these four steps that are necessary for the salvation of children. Jesus blessed, affirmed, befriended, and participated with Zacchaeus. That's what children and youth ministries are. Our task as disciples of Jesus, as the church of God, is to bless, pray, and befriend children, and participate with them.

Children's and youth ministries need the support of each church member and official if we are to fulfill God's mission. Let's not be part of the multitude that, as in the case of Zacchaeus, would not allow others to see Jesus. Let's not allow ourselves to set them aside because of their short stature. On the contrary, let's lift children up high on our spiritual trunk and our strong branches of love, so that they may have a better view of our Jesus, so that they may respond to God's call to be His disciples for eternity. God Himself invites children and adults equally to respond to His loving call. What will your answer be?

Let's pray.

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