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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

**A2014 ~ Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

Around the year 1920 in the city of London, a young teenage girl became very upset about her appearance. When everyone else she knew her age grew tall, she didn't; she remained short. The girl also had lovely brown eyes and she prayed earnestly to God one night that He would change the colour of her eyes to blue. However, when she looked in the mirror the next morning, she saw that she still had eyes that were brown.

People both young and old are often not happy with how they look. They wish they had some part like someone else's. At such times, we can become envious of another person while discontented with ourselves. Yet it's a happy smile and cheerful manner that can make people like us for who we are and not by how we look. We always need to remember that God knows best and He has His own individual plan for our lives.

God had a very special assignment for the short young woman from London who had brown eyes. Her name was Gladys Aylward and she had some incredible adventures to face after becoming a missionary in China. When she arrived there, she found that she wasn't taller than the Chinese people around her and that her brown eyes and black hair helped her quickly be accepted into the Chinese way of life.

In today's drama, we meet another short person. The story of Zacchaeus is a popular children's story from the Bible and found in the first 10 verses of Luke, Chapter 19.

Zacchaeus dearly wanted to see the Lord Jesus as Jesus walked through his home town of Jericho.

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DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

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What a big difference Jesus made in Zacchaeus' life! What had he been like before? Zacchaeus was a rich chief tax collector in Jericho. Everyone knew him yet hated him. Everyone knew that tax collectors took a lot more money from the people than they should when collecting the annual taxes. Even though being a tax collector could create much wealth for himself, the biggest drawback was that outside their own group, tax collectors were generally socially excluded from everyone else.

Tax collectors were also left to deal with their consciences. Some had already deadened that part of their mind that told them cheating people was a wrong thing to do. And as a result, even if they gave up being a tax collector for a while, they were never accepted back into society. Such was a consequence of this type of job.

John the Baptist was once asked by some tax collectors who came for baptism in Luke, Chapter 3, what they should do about their situation? John told them not to collect any more tax than what was legal. Maybe Zacchaeus heard John the Baptist say this himself; or more likely, some angry person being charged an outrageous amount of tax made the tax collector know the right way of it.

Zacchaeus' conscience may have been working quietly as he pondered other teachings of Jesus that he had heard. Tax collectors were out among the people, talking to them and hearing what was going on. No doubt all the tax collectors had heard about the miracles that Jesus was performing in many different parts of the country. They may have even noted that one of Jesus' disciples had once been a tax collector too.

Even though Zacchaeus was a sinful and greedy man, Jesus called out to him while he sat hidden up in a tree. Jesus told the tax collector that He would be staying at his house that very day. Some people witnessing this grumbled against Jesus. They thought that no proper Jew, especially a teacher or prophet, would ever stay at the house of such a sinful man as a tax collector.

When Jesus and His disciples reached Zacchaeus' house, Zacchaeus fully repented of the evil that he had done. He confessed to them all that he had cheated the Jewish people. Then he publicly pledged half of his possessions to be given to the poor. He also said he would pay back and compensate four times anyone he had cheated. This extra payback system of restitution was part of the Law of Moses. For in Exodus, Chapter 22, it says: "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen and four sheep for the sheep." In some courts of law, the guilty person may be required to pay compensation to the person wronged and this is a fair ruling.

Many dishonest people are forced to be honest by the standards of the law, yet they receive no credit from God in doing such. But Zacchaeus became honest by his own choice and showed Jesus that he had truly repented from his old tax collecting ways. Zacchaeus had lived as a man of the world for many years. But when he came face-to-face with the Lord Jesus, it was then that he changed his ways. When Jesus heard the tax collector's words of repentance and knew his change of heart, Jesus said that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house that very day.

Jesus came to earth to save lost sinners just like Zacchaeus. What great news! With it comes freedom from sin and guilt, and special blessings and promises of walking with God. If we are truly saved and Jesus is living within us, like Zacchaeus, we too will want to tell others the good news of salvation we have come to know. Yet like Zacchaeus, we need to forsake our old ways of doing things, which belong to the world, and instead learn God's ways. The more we know and understand God's ways, the better we will come to know and work for Him.

An older pastor had come to learn how to manage a large church organisation, for when certain situations came up, he felt close to panicking. He thought that if he had known God's ways better at an earlier age, many of the problems he was facing now would have been robbed of their fear. As the years went by, the pastor gained insight into the way God works and trusting in the Lord, he calmed down while knowing a deep inner security and peace.

The pastor taught people that Jesus is our perfect example to know and follow. Jesus was never in a hurry and appeared to be adequate for every situation that confronted Him. Jesus lived a very busy life during the three and a half years that He had in ministry, but He never tried to do everything He saw needing doing around Him. When He went to the Pool of Salome crowded with desperate sick people, He spoke only to one man there. Jesus' solution was to look to His Father in heaven for guidance; He saw that His Father's way in certain situations was not to heal everyone. Without God's leading, we can quickly take on far more than we can possibly handle too.

In 1 Timothy, Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul says that godliness has value in all things. Other things are important but are not nearly as important as living a godly lifestyle.

God's way is to train us before He entrusts us with great responsibility in His kingdom. God tests us first and we must be willing to go through this process of trial and discipline. These tests are not to convince God of our ability to perform but that we might become more refined and ready to do God's work through the testing.

Many unexplainable bad circumstances in life affect either the physical, financial, social or spiritual areas we find important in life. Such testing is done with the purpose of discerning the quality of what's in our hearts when things don't go our way. These testings expose our weaknesses and cause us to turn to Christ for deliverance from many hidden errors. This is the making of a person who will become a trusted servant, who won't break under pressure or walk away from an issue when tired or discouraged.

The good news for us is that God knows how much testing that we can bear; He doesn't ask us to bear more than we can bear. The Scriptures clearly teach us that tests come to try the genuineness of our faith by exposing any hidden or corrupt motives within us, as well as any bad attitudes rooted deep within our hearts. Tests from God are things to be thankful for as they cultivate a deeper knowledge of God's ways and character, and cause us to press into Jesus and His strength when we have nothing left to trust in ourselves.

One big test we all face in life is the money test. Many a young man has started out in the work of God with tremendous spiritual potential and yet failed the money test. Some Christians fall by the wayside because they cannot handle money or the influence and effect that it can have on us. We need to learn how to be good money managers for God and not try to keep money for ourselves because we think we deserve this.

Another big test is the time test. One of the greatest tests of discipleship is what we do with the minutes and hours that are entrusted to us each day. It's very easy to fritter away the best years of our lives by focusing on entertainment and pleasure. But those who are masters of time, like the Lord Jesus, never waste any. We need to learn to say "No" to things of lesser importance so that we can say "Yes" to the most necessary things that enhance our spiritual growth.

God also has a persistence test. Sometimes we feel like giving up on a project because it isn't worth all the effort for the gain of such small results. We need to keep going on what God has called us to do, even when things might look grim. The Church is filled with people who made good beginnings but bad endings. People start with good intentions but then, for various reasons, end up compromising on their original plans. Others become discouraged and give up their work and sadly, sometimes even their faith. We need to finish the tasks God has given us to do while living in the strength and purity of Christ's power, forgiveness and example of humility.

Then there's the 'present circumstances don't suit me' test. Some people are not willing to wait and embrace the time that they are going through for God's glory. If any of us get tired with our present situation, we can call on Jesus' name and worship Him as our Lord. We may need to learn to live with a current set of circumstances until it's time to go to our heavenly home.

One example is sticking to your marriage vows. The number of people who now walk out of their marriage commitment because something doesn't please them is staggering. In past generations, people often held their marriage together for the sake of the children. But now we see that marriage partners are much fussier about what they refuse to live with and less tolerant to forgive and love the other person who is different to them.

There's an important test called the 'tongue' test? Many a person has ruined their spiritual future through thoughtless or unkind words. If your words are stained by unrestraint and poor self-discipline, God will mark you as a person unfit for duty in His Church. The control of one's tongue and temper are necessities for any servant of God who is filled with His Spirit.

We all need to pass the forgiveness test. How often have you heard someone say, "I could never forgive that person for doing what they did!" But this message is contrary to what God calls us to do in the Scriptures. Our forgiveness from God depends on our forgiving those who have wronged us, and maybe many times. Yet we need to find a solution for our inability to forgive. We need to pray for God's direct healing and teaching in how to learn to forgive, because in doing God's work, there will be many times when we are going to get hurt. People will disappoint us, tell lies about us and unjustly attack our character. So we must be prepared to forgive as we follow the example that Christ gave. Forgiveness frees us from the internal stain of bitterness and bad memories!

God has many ways He uses to achieve His outcomes in people's lives. So the last test to be mentioned is the "honour and praise" test. When a major project has taken years to be accomplished, some involved with it want public recognition for their labours in it. It's never the servants' place to seek honour and attention, or to compete with God for some of the glory. God insists that we give Him all the honour, glory and praise and with the greatest joy that we can. In Isaiah, Chapter 42 God says: "I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another."

God is still seeking those who will walk in His ways and promises great blessings to those who'll do so. In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 7, the Lord told His people, "If my people who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

The Israelites wouldn't give up their idolatrous ways and walk in God's way. As a result of this decision, from that time on they only saw God's acts. They missed His ways and they were content to be observers on the sidelines. God wanted people who would walk with Him in His ways and follow wherever He would lead.

To know only the acts of God and not His ways is to take for granted the most precious and valuable thing that we have on this earth...a personal relationship with our God who loves us with an everlasting love. The best way of knowing God's ways is through a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Psalm 86, Verse 11 says: "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may respect your name."

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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