

Call to Obedience #479
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Three Very Smart People

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Today, I want to draw your attention to three of the smartest people mentioned in the Gospels. They are not considered wise by the world, but they certainly made God smile upon them then, and forever after. I do hope that you would also like to be such a person upon whom the Almighty smiles for eternity. Unknown to these three at the time, they have become teachers to millions throughout the centuries.

I will begin by examining the subject of intelligence. There is natural intelligence that the world glorifies, and there is spiritual intelligence which is what God is looking for—it helps us to get around in His kingdom. Natural and spiritual intelligence are incompatible. They lead us to different conclusions and to divergent destinies. Therefore, Paul says that: *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness...* (1 Cor. 2:14). These two intelligences have different sources. Natural intelligence is acquired at natural birth and except for minor changes, we are stuck with it the rest of our lives. But spiritual intelligence has its beginning at spiritual birth and it grows exponentially as our roots go down in humility. Isn't this great? Although we are stuck with our natural IQ for life, we can become brighter and brighter in the things of the Spirit as long as we pay the price of self-denial.

God wants man to be spiritually bright. That is why He told Adam and Eve: do not eat of the tree of knowledge or you will die. God wanted Adam and Eve to trust Him. Trusting in God will make man depend on God's intelligence. The serpent told Eve that she had a right to know and to investigate. On the contrary, God told her to trust and obey. So, from the beginning, God has never looked for men and women with great natural intelligence or education. None of His apostles were college graduates, but yet, they turned the world right side up. The Apostle Paul had to cast all his learning on a dung pile before he could be used by God, and he concluded that all the wisdom of the world he once gloried in was now foolishness to Him. He also said that knowledge puffs up. Jesus said: *I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed*

them to infants (Matt. 11:25 CSB). Solomon, who had the gift of wisdom, said out of that gift of wisdom: *Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life* (Prov. 4:23). If you go to college, you had better take Jesus with you; without Him, you are likely to get all tangled up.

All right, are you ready for three of the most spiritually intelligent people in the Gospels who still influence all of us to this very day? They are the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and the man born blind. All of them were rejected by the world but highly favored by their Maker.

The Samaritan Woman at the Jacob's Well (John 4:1-42).

Jesus was so impressed by this Samaritan woman that He made a detour in His travels to seek her out. And that meeting between these two was so great that it could have made headlines in the Jerusalem Post of those days. And what was the sign of this Samaritan having spiritual intelligence? **It was that she acknowledged that her well was empty.** I believe that this tops Einstein's discoveries in physics. Once you realize that you are at the very bottom of all things, you come to the threshold of true greatness. So, with this intelligence, this woman became the first foreigner to convert to Christianity: despised and unwanted by the Jews. She is an echo of her cousin, Rahab, of ancient times, who also knew that her well was empty and with that, she became the first Canaanite to convert to Judaism to become a grandmother of Jesus. Thank you, John, for recording this story of the Samaritan. The other gospels did not record it. Then this Samaritan had her empty well filled, and better than that, she connected it up to Jesus' well of living water. His well of living water is a perpetual supply of the rivers that flow from the throne of God and with this, she became the first true evangelist in the history of the church. Indeed, unbeknownst to her, she was a smart woman!

Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10).

Zacchaeus was another socially shunned person. He was not only one who did not fit in, but he was also considered a traitor and was totally rejected by the Jews. He was a chief tax collector. Yet, despite this, he was spiritually smart. He also knew that his well was empty, ever so empty. Be careful about your thoughts concerning rich people. What you see on the outside may not reflect what is in their hearts. Never measure a man by the kind of car he drives, the kind of house he lives in, the kind of clothing he wears, the kind of education he has nor by what he has been but rather by what he is now. Yes, Zacchaeus knew that his well was empty, but his story adds a little more to the story of the Samaritan woman. Zacchaeus was the first believer of the church

of Jesus Christ who **demonstrated what repentance, “...not to be regretted...” looks like** (2 Cor. 7:10) when he said: *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* (Luke 19:8 NIV). You say that is from the Old Testament, so what? Here is what the Old Testament law requires for restitution for fraud: repayment plus 20% (Lev. 6:2-5). But Zacchaeus went so far beyond the Old Testament law that he was in harmony with Jesus’ teaching on giving: packed down and running over (Luke 6:38). This kind of giving, this humility and this yielding to God thrilled Jesus’ heart to such an extent that He was compelled to urgently insist on visiting Zacchaeus, just as He had visited the Samaritan woman before this.

How is your giving, my dear friend? Does it draw Jesus into your home, into your heart? Is your stinginess keeping Jesus away? Jesus watches where your money goes. Remember, Jesus sat down at the temple one day and watched how people gave. He still does so today. Jesus blessed Zacchaeus with His presence. He did not just say, I want to be with you today; no, it was: *...Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house* (Luke 19:5 KJV). There is no story of Jesus ever having visited a man with a greater urgency than Zacchaeus! Oh, my friend, we do not talk much about money in our churches. But Jesus pays more attention to our money than to the words we speak. Zacchaeus was a smart man. He **refreshed the doctrine of restitution and gave substance to repentance**. This brought Jesus into Zacchaeus’s house.

The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41).

The Apostle John gives the same amount of space to the man born blind as to the Samaritan woman. The man born blind is another person whom Jesus just had to see. It is said of Jesus that He must go through Samaria, that He must go to Zacchaeus’ house and here we have that same sense of urgency. Once the blind man, now healed, started preaching to the Pharisees and was cast out of the church by them, Jesus just had to see him and went out of His way to find him (John 1:35). Are you beginning to get the picture that **there are certain people that Jesus just cannot stay away from**? He is drawn to them like a magnet. They are close to Him in this life and will be close to Him forever at the throne of God. Is there something about your life that draws Jesus to you, that causes Him to choose you above many of your fellows forever?

This man was born blind. Why did he have to suffer? Here is the answer: *...Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God would be revealed in him* (John 9:3). Now, all through his restricted, fumbling life, he had no idea about that. But he had the spiritual intelligence coming out of a deep spirit of humility to recognize that Jesus is God, to commit himself completely to Him and to preach about Him in the face of abounding cowardice and opposition. This demonstrates that God can glorify Himself whenever He can find the proper human response to His goodness. This blind man had that proper response, therefore Jesus sought him out and revealed Himself in the time of the man's need, while the educated Pharisees rejected the truth and refused to glorify God during the whole episode. On the same day when Jesus was passing by, the blind man entered divine history forever to bless millions of people until the end of time. Glory to God! He also was indeed a smart man!

So there you have it, my friend. The Samaritan woman was smart enough to know she was empty, Zacchaeus was smart enough to know he needed to make restitution, and the blind man was smart enough to respond correctly to God in complete submission and public testimony. Spiritual intelligence trumps natural intelligence more than a million times. So, would you rather have a high IQ with man or a high IQ with God? To get the former, you need a ladder to climb higher above your friends or enemies. To get the latter, you need a shovel to dig deeper to get below your friends and enemies to become a servant of all.

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