

**Joke:** Little Kevin had a habit of stealing apples from his neighbors farm. Annoyed, the neighbor tried to catch Kevin in the act but was unsuccessful in doing so. He decided to hire a wise man to help him. The wise man thought about it for a moment, then painted a few words on a sign and hung it near the apple trees and left. The sign said, "one apple is poisoned." The next day the neighbor calls the wise man back complaining and asks for his money back, the wise man sure his plan was good was now a bit confused and asks whether his apples were stolen, the neighbor replied that they weren't, then what's the problem and why do you want your money back the wiseman asked? The neighbor showed him the sign that had a new addition, added to the bottom of the sign we're these words: Now there are two!

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## Wise Men - changed minds

Matthew 2:10–12 (NIV): When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Almost every Christmas, we talk about the Wisemen making their long journey to see the baby Jesus. We talk about how they worshipped him and the significance of the three gifts given. And why wouldn't we that is the primary focus of the story of the Magi.

However, have you ever thought about the fact that the Wisemen had to change their minds? How many of you struggle with change?

They had a plan. . .their plan? Find the Messiah, give him gifts, turn around, and go home.

And obviously the quickest and easiest way to return home was to just reverse the route they took getting there. After all, doing that they would know where the gas stations were, where the best places to eat were. Plus on top of that, that one Wiseman with the electric camel knows where the charging stations are.

Truth is many if not most of us change our minds about as often as we change our socks. However, there are times when change may be needed but is difficult to do.

Changing your position on an important issue. Or maybe a change in your theology.

Honestly, sometimes the change you may be dealing with is life-altering. Like the Wisemen, it will change the path you are on in life. And in those times, it would be good to keep three things in mind:

Three things. . . Divine - Decide - Dedicate

The Wisemen had a divine dream calling them to change their minds about how to get home. This was not for their safety or prosperity but to be obedient to the dream and walk in God's divine plan. They had to decide if they would follow this divine intervention or ignore it. No one in all of history would blame them if they returned the way they came. And I believe God would figure out a way to protect the holy family no matter what the Wisemen decided.

Job 42:2 (NIV): 2 "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

However, their dedication to this decision, that was prompted by a divine dream, gave them a place of honor in the Bible for their obedience.

The Bible is filled with people who had to change their minds about different things. In the Old Testament: Lot changed his mind about where he'd live.

Jonah changed his mind about where he'd go. Esther changed her mind about what she'd say.

And in the New Testament countless times as well.

And today, let's compare and contrast two people from the New Testament who were called to change their minds: One is the Rich Young Ruler, the other is Zacchaeus.

Luke 18 tells the story of a rich young man seeking Jesus to find out what he must do to gain eternal life. And Jesus says:

Luke 18:20–22 (NIV): You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" 21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

And then just one chapter later, in Luke 19, we see Zacchaeus' call to change his mind. Jesus walks into town, looks up at the "wee little man" sitting in a tree, and says to him:

Luke 19:5–9 (NIV): When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 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." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."

Two men, both called to change their minds about things. Called to “alter the path of their journey.” On this side of history, we see them a little differently than who they really were. Consider this:

The rich young ruler was a wonderfully religious guy. I mean just ask him! By all accounts, he followed the rules, and honored God with his life. He even told Jesus that all the commandments that Jesus told him to obey he says, “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” It seems he wanted to ensure he was doing everything right to gain eternal life. He was the type of man you would want your daughter to marry. He was the young man many parents hoped their children would become.

In contrast, Zacchaeus was a tax collector. In other words, he was a traitor to his people and, by all accounts, not religious at all. He cheated people out of their money and partnered with Rome to extort God’s people. If your daughter brought Zacchaeus home, it is possible you wouldn’t let him in the house. If you did, there would be some very serious discussions once he left.

We even see an example of one of the religious people in Jesus’ day praying, “Lord, thank you that I am not like this tax collector.” Now I realize that his motive wasn’t right either but you get the idea. A tax collector in those days wasn’t all that popular, back to Luke.

Let’s compare their stories.

Just as the Wisemen had a divine dream, the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus didn’t have a divine dream but both did have a divine calling to change their minds:

Jesus tells the Rich Young Ruler to “Sell everything you have and give to the poor.” Jesus knows that money has a hold on this guy’s heart. Jesus would love for this guy to join the caravan. Who knows, maybe if he would have done what Jesus told him to do he might have become the next disciple.

However, Jesus also knows that you cannot serve two masters.

Matthew 6:24 (NIV): 24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

And let me just say this. Money is not evil, it's necessary. Scripture tells us the love of money is the root of all evil. And I believe that God wants to bless His children so that they can be a blessing. But God doesn't want money to be a hinderance in your relationship with Him. And these rich young ruler has a love of money.

So, he is calling this young man to change his mind about money. Instead of serving money, he wants him to use money to serve others. He is trying to get him to see money as a tool to help other people, instead of a possession where you base your identity.

Jesus tells Zacchaeus, “I must stay at your house.” Jesus is well aware that Zacchaeus also serves money. However, Zacchaeus doesn't feel like he is a part of the family. He has been rejected by everyone and feels like he is all alone in life. And Jesus is calling Zacchaeus to change his mind about who he is and who Jesus really is. “Come down” is as much about where he is in the tree as it is about where he thinks he is in life. Zacchaeus felt better than many about who he thought he was, yet rejected by those around him because of who he thought he was.

Two men, both with a divine call to change their minds about who they are and what they serve.

Just as the Wisemen had to decide to change their path, the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus must decide if they will change.

Jesus gives the Rich Young Ruler a divine calling; the Bible says it made him sad. Sometimes change is difficult. Amen.

Our desire to change must eclipse our desire to stay the same because sometimes change is incredibly challenging. Jesus is calling this young man to give up his identity. Even to this day, we identify him as the “Rich” Young Ruler. He had found his identity in his stuff and his status. Jesus tells him, “If you want to find eternal life, then you need to find your identity in me and not in what you have.”

Talk about that.

This is a calling to actual change. It will change how he lives, who he associates with, and how others see him. If he says “okay,” it will change everything. His decision is instantaneous. He is not sad that Jesus said something; he is sad because he has already decided he cannot change or at least not willing to.

In contrast, Jesus gives Zacchaeus a divine calling, and the Bible says, “he came down at once and gladly welcomed him.” Sometimes, change is so exciting we don’t think about its implications. In fact, as Zacchaeus was shimmying down that tree, he honestly had no idea that what seemed like a simple decision would become a life-altering decision.

One “yes” to Jesus would change the entire journey of the rest of Zacchaeus’ life. This decision will change the way he lives, how people see him, and who he spends time with. It will change his politics and his theology.

And honestly, we like to think that since he decided or even when we decide to say “yes” to Jesus, that life will be infinitely better, but Jesus also said this:

John 16:33 (NIV): 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

While we hold on to Jesus overcoming the world, as we should, we also should not miss out on the first part of that passage. Zacchaeus’ decision to

invite Jesus to his home was also an invitation to the challenges and troubles of being a follower of Jesus. He will have to learn to live with less income, less political power, and less influence in certain areas of life. His decision for more Jesus may just cause him less of other things.

When you look at these two stories together and maybe you never thought about this but I find it interesting to think the Rich Young Ruler is offered life with Jesus, but Zacchaeus is merely offered dinner with Jesus?

However, both of their decisions would change their lives in many different ways.

Just as the Wisemen dedicated themselves to their decision, so would the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus dedicate themselves to their decisions.

In Mark 10, we see the Rich Young Ruler “went away grieving.” He didn’t have to, but he was dedicated to his decision not to change his mind about how he found his identity. He was dedicated to continuing to live the way he had been living rather than choosing to follow Jesus.

And we have all been there. We have all had those moments when our journey finds us on a road of regret about a decision we made. Many of those decisions were tied to the fact that we were unwilling to change our minds about something. Even now, just hearing those words, some of us are reminded of times when we wish we could go back and change rather than stay the same. We have tasted the Rich Young Ruler’s grief. Yet like him, we stayed dedicated to our decision not to change.

On the other hand, Zacchaeus is the poster child of dedication to changing your mind. Look at his dedication: “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.” Now that is dedication! Sometimes we forget that dedication is costly.

Right up front, he is giving away half of everything he has. Jesus never even suggested that to Zacchaeus. This is not an obligation; it is an offering. He is not giving it to people he owes but to people in need. He is starting to understand that money is a tool, not a treasure.

And for us, as we become more like Jesus, it becomes less of us and more of Him. We change because we want Papa to be pleased. Talk about that.

If giving away half of what he has to the poor isn't dedication enough, he's going to give back four times what he cheated anybody out of. Can you stop for a minute and think about what living on half your income would be like? Now, out of the half you have, you're going to pay back people four times what you may actually owe them. We love this story! We celebrate Zacchaeus! But his story is not just there for us to cheer him on. He is setting an example of just how costly dedication to change can be.

We see two men who were given a divine call to change their minds about big things in life. They both made decisions that would affect the path they took in their journey of life. Both of them experienced the cost of being dedicated to their decision. In the end, one went away incredibly sad, and the other incredibly satisfied.

Let's close with the words of another wise man. The Apostle Paul who said:

Romans 12:2 (NIV): Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

What are the patterns of your world? We always seem to make it about the world outside of the church. The "secular" world as we call it. But what if you looked at the world you live in? What if you reconsidered how you make decisions based on the world of your family, your church, your work, and your friends?



Another thing worth noting about this passage is that the word Paul uses there that translates to “renewing” can also be translated as “change of heart and life.” In other words, it seems like Paul calls the Christians in Rome to be open to changing their minds about things.

Jesus would use this phrase several times, “You have heard it was said....but I say.” In other words, “You were taught to think, act, and do something this way, but I am calling you to change your mind about it.”

In the church, we can tend to get stagnant and avoid change. Let’s face it there is often comfort in staying the same. However, there are times when change is needed. It could be as simple as changing the direction of your journey home or as complicated as changing your mind about where you find your identity.

I’m not talking about compromise the church needs now more then ever to stand on God’s Word with boldness and truth. Amen. But there are times that God would have us change somethings in our lives to reach the destiny that He has called us to. That’s why I can read the Scripture and all of a sudden something just leaps out that I never noticed before. It’s not that it was just added it was there all along, but a God gave me divine revelation of that passage. And if I will change it may just have a huge impact on my calling and my divine destiny that God has purposed for me.

### **Show Video - Wisemen**

Wisemen seek Jesus above everything else, and from time to time, they also change their mind and alter their journey in this life. May the God of peace teach us when to change and when to stay the same. And give us the strength to do it as well.

### **Show video - Invitation**