

CHANGE

Introduction: Merrill's skit (throw off the old)

- Experts say we have to make 35,000 choices per day
- Many people do not like change
 - Not all change is good or progressive

Isaiah 43:19 *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*

ILLUSTRATION: Dr Harry Ironside was a great Christian leader in the first half of 20th Century. On one occasion, he was involved with a Salvation Army meeting in San Francisco. Dr Ironside shared his testimony with the gathering, then returned to his seat on the platform.

Soon after sitting down, a note was handed to Dr Ironside. A well-known atheist (someone who doesn't believe in God) was in the crowd, and he had written a brief note on his business card, then had someone hand it to Ironside. In it, the Atheist challenged Ironside to a public debate, and offered to pay all expenses.

Ironside then returned to the podium and publicly accepted the debate on the following conditions: That the Atheist would bring one man and one woman who had both fallen into some type of vice that had caused them to experience great loss, and cost them favour within society, but who were now back in the graces of their respective families and society at large because of the positive changes and transformation caused by their new-found belief in atheism.

"I will bring 100 people to the meeting whose lives have been changed through belief in and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour!" he declared.

The Atheist declined the invitation.

1. **Change of Direction**

- What happens if Grace walks through the front door?
- Zacchaeus' story:
 - Chief Tax collector
 - Financed by illegal money
 - Avoided by neighbours
 - Wants to see Jesus (hungry)
- Jesus: full of truth and grace
 - Wants to come to Zac's place
- "When Grace walks in, selfishness scampers out the back" (Max Lucado)

Luke 19:8-9 *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.

- Today, salvation has come

2. **Change of Attitude**

- What attitude ruled me in 2019?
- Disciples’ question: who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 18:3-4 *Learn this well: Unless you dramatically change your way of thinking and become teachable, and learn about heaven’s kingdom realm with the wide-eyed wonder of a child, you will never be able to enter in. Whoever continually humbles himself to become like this gentle child is the greatest one in heaven’s kingdom realm. (TPT)*

- Dramatically change – convert; turn

Mark 10:45 *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

3. **Change of Belief**

- Sometimes our belief system needs a jolt to get us moving.

Newton's **first law** of motion



ILLUSTRATION:

Sir Isaac Newton’s First Law of Motion states that *“An object in motion will stay in motion, and an object at rest will stay at rest unless acted on by an outside force.”*

- Toy Car Demonstration
- Pool of Bethesda Story – John 5:1-15
 - Man sick for 38 years

BACKGROUND: Cultural context of the Pool of Bethesda.

The Greeks had created a cult around Asklepius (ask-lep-i-us) the pagan god of healing. During the Hellenistic period, the Greeks built “Asklepions”, or

ancient healing centres, all across the Greek Empire. The ill and disabled would congregate at these regional healing centres. They would drink and bathe in the waters of the Asklepiion, and then sleep within the temple's walls. They slept on mats laid out in a section of the inner sanctum of the temple, called the "abaton". The Abaton was supposed to be the place of divine dreams, where Asklepius or his serpents might appear to give the sick clues about their healing.

In simple terms, the Greeks attributed the healing powers of natural springs to spirits. This belief made its way in to the cult of Asklepius. His temples were typically built near sacred springs with shallow pools and baths. Participants would wait by the water, praying, fasting, chanting etc until Asklepius or his helpful 'serpent spirits' churned the water. This was the best time for a healing miracle – when bubbles or ripples made their way from the spring to the pool.

- Jesus challenged the Greek (pagan) belief system.

John 5:6-7 *When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"*

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

- Do you want to be well?
 - Choose to avoid 'excuses'

John 5:8-9 *Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath...*

- Choose to act
- Stop selling yourself short!