

Starting Over

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Introduction: The opportunity to start over is both a great blessing and a frightening challenge

- A. It is rare when you get a chance to start over in something that matters.
 - 1. In my golf game I often award myself “mulligans.”
 - 2. There were teachers who gave a test over when the class did poorly.
 - 3. I had ball games that were rained out and had to be replayed.
- B. There are things that cannot be changed.
 - 1. Esau learned this through bitter experience. (**Heb 12:16-17**)
 - 2. Starting over will only involve things that can be changed and things that are under the control of your will!
 - 3. Sadly, there are Christian parents who look back with great regret. (Ex. “The twig has been bent.”)
 - 4. Time can make a huge difference. Will you carefully consider these things today?

I. The forgiveness of God is an opportunity to start over

- A. What God offers us in forgiveness is beyond description!
 - 1. We are blind men given sight and prisoners freed from darkness. (**Isa 42:7**)
 - 2. We are given a new life as a child of God. (**Rom 6:3-4; 2 Cor 5:17**)
- B. We can “start over” at any time. (**Rev 22:17**)
 - 1. Many find this hard to believe. (**Mt 20:3-16**)
 - 2. Remember that our God has emphasized this aspect of His nature. (**Ex 34:6-7**)
- B. The example of Zacchaeus and Jesus. (**Luke 19:1-4**)
 - 1. Zacchaeus never expected that this day was to be one in which he would “start over”.
 - 2. It probably shocked Zacchaeus that Jesus was even interested in him. (**Luke 19:5-6**)
 - 3. The world’s thinking about God and sinners was expressed by the critics of Jesus. Maybe Zacchaeus had accepted this falsehood. (**Luke 19:7**)
 - 4. God’s way to start over always involves repentance. (**Luke 19:8**)
 - a. When God offers you a chance to start over, you can do it!
 - b. Still, the call of repentance causes most to turn away.
 - c. Do you really trust God?
 - 5. Jesus wants you to know that He is seeing you as well! (**Luke 19:9-10**)
 - 6. Some possible excuses Satan would offer Zacchaeus.
 - a. “I am too evil.” b. “I just can not live the Christian life.”
 - c. “I have gone too far into sin.”

II. Christians have opportunities to start over

- A. We can start well but drift to a point where we must “start over.”
 - 1. The church at Ephesus had a great start but they lost something essential.

(Rev 2:2-5)

2. In many ways this kind of “starting over” can be more difficult than becoming a Christian. (Ex. How many fallen Christians in this area?)
 3. You must renew your conscience, overcome pride, and have the courage to change if you are to start over. (Ex. Eldership that cannot admit mistakes)
- B. It takes a great faith to leave the familiar!
1. Israel left Egypt, but most of them had no faith. **(Heb 4:1-2)**
 2. Look at the trivial things they complained about! **(Num 11:4-6)**
 3. Most Christians who will be lost will let things like this defeat them.
- C. Where are you right now? What is holding you back from fully serving the Lord?
1. Just as He did with the rich young ruler, Jesus right now sees your heart and knows the things you must let go of. Will You? **(Mk 10:21-22)**
 2. Ultimately you must be converted again. This happened to Peter: “when once you have turned again” (NASV) **(Lk 22:31-32)**
 3. This change is so great that Jesus describes Himself as being on the outside looking in. **(Rev 3:20)**

III. The difference between starting over and duplicating sin

- A. Some people start over with some regret, temporary change but no change of heart. **(2 Cor 7:9)**
1. When you are locked in worldly sorrow, you are not ready to really change!
 2. You may have some pain, but you repeat the same plans! (Ex. Woman who found her husband had cheated and was an alcoholic)
- B. A change brought by faith will take enormous “risks.”
1. Those at Ephesus who wished to repent of belief in Magic did not sell their books at a yard sale. **(Acts 19:18-20)**
 2. We have those in churches that give advice that do not understand the nature of a real faith. (Ex. “You do not have to give.”)
- C. Others will be affected by your decision.
1. What if Zacchaeus decided that following the Lord would be too much of a financial sacrifice?
 2. His friends and especially his family would likely never know the Lord.
 3. “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” - Edmund Burke
- D. These principles can be applied to other Christian duties as well.
1. Our relationship with our mate. **(Ephesians 5:25-30)**
 2. Our efforts to grow as a Christian. **(Philippians 1:9)**
 3. Our work in reaching the lost. **(Luke 19:10; Matthew 28:19-20)**
 4. Our attitude towards other Christians. **(Ephesians 4:31-32)**

Conclusion: You will never regret beginning again.

- A. After meeting with Jesus he lived a victorious life. **(Jn 21:15-19)**
- B. Do you hear the knock?