

Review – Please look over your notes from this weekend or the points below before your group meets.

You and I cannot stuff Jesus or our experience with Him into our old ways of thinking and living. Life with Jesus is a new and exciting thing. He Himself wants to fill us, to expand our personalities, and to reshape us to fit who He is. When Jesus, the Man with all power, comes into our lives, we are privileged to open ourselves up to newness. Bible Teacher's Commentary

Remember – you don't have to ask every question and cover all the material.

SHARE IT – Connecting with each other

- Describe a family tradition that you cherish? How did it begin?
- Have you ever tried to change a family tradition? How well was it received?

GO DEEP – Connect with the Scriptures

The parable of the cloth and wineskins falls between several interactions with the Pharisees who were questioning Jesus' actions and authority. Read [Mark 2:13-28](#), [3:1-6](#). Similar texts in Matthew 9 and Luke 5.

The Pharisees were a strict group of religious Jews who advocated minute obedience to the Jewish law and traditions. They rejected Jesus' claim to be the Messiah because He did not follow all **their** traditions and associated with notoriously wicked people.

Read [Matt. 5:17-20](#), [15:1-9](#), [22:15-18](#), [23:1-33](#); [Luke 6:1-9](#), [7:30-43](#), [18:11-12](#); [Phi. 3:1-21](#).

Why did the Pharisees and other religious leaders attack Jesus?

What things did Jesus do outside their rules and traditions?

How were the Pharisees described by Jesus? Do we have modern day Pharisees?

Levi's banquet leads to further questions about religious practices of the Jews, particularly fasting and prayer. These practices were considered significant indications of religious devotion. The religious leaders (including the Pharisees) in Jesus' day had developed a legalistic system that violated Old Testament teachings. Under the law, fasting was a voluntary act, but these men believed they had to fast twice a week (Monday & Thursday) to be in the will of God. In the law, the only required fast was on the Day of Atonement, but after the Exile four other annual fasts were observed by the Jews.

Read [Leviticus 16:29-31](#), [23:27-32](#); [Zechariah 7:5](#), [8:19](#); [Matthew 9:14-15](#); [Luke 18:9-14](#); [Acts 13:1-3](#), [14:23](#).

What was the purpose of fasting? What had the religious leaders turned it into?

Why did Christ's disciples not fast like the Pharisees?

In Mark 2:18-22, Jesus uses three metaphors to contrast His way versus the traditions of the Pharisees. These illustrations show that the New Covenant introduced by Jesus could not simply be patched onto old Judaism or poured into the old wineskins of Judaism. New forms would have to accompany the Kingdom that Jesus was now inaugurating. To try to tame Jesus and incorporate Him into the matrix of established Jewish religion and piety would only succeed in ruining both Judaism and Jesus' teaching.

Why would one not put new cloth over a tear in an old garment? Explain how this relates to the gospel.

What was Jesus' point in the illustration of new wine in old wineskins?

Are you putting Jesus in a wineskin of your own making, or are you allowing him to fill you with the new wine of renewal and refreshment for your spirit?

Has your walk with God become stagnant and stale?

NEXT STEPS – Applying the truth of Scripture to life

Tradition in itself is not inappropriate. We all develop conventional ways of doing things in personal and corporate worship. But we must not violate Biblical truth with our cultural traditions. Stated positively, we must make sure our external forms and methods are in harmony with Biblical functions that deepen our inner, spiritual lives.

Why is it so easy to get wrapped up in traditions and lose sight of the true meaning?

In what ways are some Christians today inappropriately following traditions rather than the teachings of Scripture – in their personal and spiritual disciplines as well as their corporate worship?

Does something that has "always been done that way" make it better or the best method?

Is the "new way" always better?

How do we separate the message of Christ versus the methods that people or churches use?

Having put Jesus' teaching in perspective, we must pause to wrestle personally with the power of His words: "And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins" (5:37-38).

Are there structures of our own age and culture that cannot coexist with the new wine of the Spirit?

Have we tried to sew Christianity onto that will cause a greater tear and undermine the faith itself?

Principles for avoiding the trap of living in the old wineskin:

- Separate the message from the method. We need to avoid labeling other people and other churches based solely on how they "do" things, as long as they are not in violation of clear Scriptural principle.
- Examine the basis for our positions. We need to avoid the legalistic clinging to tradition for the sake of tradition. And we also need to avoid the legalistic clinging to "freedoms" simply for the sake of rejecting tradition. If you're a slave to tradition, you're no better than the Pharisees in Jesus' day.

Is your position Scriptural, is it based on culture or tradition, or is it based on something else like personal preference?

- Examine the basis of other positions, taking the lens off you and looking at someone else. Make sure that that lens has the right filter on it - the Scriptures.
- Ask the Holy Spirit for the right balance. Stay away from the extremes (New is automatically good and old is automatically bad, old is automatically good and new is automatically bad).
- Ask Jesus to keep your wine fresh.

It's very easy to look at others and evaluate them, for good or bad. But it's another thing to look at ourselves and ask Jesus to give us a "once over."

PRAY

Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit, that I may grow in the knowledge of your great love and truth. Help me to seek you earnestly in prayer and fasting that I may turn away from sin and willfulness and conform my life more fully to your will. May I always find joy in knowing, loving, and serving you.