

Small Group Guide

Luke 5:27-39 -- New Wine, New Wineskins



Before You Meet

Encourage group members to reflect on the sermon and come prepared to share honestly. This guide works best when participants feel safe to be vulnerable about where they are in their spiritual journey.

Key Takeaways

1. Responsibility Brings Meaning The pastor described how growing up and taking on responsibility -- marriage, children, leadership -- gave his life far more meaning than the aimless freedom he once chased. Meaning is better than freedom without direction.

2. Matthew Responded Immediately When Jesus called Matthew, a despised tax collector, Matthew left everything and followed. He did not wait. He then immediately introduced the people around him to Jesus, using the unique window of time between his old life and his new one.

3. Spiritual Pride Can Blind Us The Pharisees and scribes followed traditions meticulously but could not recognize their own sin. Their outward righteousness made them less receptive to Jesus than the very people they condemned.

4. The Bridegroom Is Coming Jesus described himself as the bridegroom and his followers as his friends. His presence was a time of celebration. His absence is a time of longing and fasting -- a posture of waiting and yearning for his return.

5. The New Covenant Cannot Be Poured Into the Old Jesus fulfilled the law. The gospel is new wine that requires a new wineskin. Those who clung to the law rejected Jesus. Those who knew they had broken the law were the most ready to receive grace.

6. No One Is Outside the Call of Jesus Matthew was considered the worst kind of betrayer. Yet Jesus called him by name. No amount of shame, guilt, or failure places a person beyond the reach of Christ's invitation.

Discussion Questions

Opening -- Getting to Know Each Other

1. The Message talked about resisting the idea of growing up and the cultural pressure to avoid responsibility. Can you relate to that? What did the shift into greater responsibility look like in your own life?
2. Have you ever held a job or position that changed how you saw yourself or how seriously you took things? What caused that shift?

Digging Into the Text

3. Matthew walked away from a profitable career the moment Jesus called him. What do you think made him ready to respond that way, especially knowing the people following Jesus already resented him? What does his response say about what he saw in Jesus?
4. Matthew's first instinct after following Jesus was to throw a party and invite all of his outcast friends. Why do you think that impulse is so strong right after someone comes to faith? Have you experienced that yourself or seen it in someone else?
5. The Pharisees questioned why Jesus ate with sinners. Jesus responded by saying that healthy people do not need a doctor -- those who are sick do. In Luke 5:31-32,

Jesus makes clear he came to call sinners to repentance, not the self-righteous. What does this tell us about the posture we need to approach Jesus with?

6. The pastor pointed out that the Pharisees were not sinless -- they simply did not recognize their own sin. How does outward religious performance sometimes prevent people from seeing their own need for grace? Have you ever experienced that in your own life?
7. Jesus used the image of the bridegroom to explain why his disciples were not fasting. What does it mean to you personally that the church is described as the bride of Christ? How does that image shape how you think about your relationship with him?
8. The Message drew a distinction between fasting from food and fasting from things like social media or entertainment. He said fasting from food is different because you are replacing a physical necessity with dependence on Christ. Do you agree with that distinction? Has fasting ever played a meaningful role in your spiritual life?
9. The new wine and old wineskins parable describes people who prefer the old wine, saying it is better. The pastor connected this to the Pharisees who rejected Jesus because they were too committed to the old system. Where in your own life might you be holding onto something familiar that is keeping you from receiving something new that God is offering?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One of the Following:

- **Identify your window.** Think about a season of transition in your life -- a new job, a move, a recent decision to recommit your faith. Who in your current circle of relationships needs to hear about Jesus? Make a plan to have one honest conversation this week.
- **Examine your posture.** Spend time in honest prayer asking God to reveal any areas where outward religious habit may be substituting for genuine heart change. Journal what comes up.
- **Try fasting.** If you have never fasted from food for a meal or a day, consider trying it this week. Replace that time with prayer and Scripture reading. Notice what it feels like to depend on God rather than a physical need.

- **Reflect on the call.** The pastor ended by asking whether you would respond like Matthew or like the Pharisees. Write down your honest answer and what it would look like in your daily life to respond with Matthew's kind of resolve.
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Closing Reflection

The pastor closed with these words:

"No matter what you've done, no matter where you are in your life, no matter what shame or guilt you feel, you are not outside of the voice of Jesus calling to you. He can call you and say, follow me. Will you have the resolve to be like Matthew and respond? Or will you be like the Pharisees and trust in yourself?"

Take a few minutes as a group to sit with that question. Close in prayer, asking God to give each person the humility to hear his call and the courage to respond.

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Based on the Themes of New Covenant, Repentance, and Spiritual Renewal



Day 1: The Call That Changes Everything

Reading: Luke 5:27-28 — The passage describing Jesus calling Matthew away from the tax booth to follow him.

Devotional: Matthew was not a likely candidate for discipleship. He was despised, considered a traitor to his own people, and surrounded by a life built on compromise. Yet Jesus walked past and spoke two words that rearranged everything. What is remarkable is not just that Jesus called him, but that Matthew responded immediately. He did not negotiate. He did not delay. He left behind a lucrative position because he recognized something in Jesus that was worth more than everything he had accumulated. No matter what your past looks like, the voice of Jesus is still reaching toward you. The question is whether you will rise and follow.

Reflection: What is currently keeping you seated when Jesus is calling you to rise?

Day 2: The Table That Scandalized the Religious

Reading: Luke 5:29-32 — The account of Matthew hosting a feast for Jesus, tax collectors, and sinners, and the Pharisees questioning why Jesus ate with such people.

Devotional: Matthew's first instinct after encountering Jesus was not to clean up his life before introducing his friends. He brought Jesus directly into his world, surrounded by the very people the religious establishment had written off. Jesus did not flinch. He sat down, broke bread, and shared the table with those who knew they were broken. The Pharisees saw contamination. Jesus saw an opportunity. His response cuts to the heart of the gospel: the sick are the ones who need a physician. Spiritual need, honestly acknowledged, is not a barrier to Jesus. It is the very thing that draws him near. Humility opens the door that pride keeps locked.

Reflection: Are there people in your life you have mentally excluded from God's reach? How might Jesus respond to that assumption?

Day 3: Fasting, Feasting, and the Longing for the Bridegroom

Reading: Luke 5:33-35 — Jesus explaining why his disciples do not fast while he is present, and his teaching about the bridegroom being taken away.

Devotional: Jesus reframes fasting entirely. It is not a religious performance or a ladder to climb toward God's approval. It is an expression of longing. When the bridegroom is present, you feast. When he is absent, you ache for his return. We live in the days Jesus described, the days after his ascension and before his return. Fasting, in this light, becomes an act of honest yearning. It is the body saying out loud what the soul already knows: that nothing in this world fully satisfies, that we were made for the wedding supper still to come. Fasting reorients the heart toward what it was always meant to desire.

Reflection: What practices in your life reflect a genuine longing for Christ's return, and which ones reflect a comfortable settling for the present?

Day 4: New Wine and the Danger of Old Wineskins

Reading: Luke 5:36-38 — The parables of the patched garment and new wine poured into new wineskins.

Devotional: The Pharisees were not evil men by their own estimation. They were devoted, disciplined, and deeply committed to the traditions they had inherited. But their devotion had calcified into something that could no longer expand to receive what God was doing. The old wineskin had been stretched to its limit. Jesus was not dismissing the law. He was

fulfilling it, and that fulfillment required a new vessel. The gospel cannot be contained in a framework of self-achieved righteousness. It bursts through it. The new covenant demands a new posture: open hands, a surrendered will, and the willingness to be reshaped by grace rather than preserved by tradition.

Reflection: Where in your spiritual life have tradition or routine begun to replace genuine surrender to what God is doing?

Day 5: The Best Wine Comes Last

Reading: John 2:1-11 — The account of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, which the master of the banquet acknowledges as better than what was served first.

Devotional: When Jesus produces something new, it surpasses everything that came before it. The master of the banquet was astonished because the best wine had been saved for last, which contradicted everything known about how celebrations worked. This is the pattern of the kingdom. The new covenant is not a lesser arrangement or a compromise. It is the fullness of what God always intended, the law fulfilled, the sacrifice completed, and new life made available through the resurrection. What Jesus offers is not a patched-together version of the old. It is entirely new, entirely better, and entirely sufficient. You are not being asked to settle. You are being invited into something far greater than anything you are leaving behind.

Reflection: What would it look like in your daily life to fully trust that what Jesus offers is better than anything you are holding onto?