

New Wineskins for Fresh Wine - part 1 – which do we love more container or content?

September 3, 2023

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BIG IDEA – What's more important the content of what God constantly renews or the container we choose to hold onto?

scripture focus - **Mark 2:18-22 NLT** Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. **"Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth?** For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. **"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins.** For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."

We all have preferences of taste and what is appealing to us. Whether that's in foods, clothing, décor, even entertainment or environment, we like what we like. When we are young, we are quite impressionable of other's preferences. We call that peer or social pressure. However, as we age, our preferences seem to solidify into something far more than just opinion. We like to be feisty, comedic, or ornery about our likes and dislikes. Jesus challenged some Pharisees over their preferences, that had become staunch rules of the day. Even more controversial for us today, it was about clothing and alcohol!

How do preferences turn into rigid rules? Through repeated experiences refined over time. We call them traditions. And we are really into creating them and reliving them over and over.

Think about a favorite vacation trip or spot from your family history. Don't worry, if you don't have one, I didn't have many of my own growing up. Robin and I were able to create some of our own.

Our memories have a way of glorifying even the worst family vacation disasters, making them funny in the future. Our big trip to the the old television show Bonanza film location up above Tahoe, California was a doozy.

Jesus not only called out preferences turning into traditions, he had some warnings about how it clouds are judgment and ability to experience the Kingdom of God and the fresh newness of God's Spirit being poured out even today.

Jesus pointed out that we struggle with change when it comes to our affection for what I will call, "content," compared to its "container."

Let me give you two container illustrations:

My favorite water bottle at home. It feels a little creepy to tell you this but I have been using the same plastic water bottle at home for five years! Robin and I attended a wedding of some dear friends back in 2018. At that wedding, they gave each person a bottle of water in name brand water-bottle company's container. Here it is! I liked the shape, size, look and feel so much that I just kept it in the frig, grabbed it when I was thirsty and filled it back up with R.O. water (reverse osmosis water). I know I'm crazy, but it makes the point. I have been so into the bottle that I've no concern about the real purpose of the bottle – to provide me with fresh, clean, cold water. It's probably leached a million-micro-plastics into my body over these FIVE years of using it!

The second is the phenomenon of the Stanley tumbler!

Brands like Yeti and Hydro Flask have gone through several trend cycles in the reusable drinkware market, which was worth more than \$28 billion in 2022. What makes people go wild for highly specific drink receptacles?

Yeah! There is a 28 billion drink ware market!

People like to belong to something, or they just like to follow the trends. Or maybe they just like their containers as a tradition?

What came back in force was a container called [Stanley](#). Stanley tumblers, thermoses and water bottles have become a [viral sensation](#) on Instagram and TikTok, with over 148 million views for searches like #stanleytumbler.

Sure enough, these likes have translated into significant sales gains, doubling the company's business two years in a row, according to Stanley Global President Terence Reilly. In particular, Reilly said, there was a 275% increase in [Quencher H2.0 FlowState Tumbler sales](#) last year, and the waitlist for the product has reached an all-time high, with an estimated 150,000 consumers registered on the direct-to-consumer website.

Stanley has been around since 1913, but they keep making new containers/drinkware for the new generation!

What if I told you that the only way to keep your favorite drink properly, safely, and efficiently was to buy an original and keep it forever?

Even though they don't make the original and the new one is so much more efficient and stylish, I told you it had to be the original. This is the dilemma Jesus is describing when he drops this example to the listening crowd.

The Pharisees, over the years, had lowered spiritual disciplines to the level of required traditions! There was a standard to uphold, and they were the keepers of the rules when it came to spiritual things.

This story, this parable of Jesus, again **paints a picture of the Kingdom of God, what it looks like, how it works. And, how extremely different it is from our individual and corporate kingdoms. God's ways are NOT our ways.**

On the front end, this story seems to begin with a familiar moment where guys are asking Jesus some questions regarding how he claims to be a Rabbi, but just doesn't quite behave like a normal Rabbi. Except, this time it's John the Baptist's disciples.

Mark's gospel adds an interesting element, he writes, "Once when **John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people** came to Jesus and asked." What an unusual group! Jesus' cousin, religious leaders and "people." Hmmm. **John's disciples and the Pharisees seem to agree on this point and come together to ask the question.**

The verses prior to this, each author tells a story of Jesus and his disciples feasting at a dinner party of some type. Matthew in 9:10, Mark 2:15 and Luke in 5:29, "While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples." **People noticed that John's and the Pharisee's disciples FASTED, but Jesus' disciples FEASTED.**

Jesus replied, "**Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom?** Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Jesus straightforward question, then answer, makes sense for that time, that culture. Most folks do not participate in spiritual disciplines when there is a celebration going on! So, **this longstanding practice of fasting wouldn't be appropriate befitting the occasion.**

Jesus added something else that made perfect sense at the time, but it is still mysterious, "**But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.**"

He, of course, was speaking of himself being the groom, who would soon be taken away.

Then, kind of out of nowhere, Jesus drops this illustration, this object lesson about patching clothes and the content of a particular kind of container.

Matthew and Mark's gospels write the same story at this point.

I've chosen Mark's version because it is slightly more colorful in word choice 😊.

Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins.”

How many of you have heard this story or maybe even these now classic sayings of Jesus?

Fewer and fewer of us are patching clothes, and certainly not doing it like they did in ancient times. There was an explosion of innovation in the textile industry at that time. Woven linens and wool were rapidly replacing animal skins. Now, all these years later, because of cultural changes in animal rights, we're no longer wearing very many true animal products. But also, we are past the era of patching holes, darning socks, and stitching tears. **In fact, we're putting holes and tears in our clothing now!** They take brand new jeans and ship them off to another country to be “rock-tumbled” or “machine-cut” to make them look worn and used. And they sell for more when they look used!

When it comes to beverage storage, whether that's wine, milk, soda, or water – we no longer store it in animal skins.

Yet, the message, the lesson, although ancient, is not hard to grasp. In fact, it's so simple that Jesus makes a humorous point. **With the clothes patching he essentially asks the question, “who would do this?”** Meaning nobody in their right mind would do this! And with the

wine stored in an animal skin, he goes even stronger saying, “**no one,**” **would do this.**

Today, let's answer Jesus questions! **Who would do this?**



We would. And we do!

Ah, but as humans we not only do this in a spiritual context, but we also actually prefer to do it!

According to a South Bay Pastor, [Sam Whittaker](#), the animal wineskin is a one-time, one-use container. It cannot be used for new fermenting wine again. I'll come back to that at the end of this message.

Matthew and Mark focus on the wineskins, the container when not replaces, causes “spilling the wine and ruining or bursting the wineskin.”

We would attempt the foolishness of trying to mix old with new.

Just like animal skins were a one time use container for the contents of new fermenting wine, so today, **each generation must be prepared to use a new container, a new wineskin to hold the new wine, the new work that God is doing in our world.** It's not a new gospel, it will never be a new gospel. But the container, the methods, and ways of communicating and living the gospel will absolutely need to change. Each generation is capable and responsible to deliver the gospel to their own cultural context.

Jesus asks... “**Who would do this?**” **We would.**

We have attempted the foolishness of mixing new with old. We have held on to the containers of our faith in our traditions, systems, and practices. And we have wanted God to continue to pour out His fresh, new content through the Holy Spirit, but it cannot be contained within our traditions. God wants us to find new ways, new systems, even creating new traditions to house His fresh wine.

New is where God is. New is where God works.

Questions to think about today:

Q: Jesus dropped this illustration in reference to fasting, what's wrong with fasting?

Q: What is so comforting in past traditions that we are fearful to let go of?

Q: What do think about the risk of **losing both tradition and a fresh move of God?**

Q: If you had to choose between the two, which would you choose?

NOTES

Scriptures

Matthew 9:14-17 NLT "One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, "Why don't your disciples fast like we do and the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. **"Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved."**

Mark 2:18-22 NLT "Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?" Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. **"Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."**

Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV Isaiah begged Israel to continue to expect new coming from God, ““Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 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.”

Questions

- Q: Do you have age-old preferences, disguised as traditions?
- Q: What preferences/traditions would you admit to wanting to hold on to?
- Q: Are you surprised to find out that Jesus was talking about human nature in the past as well as the future?
- Q: Jesus dropped this illustration in reference to fasting, what's wrong with fasting?
- Q: What is so comforting in past traditions that we are fearful to let go of?
- Q: What do think about the risk of **losing both tradition and a fresh move of God?**
- Q: If you had to choose between the two, which would you choose?

Commentary

Strong's Concordance

Luke 5:39 old vs new: palaios: old, ancient. neos: young, new, fresh. Better: chréstos: serviceable, good, useful, gentle, pleasant, kind

Basic Bible Interpretation: A practical guide for discovering Biblical truth

Matthew 9:14-17, Mark 2:18-22 and Luke 5:33-39. Conflict between Jesus' concept of the kingdom and that of the Pharisees. The New Cloth and New Wineskins, The Rude Children.

The Bible Exposition Commentary

Matt. 9:14–17: It was the age-old conflict between living truth and dead tradition. The new wine could not be put into the old wineskins nor could the new cloth be sewn on the worn-out garments.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

On Mark 2:18-22: Jesus pictured the relationship between His ministry and that of John the Baptist. John was a reformer seeking to bring about repentance among those steeped in the traditions of Judaism. Jesus, however, was not out to patch up an old system, like sewing a new unshrunk cloth on an old garment, which would then tear, or pouring new wine into old wineskins, which would then burst. His purpose was to bring in something new. He had come to lead a group out of Judaism into the kingdom based on Him and His righteousness. True righteousness is not built on the Law or on Pharisaic traditions.

On Mark 2:21–22. For the first time Mark used two of Jesus' parables, both of which had broader relevance than to fasting. Jesus' presence with His people was a time of newness (fulfillment) and signaled the passing of the old.

An attempt to bind the newness of the gospel to the old religion of Judaism is as futile as trying to patch an old (palaion, “worn out by use”) garment with a new, unshrunk piece of cloth. When the new (kainon, “qualitatively new”) piece (plērōma, “fullness”) becomes wet, it will shrink, pull away from the old, and make a larger hole. It is equally disastrous to pour new (neon, “fresh”), not fully fermented wine into old (palaious, “worn out by use,” with no elasticity, brittle) wineskins. Inevitably, as the new wine ferments (expands), it will burst the skins and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. Salvation, available through Jesus, was not to be mixed with the old Judaistic system (cf. John 1:17).

Internet Links

[Beliefref.com](#) shares that **Jesus did not come to “patch Judaism with a new piece.” He came to fulfill Judaism.** They say, “Jesus comes to redeem, not plug holes.” They share a brilliant biblical connection. “The noun translated “tear” comes from the Greek root schisma. The verb form, schizo is used in Mark 15:38 to describe how “the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” Regarding verse 22, [Bibleref.com](#) teaches that the Pharisees lived lives like old wineskins. When new wine was poured in, the wineskins would break apart and the wine wasted. Jesus however, brought freedom in grace. His grace could not be held in legalistic rules that the Pharisees enforced over others. We cannot alter Jesus to fit our mold of religion, we have to remember that we are the jars, and He is the Potter. He will shape us to learn. **“To try to fit Jesus' teachings of love and freedom into the Pharisaical legalism (or even its modern-day equivalences) would have resulted in a burst tradition and pieces of love and freedom spilled out all over the floor”** (Bibleref).

[Glenn: Interesting that the “bursting” leaves even our traditions spilled out and lost. A whole new perspective about “crying over spilt wine.”] Forcing new into old results in total loss of both content and container.

Patched up religion is just silly! Jesus said, “who does this? No one with any sense!”

Pretty patches on old containers.

[What Is the Significance of New Wine in New Wineskins?](#)

Given the biblical and historical context of the term “new wine,” many scholars attach symbolic significance to Jesus’ use of it as recorded in Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22, and Luke 5:37-39. There are three primary theories.

Dr. Charles R. Swindoll, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, sees new wine in Jesus’ context as a reference to the intense legalism of Judaism at the time.

In [Swindoll’s Living Insights: Mark](#), he suggests that both the old wineskins and the old garment represent “the Old Testament relationship with God” — something inherently good and fulfilled by Jesus rather than abolished by him ([Matthew 5:17](#)). New wine, and the new patch of cloth, both represent “the religion of the Pharisees” — something which has corrupted the good intent of God’s law ([Matthew 23:13](#)). The summary application, according to pastor Swindoll, then is, **“Your newfangled, man-made religion of legalism causes more damage than what it attempts to fix.”**

[OLD STANLEY VS NEW STANLEY: WHAT’S REALLY CHANGED IN THE UNBREAKABLE BOTTLE?](#)

