

## New Wine in New Wineskins

Sometimes we wonder what took us so long to “get it,” when it comes to following Jesus. Sometimes we wonder why others don’t “get it.” We also may wonder why those who don’t get it can be so hostile to Christ, to Christianity, or to Christians. We can learn a lot from the encounter Jesus had with hostile religious leaders in our text today.

### Mark 2:18-22

<sup>18</sup> Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup> The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. <sup>21</sup> No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. <sup>22</sup> And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.”

Jesus seems to have in mind to teach two key truths to his disciples on this occasion.

#### **I. The essence of true religion is to enjoy and to love Jesus Christ. (vv. 18-20)**

The religious leaders ask Jesus basically why it is that their disciples seem to be more rigorous than Jesus’ disciples. He could have easily explained to them that God only commanded one fast day per year in the Old Testament (although the Jews later added four more days — cf. Zechariah 7:5 and 8:19) and that He Himself had fasted for forty days straight (cf. Matthew 4:2) and taught clearly on the subject (cf. Matthew 6:16-18); rather, He drilled down to the real issue: the religious leaders were more concerned with their rituals than the substance and meaning behind the rituals. The heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Himself, is here! Why would anyone fast? Often we, too, are more concerned with “having our devotions” than we are with loving Jesus through those devotions; more concerning with being a faithful evangelist than we are with exalting Christ through evangelism; etc. In other words, our religion is often more about us than it honestly is about Him.

#### **II. Enjoying and loving God requires a total makeover. (vv. 21-22)**

Jesus goes on to apply the truth ever more deeply to His hearers: the reason we’re not enjoying Jesus as we could is because we are simply trying to “tack Him on” to our current lives rather than to renovate our lives by His presence. Jesus’ two analyses show that we can’t just co-opt Jesus; rather, we must receive from Him a total makeover. Otherwise, we’ll never “get it.”

### Discussion Questions

1. How do we sometimes get carried away with our religious disciplines, rituals, and traditions and forget the essence of them?
2. How can we simply enjoy and love Jesus more?
3. How have we at times tried to co-opt Jesus into our existing lifestyles?
4. What would “new wineskins” look like in our lives today?

*Pray together that God will enable you to enjoy the love of Christ and invite Him into your life to remake and remold you.*