



## LESSON 8 // READY FOR RENEWAL

One of the great truths of Scripture is that God is always willing to give people a fresh start. Over and over we read biblical stories of men and women who found newness in their lives through a relationship with the Lord.

We all need something new from the Lord and every time we give Christ a new place in us or part of us, we can count on rich renewal.

Mark 2:18-22 helps us understand how to do this—how to be ready for this kind renewal. Jesus is teaching about the nature of His kingdom and those who want to be a part of His kingdom. In response to a question about fasting, Christ taught a powerful principle about the kind of person we need to be to receive the newness of life He promises:

**Mark 2:18-22 (NIV)** *Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. <sup>20</sup> But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. <sup>21</sup> "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. <sup>22</sup> And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."*

From this passage, we learn that:

### 1. Jesus wants to do something new in us.

Mark 2:18 reveals the legalistic mindset of the Pharisees. They were upset that Jesus failed to promote fasting in the way they practiced it. Their focus was on obeying the letter of the law, relating to God from the *outside in*.

Jesus was teaching about an *inside out* relationship with God, loving and serving Him from the heart. He was ushering in a new order and a new day. He was saying, "God doesn't want to patch you up. He wants to form you into something new—new wineskins—and fill you with something new—new wine!"

In Scripture, wine symbolically refers to the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-21; Ephesians 5:18). The Lord wants to bring a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit to our lives that will make us new on the inside and the outside! Receiving this new wine of the Spirit produces wonderful results in us: a new consecration, new character, new power and passion.

## **2. Jesus wants us to understand what hinders the “new.”**

Jesus taught us that “old wineskins” can’t contain new wine. He is referring to skins that were hardened, dry and brittle and would easily crack under the pressure of fresh, fermenting wine.

The Pharisees couldn’t receive the new wine of the Holy Spirit because they were the wrong kind of containers—old wineskins. Their hearts were not prepared. They were worn out and used up.

In the same way, when our hearts are not properly prepared, they can’t contain the new wine of the Holy Spirit for any length of time. Our old ways override the new work Jesus wants to do in and through us. Our sinful and selfish living, bitter experiences, wrong thinking, unforgiveness or even dead religious works keep our hearts hard and brittle.

## **3. Jesus wants to prepare us to receive the “new.”**

In order for us to be ready to receive the new wine, Jesus wants to make us into new wineskins that are flexible, responsive, supple and pliable, willing to change, grow and be re-shaped. This happens through the new birth we experience when we receive Christ as Lord and Savior. But even after we come to know Christ, we can become hardened again and must be spiritually renewed.

Hardened old wineskins can actually be made fresh by submerging them in the flowing waters of a stream. In the same way, God is able to take us as old wineskins and place us in the flowing stream of His presence so that we are not only filled with new wine, but our wineskin is renewed as well! Here are four things that will put us in the stream that brings spiritual renewal:

- *Repentance (Psalm 51:10; Acts 3:19)*
- *The filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44; 19:6)*
- *The Word of God (Ephesians 5:25-26)*
- *The worship of God (Psalm 63:1-5)*

God has something new for you. He wants to pour out His flowing stream in your life, make you a new wineskin and fill you with new wine!

## **Discussion questions**

1. What’s the difference between “obeying the letter of the law” and an “inside out relationship with God”? How are you doing with your inside out relationship with Him?
2. What are some of the things that can make your heart hard and brittle like an “old wineskin”?
3. In what practical ways can you prepare yourself for the new wine God wants to pour into your life?