

**THE BOOK OF LUKE**  
**STUDY TWENTY SIX (LUKE 5:33-39)**  
**PARABLES FOR THE RELIGIOUS**  
**"POURING NEW WINE INTO OLD WINESKINS"**  
**JULY 13, 2008**

**MEMORY VERSE**

*"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." Luke 5:37*

**INTRODUCTION**

In this week's study, we switch our focus from parables for the disciples to parables directed specifically to the "religious." During this study, we will examine Jesus' response to the Pharisees concerning why His disciples did not adhere to the strict Jewish laws pertaining to fasting. The "religious" Pharisees fasted twice a week in order to show how holy they were. Their need for God and His presence had nothing to do with their fast. Fasting was purely a matter of ritual and custom. Through the use of these two illustrations, Jesus explained that if people fast only to impress others, they will be twisting the purpose of fasting. The first example was fairly easy to understand. If you have a hole in an old shirt, you would not attempt to patch it with a piece of cloth taken from a new shirt. You end up ruining both shirts. The new shirt because it would have a hole in it and the old shirt because the new patch would end up shrinking after you washed the shirt. The second illustration is a little harder for us to comprehend in today's world, because we are used to wine being stored in bottles rather than animal skins. In Jesus' day, new wine would be poured into fresh animal skins, rather than bottles. As this new wine matured and fermented, the gases would cause the wineskin to expand. These fresh skins had the necessary elasticity to absorb this type of expansion. If the new wine was poured into old wineskins that had already been stretched out and hardened, the skin would actually burst when the fermented wine began to expand. Both the wine and the old wineskin would be ruined. Through these parables, Jesus was pointing out that the Pharisees had become rigid like old wineskins. They could not accept faith in Jesus that would not be contained or limited by man-made ideas or rules. The strict adherence to Jewish laws and rituals had little to do with actual worship and were incompatible with the love and grace Jesus offered. This new kind of relationship with God demanded a new way of doing things. Trying to combine the two ways was not going to work. The Pharisees and their followers focused on traditions and rituals and missed the significance of the one who stood before them. They lectured and condemned Jesus when they should have been listening and obeying Him. Our hearts, like the old wineskins, can become rigid and hard to the point of preventing us from accepting the new life that Christ offers. We, too, must be careful that our hearts do not become so rigid that they prevent us from accepting the new way of thinking that Jesus brings. We need to keep our hearts soft and pliable so we can continuously accept Jesus' life-changing message.

## LEARNING TO WALK WITH GOD

1. Why did Christ's disciples not fast during their time with Jesus? What was Jesus referring to when He stated, "the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away" (Luke 5:33-35)
2. Read Deuteronomy 9:15-18; Judges 20:26; 2 Samuel 12:16-23 and Ezra 8:21. What do these passages reveal concerning the common occasions in which people fasted in the Old Testament?
3. What do the old garment and old wineskins represent? What do the patch of unshrunk cloth and new wine represent? Jesus uses these two parables to describe His ministry. How do they relate to the question about fasting?
4. Read Ephesians 4:22-24. What does it mean to "put off our old self" and "put on a new self?" Why is it important that believers make this kind of change in their lives?

## OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. In these two parables, Jesus used a torn garment and an old wineskin to represent the traditions and beliefs clung to by the Pharisees and other religious people. Why are so many people attached to their traditions and rituals? Why is it so hard for them to give up their old ways of thinking and habits? How does this type of thinking affect one's relationship with Christ?

2. Are there old wineskins you are hanging onto in your life? What is standing between you and a growing and intimate relationship with Christ? What are you allowing in your life that is merely form and not content, ritual and not true devotion? How is this keeping you from truly living the “new” life that Christ calls us to?
  
3. Jesus observed that the religious legalists of His day taught a distorted view of God. What religious legalisms can keep us from enjoying an intimate and thriving relationship with the Lord today? How do we avoid these traps?
  
4. Why do you think fasting has become so rare in today’s church culture? What does fasting accomplish? What is your own attitude toward fasting?

### GOING DEEPER

The Old Testament is filled with laws that guided Jews in every aspect of their lives. These laws governed everything from what they could eat to how they conducted business transactions. The Pharisees expanded on these laws and created additional structures and rules to prove they were even more “religious” than what the Bible expected. However, with Jesus’ arrival a drastic change took place. Read Hebrews 8-10. What gift have we received that changed our relationship with God? What must we do to accept and receive this gift?