

# mark

C O M E F O L L O W M E

## The New Way of the Kingdom (Mark 2:18-22)

**Bottom Line:** The Kingdom of God completely reorients the way we understand our relationship with God.

**Have you purchased or obtained anything new lately? Was it a replacement of something you already had or was it brand new? If it was a replacement, what did you do with the old item you had?**

It's not unspiritual to say that we like getting new things. There is a certain amount and kind of joy that God intends for His children to have as they enjoy creation and the things in it. Of course, the WAY we enjoy new things should be different than the rest of the world, but suffice it to say for now, that we all feel a little excited when something new comes along, and that's okay. Maybe it's a new episode of your favorite TV show, a new job opportunity, or a new addition to your family. Whatever it is, newness is exciting.

**Why is the idea of something “new” so exciting to us? How can this desire be a good thing? How can we abuse this desire and make it a bad thing?**

**Read Mark 2:18-22.**

**What, in your own words, is the main point Jesus was making through his teaching here?**

The Pharisees were teachers of the Law, or the Old Testament, who placed a strong emphasis on tradition. These are the kind of people who say “But that’s the way we’ve ALWAYS done things!” They weren’t very innovative people and their sense of identity was tied very strongly to their heritage, or their traditions. So when the Pharisees saw that Jesus’ disciples weren’t observing the traditional rhythms and practices of fasting, they were perplexed and wondered why Jesus’ disciples ignored their traditions.

**What church or religious traditions do you observe? (“Religious” is used here in a good sense, not a bad sense.) Why do you observe them? What is the benefit that you feel observing these traditions brings to you? How would you explain that benefit to others?**

It's easy to look at the Pharisees' behavior and chide them for it. Jesus did (Mark 7:9). But when we think of our own traditions that we keep, and the sentimentality that is attached to them, it's a little easier to understand why the Pharisees were reacting the way that they did. We value our traditions and think of them as important. The Pharisee's did too. But where our traditions can hurt us, rather than help us, is when they prevent us from embracing something new and better. That's what Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisee's.

**Read Mark 2:21-22 again. Do you see the point that Jesus is making? That something new has come? What is the “something new” that has come? What is the “old garment” and the “old wineskins” that Jesus mentions?**

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When questioned about why His disciples didn't fast, Jesus explained the reason why in terms of newness and oldness. What's important to note is that Jesus did not completely do away with the practice of fasting ("when the bridegroom is taken away from them...they will fast in that day" v. 20). What He did was explain that since something new has come, namely, the Kingdom of God, then the practice (or "tradition") of fasting has changed also. Something newer has come, something better has come. The Old Way of doing things is no longer necessary in the New Way. We don't always completely do away with the old way of doing things, we just do them in a new way. For example, in the Old Testament, fasting was a means of purifying yourself and was observed as an obligatory rite that the people of God were bound to, but in the New Testament (the New Way), fasting is something that we are not bound to in order to purify ourselves, it's something that we are invited to in order to deepen our relationship with God. It's a privilege, not an obligation.

**How does this teaching show us the difference between the way of religion (in the bad sense this time) and the way of Jesus? What are some subtle ways you might be understanding your relationship with God as one of obligation rather than privilege?**

**How does it change your understanding of the "spiritual disciplines" when you understand that they are privileges rather than obligations? Bible reading? Praying? Giving? Gathering together? Etc.?**

**Application:** Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

**Jesus said that He came to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). He lived the perfect life and met every single one of God's demands, requirements, rules, and laws. He fulfilled everything needed to be considered righteous by God. And right before His death on the cross, after He had absorbed the wrath of God for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2), He said "it is finished." The work was done. When Jesus uttered those words, then all of our obligations became privileges. The work Jesus did was all the work that WE should have done. So now, for those who trust in Christ for their salvation, everything necessary has been considered done. "Finished." And now everything else is extra—privilege. Does your Christian life feel more like obligation than privilege? If so, could it be a lack of assurance that Jesus truly has accomplished everything for you? Or could it be that the weight of the law still rests upon you and hasn't been removed? In either case, the answer is to repent of your sin, place your trust in Christ, and rest in His finished work for you on the cross. Then you can enjoy a life of privilege in the presence of God, rather than obligation.**

**What privileges are you ignoring or missing out on? We can also think of "privileges" as spiritual disciplines. These are habits, or practices, that aid us in our walk with the Lord to become more like Christ and deepen our relationship with Him. Bible reading, prayer, solitude, sabbath, giving, gathering, serving, evangelizing, etc. All of these are privileges that Christ has modeled for us in order to increase our joy in Him. What is keeping you from these things? What can you eliminate from your life to help create the time to participate in these privileges? Will you pray for God to give you a desire and the means to participate in these privileges with Him?**