

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Mark 2:18-22

6/24/07

It is easy to be very religious, and not be right with God.

To think that our relationship with God is all about is following a bunch of rules and rituals.

To keep God off their backs, or

To impress other people that they are spiritual.

We will see in our passage this morning that Jesus didn't come to promote a dead, rigid, legalistic religious system.

He did not come to perpetuate the legalistic distortions of the Old Testament that were common in His day.

(He came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies and sacrifices.)

Jesus also came to initiate a New Testament relationship with God.

The type of relationship God wants you to have with Him:

Is fresh and new, not old and stale.

Is personal, not rote religious regulations.

Involves your heart, not just your behavior.

Is living and real, not dead and superficial.

Judaism in Jesus' day had degenerated into dead religious system full of rigid rules and regulations that God had never commanded.

These rules and regulations blanketed every area of life including when you had to fast and go without eating.

Read Mark 2:18-20

1. Fasting In The Old Testament

a. Fasting was only commanded for the Day of Atonement.
Leviticus 23:27-32

Any other fasting was purely voluntary

b. Many Old Testament figures chose to humble themselves and fast during times of *grief, repentance, and prayer*.

Moses fasted when he received the Law on Mt Sinai. He also fasted and prayed for God's mercy on those who had sinned by worshiping the golden calf. Dt 9:9,18

David fasted when Saul and Jonathan were killed and also when his son was sick and dying. 2 Samuel 1:12; 12:15-23

Esther fasted for 3 days before approaching the king to seek protection for the Jews. Esther 4:15

Daniel prayed and fasted when seeking God's mercy for Israel and that he might understand God's word. Dan 9

Ezra prayed and fasted when seeking safety for the Jews long and dangerous journey back to Israel. Ezra 8:21

Nehemiah prayed and fasted before approaching the king and asking for permission to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah 1:4

Many Old Testament figures chose to humble themselves and fast during times of grief, repentance, and prayer.

Yet even in the OT there were those who fasted merely for appearance sake or in an attempt to manipulate God.

Isaiah 58:3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' . . .

2. Fasting In The New Testament 2:18-20

a. Fasting was a regular part of *Judaism* in Jesus' day. 18 cf Matthew 6:16-18

Jesus' disciples were feasting while John the Baptist's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees were going without food.

The Pharisees fasted two day a week order to appear "spiritual."

They whitened their faces, put ashes on their heads,
wore their clothes in shoddy disarray, refused to wash
and looked as forlorn as possible.

Matthew 6:16-18 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷ "But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸ so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

Wrong Reasons To Fast

To impress people with our religious piety

As a legalistic religious ritual

As a form of penance in an attempt to appease God

As an attempt to manipulate or obligate God to do what we want

As a religious hunger strike

b. Fasting was not appropriate when Jesus was present on earth. 19

It is interesting that Jesus uses this marriage metaphor here.

The Old Testament used marriage to picture Israel's relationship to the Lord. Cf Isaiah 4:5; Jeremiah 31:32; Hosea

John the Baptist had already announced that Jesus was the bridegroom. John 3:29

Jesus is the Messiah, the promised bridegroom, of the OT. Cf Ps 45; Isa 62:5; Hosea 2:20

A Jewish wedding at that time lasted a week.

Through a rabbinical ruling, guests at a wedding were actually exempt from fasting and other religious observances that would lessen their joy.

Fasting is associated with mourning, not celebrating.

Jesus is saying that His disciples were exempt from fasting as long as He (the Bridegroom) was on earth.

This is another of His claims to be the promised Messiah.

c. Fasting is appropriate today. 20

Fasting is entirely voluntary in the New Testament.

But we do find New Testament Christians fasting. Acts 9:9; 13:1-4; 14:23

Paul fasted until he understood God's will for him.
Acts 9:9

While the church at Antioch prayed and fasted they received instruction by the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Acts 13:1-4

Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted before appointing and commissioning elders in the churches. Acts 14:23

Fasting is appropriate when an individual or congregation desires to humble themselves before God.

In times of penitence

When they desire to know and do God's will

In times of special need

Fasting, in itself, means nothing.

But sincere fasting is humbling of yourself before God.

Sincere fasting:

Demonstrates your serious concern about what you are praying for

Demonstrates a submissive and teachable spirit

Demonstrates our seriousness in repentance

Demonstrates a seriousness in our desire to know
God and to do His will

Fasting demonstrates a humility and seriousness when we
come before God.

TAN # 5074; #5075

Fasting indicates that we are serious in our prayer to reach
love ones, people this community and on this campus for
Christ.

That we are serious in our prayer for God to work in the
life of a family member or friend.

Fasting does not obligate God to answer our prayers, but it
does indicate to God the earnestness of our request.

*Fasting is a humbling of ourselves before God as we draw
near to Him in repentance and prayer.*

I have also found that it enhances my worship.

3. Something Old, Something New 2:21-22

Jesus is not simply trying to patch up the old system of
religious rituals. He is offering something completely new.

It is fresh and new, not old and stale.

It is personal, not rote religious regulations.

It involves your heart, not just your behavior.

It is living and real, not dead and superficial.

The two systems are incompatible; they do not mix.

New patch on old cloth

New wine in old wineskins

Jesus' way and the legalism of the Pharisees

Those who are caught up religious legalism find it hard to
accept a message of grace.

I know many people who are focusing on trying to be better
people, but have no personal relationship with God.

They are living by rules rather than loving God and living for Him.

Romans 10:1-4 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

The Bible teaches that we are justified (declared righteous) by faith alone.

Galatians 2:16 . . . a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone requires humility.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

2 Chronicles 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. ¹⁵ "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer *offered* in this place.