

Good News From Mark

New Wine + Old Wineskins = One Big Mess

Mark 2:18-22

Intro

Have you ever practiced fasting?

As with any spiritual discipline, we need to be aware of the opportunities as well as the dangers in pursuing a closer walk with God.

Setting (2:18)

John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples practiced fasting.

Fasting was appropriate for both groups:

- A) John led a ministry calling people to repent and now he was in prison (1:14).
- B) The Pharisees had added to the OT commands (cf. Lev. 16:29; Zech. 7:5, 8:19; Lk. 18:12).

Against that backdrop, 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?"

Overview

Q. Why weren't Jesus' disciples fasting when everyone else was?

- A. 1. It would be inappropriate for Jesus' disciples at the given time.
- A. 2. Any spiritual discipline wrongly applied can lead to spiritual ruin.

1. It is inappropriate (2:19-20)

In the first part of his answer Jesus uses the setting of a wedding. Weddings are occasions of joy...

- A party atmosphere
- Plenty of food
- Gala processions with music

The new situation created by Jesus' presence makes fasting

inappropriate for Jesus' disciples.

But, take the bridegroom out of the picture and then there would be a reason to fast.

Jesus is the centre and the cause of His disciples' joy.

Jesus would be "taken away" eventually.

Isaiah 53:8 (NIV)

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. We don't read that the disciples fasted specifically when Jesus died.

But we do know that their sorrow and mourning was only temporary.

John 16:22 (NIV)

So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John's disciples practiced fasting in preparation for the coming of the kingdom.

The Pharisees' disciples fasted in a mechanical way that was blind to what Jesus' presence meant.

It was inappropriate for Jesus' disciples to fast because the wedding party had begun. It was time to feast!

2. It could lead to ruin (2:21-22)

Here Jesus uses two common practices to further illustrate his point.

- patching old clothes
- using wineskins to contain wine

The point here is that fasting, or any other spiritual discipline applied the wrong way can lead to ruin.

We can practice spiritual disciplines in a harmful way if we think

...

- God will love me more if I do this
- I can use it win God's favour

- I can convince God that I'm really serious
Jesus taught the right way to fast in Matt. 6:16-18.

Summary & Application

1. Another NT passage that reflects Jesus' teaching here is in Galatians where Paul used this same approach to correct wrong application of the Law when it came to circumcision.
2. If you take some aspects of Christianity and try to patch the holes in your life with them, you end up worse off than before (Matt. 12:39-45).

The newness of life in Christ and the joy that he brings doesn't fit as a patch on our lives full of holes. And it can't be contained in the brittle and cracked containers of our lives of sin.

If you think of it in terms of home renovations it would be more like Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.