

Patches and wineskins

Luke 5:33-39 – Leaders version

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

30 minutes

Read Luke 5:33-39

1. What do you think Jesus is thinking about?

Don't try to come to a conclusion, just let the group brainstorm.

2. What triggers Jesus' teaching about patches and wineskins? (v33)

This is not a continuation of the conversation at the party between Jesus and the Pharisees in Luke 5:30-32 but is following the theme of feasting and fasting and is thus arranged here by Luke (Edwards 2015, p172). They (it's not specified who 'they' are) are challenging Jesus on the behaviour of his disciples.

3. Why do you think the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees fasted and prayed?

Jews were required to fast once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Other fasts were voluntary, but by Jesus' time fasting had become a sign of religious commitment, so not fasting would call your commitment into question.

The purpose of fasting is to spend time with God and grow closer to him, having made that time to pray by giving up something that is important to us and spending that time in prayer instead. It's the prayer, not the fasting, that helps us to grow closer to God!

We classically think of fasting food, but we can fast anything – help the group to think of things we can fast e.g. TV, phone, books, smoking etc.

A danger of fasting is that the fast can become a work – we can start to think that fasting itself, or denying ourselves impresses God, makes us holy etc.

4. Why do you think the disciples of Jesus didn't fast?

It's worth considering whether the allegation is true! Who's to say they didn't? The disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted and prayed, but the allegation against Jesus' disciples only refers to fasting.

5. What does Jesus say in v34-35 and what do you think he means?

Jesus' answer certainly implies that there is a difference between the habits of his disciples and those of John / the Pharisees. In v34 Jesus is the bridegroom and when the bridegroom is with you, you celebrate. Jesus is saying that his disciples have reason to celebrate while he is with them, but there will be a day when he will be taken from them (i.e. forcefully removed) and then they will fast. Let the group consider what this might mean and then explain that he's referring to his arrest, trial and death.

6. Why is it significant that Jesus already knows what is going to happen to him? (v35, also see Mark 8:31)

Jesus knows he's on a mission that will end in his death in order to save sinners. His death was no accident and his statements such as those in Luke 5:35 and Mark 8:31 show us this. Although his trial and death sentence were a miscarriage of justice they were not a miscarriage of God's will. God's plan to save sinners from their sin and to restore their broken relationship with him was rolled into action in Genesis 3:15, but it had been in place since before creation – see Ephesians 1:4.

It's important for us to understand this because it demonstrates God's sovereignty and his love. Sovereignty – He knew that we would rebel and He knew that the Son would die to save us. God hadn't lost control and come up with Plan B; He knew before creation how things would play out. Love – He knew that this would happen and He still created and saved us.

7. Read the parables in Luke 5:36-39. What do they literally mean?

There may be 3 parables here, patches and wine x2 – look at them individually. Work out the literal meaning first, you will look at the theology in Q8.

Patches, v36 – *you don't wreck a new garment in order to fix an old one. You just start using the new one. (NB Matthew and Mark talk about washing the old garment and the new patch shrinking and tearing it, Luke doesn't).*

Wine 1, v37-38 – *once a wineskin had been used to ferment wine, it couldn't be used again as it had no more stretch left. Putting new wine in it would just burst it as the new wine fermented. You need new wineskins to put new wine in.*

Wine 2, v39 – *people prefer old wine to new wine.*

8. What do you think Jesus' meaning behind the parables was? Remember, parables are stories that Jesus told in order to teach something about the Kingdom of God.

Patches – *Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of God – although a fulfilment of OT teaching, it was new teaching. You don't take bits of the new teaching (New Covenant) and stick them into the old teaching (Old*

Covenant), rather you accept the whole new thing.

Wine 1 – you can't live under the New Covenant and the Old Covenant at the same time. The New Covenant is the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, not a bolt-on.

Wine 2 – people don't like change! Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of God but people didn't want to let go of their old ways and start to follow his teaching.

The **Old Covenant** was the sacrificial system, set up by God through Moses in Genesis to Deuteronomy. Under this system, the people brought sacrificial animals to the Priest, who made the sacrifice to God. It was the spilling of the animal's blood that symbolised the payment for sin, because sin leads to death. However, no-one lives a life completely obedient to God, and everyone needed to repeatedly bring sacrifices to pay (atone) for their sin. Paul tells us that, under the Old Covenant, we were slaves to the Law. The **New Covenant** is the fulfilment of all that the Old Covenant pointed to – Jesus, the sinless one, the only human who could die to pay for sin but the only one who didn't need to, has died to pay the price for the sins of many (Mark 10:45). No other sacrifice is required or accepted.

'The images... pose crucial questions for followers of Jesus. The question is not whether disciples will, like sewing a new patch on an old garment or refilling an old container, make room for Jesus in their already full agendas and lives. The question is whether they will forsake business as usual and join the wedding celebration; whether they will become entirely new receptacles for the expanding fermentation of Jesus and the gospel in their lives.' (Edwards 2015, p176)

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Do you try mix your old life of sin with your new life in Christ? Can you see from this passage why this won't work?

If you have time, read Romans 6:6-7 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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2. What triggers Jesus' teaching about patches and wineskins? (v33)
3. Why do you think the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees fasted and prayed?
4. Why do you think the disciples of Jesus didn't?
5. What does Jesus say in v34-35 and what do you think he means?
6. Why is it significant that Jesus already knows what is going to happen? (v35, also see Mark 8:31)
7. Read the parables in Luke 5:36-39. What do they literally mean?

8. What do you think Jesus' meaning behind the parables was? Remember, parables are stories that Jesus told in order to teach something about the Kingdom of God.

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