

Redefining the New Me:

12.31.17

Mark Series Message 11

Redefining the New Me: 1

Spiritual Disciplines Emphasis

Mark 2:18–22 (NIV)

1. How many of you want to change something about your life in 2018?

A. A new year brings a new start for most of us.

1. New diets.
2. Exercise
3. I set personal reading and education goals for the new year.

B. I hope that you have some spiritual goals as well.

1. If you have never read all of the New Testament or the whole Bible in a year, this is the year.
2. Maybe you want to pray more.
3. Maybe you have a goal of being a better disciple and have a closer relationship with Jesus.
4. But how are you going to grow closer to Jesus?
 1. Goals need good plans.
 2. Good plans need good tools.

C. Some of the tools that help us grow closer to God are called Spiritual Disciplines.

1. Spiritual Disciplines are activities and practices that require us to lay aside something of ourselves in order to pick up something that God wants us to have.

2. Discipline is always about delayed gratification.

a. We exercise today so that we can experience energy and vitality later.

b. We eat healthy today so the future version of ourselves will thank us later.

c. I practice hard today to enjoy tomorrow.

d. The idea behind discipline is to help us enjoy more.

D. Growing closer to Jesus is not supposed to be something we dread.

1. The closer we get to Jesus the more fulfilled we are.

2. Most of us here really want a closer relationship with Jesus.

3. We want to be better people.

4. We want to experience more of God's love and power in our lives.

5. How do we get there?

E. In Mark 2, Jesus is confronted by Jewish leaders who wanted to know why his disciples weren't fasting.

1. Fasting had been part of Judaism and serving God since almost the beginning.

2. But Jesus' disciples weren't fasting like everyone thought they should.

3. Jesus' response redefined what God is looking for, and will help you and I grow closer to Him.

Mark 2:18–22 (NIV)

¹⁸ Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. 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?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. ²⁰ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

²¹ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

2. The Pharisees and disciples of John fasted.

A. Fasting is the giving up of something we cherish for a specific time and reason.

1. The Pharisees and John's disciples fasted food twice a week.

2. Other forms of fasting in Scripture include fasting sex.

3. There must always be a purpose for fasting:

1. In the Old Testament, fasting was an act of repentance or seeking God's help in an emergency.

2. Even during the American Revolutionary War, several days of fasting were called for people to pray for upcoming battles and situations.

3. Today, one of the primary reasons Christians should fast is to draw closer to God.

4. Fasting is about emptying ourselves so we can be filled with God.

4. If fasting is a good thing, then why weren't Jesus' disciples fasting like the Pharisees?

5. The reason is that the Pharisees were fasting for the wrong reasons and with the wrong attitude.

B. First, the Pharisees were fasting in hope of the Savior to come.

1. What they didn't realize was that the Savior had come.
2. Jesus said that guests don't fast at a wedding.
 - a. Weddings are time for celebration.
 - b. So too, Jesus' presence on Earth was a time of celebration not a time for fasting.
 - c. Jesus' time among them was something worth celebrating over, not something to fast for.
 - d. When Jesus left, that was the time for fasting.
 - e. One reason believers should fast today is to show our anticipation of Jesus' return.

C. Second, the Pharisees were fasting out of religious duty, not out of worship.

1. The Pharisees were more devoted to outward religion than most us ever will be.
 - a. In some ways, Muslims have the same spirit of devotion to the observances of Islam.
 - b. What both have in common is the emphasis on the physical observance of religion without the heart of worship.
2. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for not having a heart of worship.
 - a. Fasting had become a badge of honor and duty.
 - b. They weren't trying to draw closer to God.
 - c. They were marking off a check-box on the checklist of their religious duty.
3. This isn't just a Pharisee problem, it's a problem for us too.

- a. We must not read the Bible out of duty, but out of a desire to know God better.
- b. We should pray out of a relationship, not out of requirement.
- c. We should fast because we recognize our need for a closer relationship with Jesus, not because we are obligated.
- d. It is a shame that the only time Christians fast is when their doctor tells them to.

D. Third, the Pharisees were upset that the disciples weren't unhappy like they were.

- 1. Jesus' disciples were happy, and the others didn't like it.
- 2. A religious spirit resents those that are happy, joyous, and blessed while accusing them of not being "spiritual" enough.
- 3. The Pharisees experience with God and religion was rooted solely in the difficult and the painful and they couldn't stand seeing Jesus' disciples not serious like they were.
- 4. *We must keep in mind that the Christian life will contain both times of celebration and mourning.*
 - a. The key is to find joy and completeness in both.
 - b. "Joy, not grit, is the hallmark of holy obedience. We need to be light-hearted in what we do to avoid taking ourselves too seriously. It is a cheerful revolt against self and pride." - Richard J. Foster
 - c. Jesus wanted his disciples to experience a new life with him, completely distinct from their old one.
 - d. And He illustrated this in a parable.²¹ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse."²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

What Jesus was saying is....

3. A New Me requires a New Spirit....

A. Jesus' illustration is about putting new fixes on old problems.

1. First, Jesus said you can't put new (unshrunk) cloth on an old piece of clothing.

a. One reason is that the new cloth will shrink and will make the tear even larger.

b. Another reason is that the new cloth is assumed to be more valuable than the old garment.

c. Don't take something old to build something new.

2. The second illustration is similar: Don't put new wine in an old wineskin.

a. When making wine (or Welch's grape juice, kidding), juice was placed in a new container made of animal skin.

b. As the juice fermented, it aged the wineskin and stretched it.

c. Old wineskins couldn't stretch anymore.

d. If you put new wine in an old wineskin, the container would bust.

3. The point is this:

a. The Pharisees were acting and behaving in a way that was no longer appropriate.

b. They were trying to gain God's favor and redemption by fasting multiple times, and by showing their seriousness.

c. But God's salvation and redemption are not earned or paid for, but it is received by Grace.

d. Standing before them that day was what they had longed for, and they hadn't done anything to deserve him.

e. Jesus was redefining what loving, serving, and following God looked like.

B. For those of you wanting to be a better person in 2018, remember that a new me must look and act differently than the old me.

1. That's where fasting and spiritual disciplines come in.

2. Spiritual disciplines are reminders that we are going to be different and do differently.

a. Spiritual disciplines cry out to God saying I don't want to put a new patch on my old life, I want to be a new person, a new creation.

b. Alan Cole said, "A new spirit must find new forms of expression; that is the lesson of the parable."¹

C. Many of you here today have seen a significant change in your life this year.

1. You are not the same person you were last year or even a few months ago.

2. You may look the same, feel the same, or have some of the old habits, but you are a new person.

3. And that new person needs things to survive and thrive.

4. Prayer, the Bible, and a local church are some of the things you need.

5. And if you feel like there has to be more, you are right!

6. The next few weeks we are going to work on redefining the new me and what the new me does differently.

7. And make sure you follow along this week with me on Facebook and Lickingag.com, as I provide additional teaching to what we are talking about today.

¹ R. Alan Cole, [*Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 128.

4. God is calling out to each of us to let go of good in order to grasp the great.

A. The enemy of Great is not bad but Good enough.

1. And fasting can prove to be a powerful tool for helping us let go of good in order to grasp hold of great.
2. John Piper said, Fasting is not the forfeit of evil but of good.²
3. For lent, a lot of people give up cigarettes, or alcohol, or other things we don't need.
4. But that isn't true fasting.
5. Fasting is giving God something that is good, knowing that what He has for you is better.
 - a. Some of my most powerful fasts have involved giving up media.
 - b. Fasting could be a hobby and especially meals.
 - c. And when the hunger pains come, or the need to turn to Facebook or tv, those are the moments you speak to God and say, "My desire reminds me that I am seeking after you. Fill me Lord and draw me closer to you."

B. This morning, will you allow God to redefine who you are and what you do?

1. Tomorrow is a new year.
2. Don't wait for some future day to get right with God, do it today.
3. Commit this new year to being a sold-out follower of Jesus!
4. Let this be the year that you take your relationship with Jesus and with others more seriously than you have ever before.

² John Piper, [*A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 17.

Resources:

Bible reading and devotions: Youversion.com

Books: *The Life You've Always Wanted* by John Ortberg

If You Want to Walk on Water You Have to get out of the Boat. John Ortberg

Power for Life by Jeff Leake

A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer by John Piper.