

Change Your Mind About Religion

Mark 2:18-22

Question: Why don't you practice religion like we do? (18)

Jewish tradition demanded that a person fast one day a year on the Day of Atonement. Stricter Jews, like the Pharisees, fasted twice a week.

Jesus' presence at Levi's dinner party (2:13-17) prompted people to ask why his disciples did not follow the rules for fasting.

Answer: A new day demands a new way (19-22)

Jesus answers the question with an analogy (19-20) and two parables (21-22). He did not come to repair, reform, or remodel the old way of religion. He came to replace it with a relationship.

Don't mourn when you should celebrate (19-20)

In Jesus' reply, he uses a common analogy of the day, a wedding celebration. He implies that he is the bridegroom and his disciples are the guests. The kingdom of God is already here. It should be a time of joy and celebration, not mourning.

Don't repair when you should replace (21)

It doesn't make sense to patch an old garment with new material. A bigger problem is created when they don't stay together.

Don't force the new into the old (22)

Over time, wineskins become hard and lose their elasticity. In contrast, new wine expands as it ferments. Putting the new into the old ends up ruining both.

Application

Salvation is not a matter of patching up one's old life. It is a whole new robe of righteousness.

A new day demands a new way.

Fast Facts on Fasting

❑ What is fasting?

To fast means to go without food

- Normal fast – go without food, but not water (Matthew 4:1-2)
- Absolute fast – go without food and water (Esther 4:16)
- Partial fast – go without certain foods (Daniel 10:2-3)

❑ Why did people fast?

Fasting allows you to use the time you would spend in another activity to focus on your relationship with God

Fasting is always associated with prayer

❑ When did people fast?

- Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32)
- Seek God's aid (Ezra 8:21-23)
- Confession of sin (Nehemiah 9:1-3)
- National crisis (Esther 4:16)
- Intercede for others (2 Samuel 12:16; Daniel 9:3-20)
- Mourning (Daniel 10:2-3)
- Preparing for something new (Matthew 4:1-2; Acts 9:9)
- Choosing leaders (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)

❑ How should people fast?

- Avoid hypocrisy (Matthew 6:16)
- Do it in secret (Matthew 6:17-18)

❑ How can people fast today?

Consider going without (food . . . phone . . . internet . . . shopping . . . TV . . . video games . . . sports . . . etc.) for a period of time in order to devote more time to prayer and seeking God.