A Study of the Gospel of Luke – Part One Lesson 11

▶ Read Luke 5:33—6:11.

The interactions in this week's passage are also recorded by the gospel writers Matthew and Mark as well. In those records the people coming to question Jesus about fasting are identified as John the Baptist's disciples. Fasting was not the only point of confusion for them. They also had trouble understanding that John's ministry was meant to prepare the way for Jesus (see John 3:22–30).

► Reread Luke 5:33-39.

1. What problem do people have with Jesus' disciples on this occasion? (v. 33; \square^* Luke 7:33–35)

2. Why do you think they see this as a problem?

WHAT DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT SAY ABOUT FASTING?

3. In Leviticus 23:26–32, the people were to "deny" themselves (some versions say "afflict") and present a food offering. This became understood as a time of fasting. What was the occasion for this fasting? (You may want to ponder why God would have them fast and do no work on this day.)

4. What were some other occasions for fasting in the Old Testament? Ezra 8:1 (for context), 21–23

Joel 2:1-11 (skim for context); 12-18

2 Chron. 20:2-4, 14-15, 29

"By its very nature, fasting seems to suggest that something is wrong. Eating is a normal part of human existence, so abstaining from eating implies a disruption in the very rhythm of life. But... the Old Testament uses fasting and abstinence from food to point to something even more necessary for life—communion with and dependence on God."¹

- 5. Jesus addresses the concern about fasting with an illustration about a bridegroom.
 - a. Why is it <u>inappropriate</u> for his disciples to fast? (vv. 34–35)

 b. What do you think this says about what is <u>appropriate</u> for Jesus' disciples? (Consider what John the Baptist had to say in John 3:28–30.) For a fascinating, in-depth article on fasting, Google: Chapter 1: Fasting In The Old Testament And Ancient Judaism: Mourning, Repentance, And Prayer In Hope For God's Presence



Zechariah talks about the annual ritual of fasting and mourning that took place in Judah (Zech. 7:3). The Lord was not pleased with their fasting because it was not connected with an internal heart of love, justice, mercy, or compassion. But in chapter 8, Zechariah describes a time to come when the LORD returns to Zion; then the fasting they had known would become "joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals" (8:19). How do Jesus' illustration of the bridegroom and the parable about the new wine connect with Zechariah's prophecy?

- c. The word "taken" in verse 35 is "Jesus' first reference to the fact of his approaching death...[this verb] suggests that it will be a violent one."² Why will it be <u>appropriate</u> to fast when the "bridegroom [is] taken from them"? (Consider the atmosphere among Jesus' disciples between his death and resurrection in Mark 16:9–11 and Luke 24:15–21.)
- 6. In verses 36–38, Jesus continues to address concerns about not fasting by telling two closely linked parables.

a. What do the "old" and the "new" refer to in the parables? (Heb. 8:7–9:15)

b.	What point is Jesus trying to make with these parables?	(vv. 36-38)
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c. Explain why you think people prefer the "old wine" over the "new wine" that Jesus offers. (v. 39)

➤ Read Luke 6:1-11.

Jesus and his disciples are again being questioned, this time regarding their behavior on the Sabbath.

"[T]he doctors of the law laid down literally thousands of subtle provisions of what was commanded and especially of what was forbidden on the Sabbath. Thus the keeping of the Sabbath had degenerated into deadly formalism."³ The law allowed people to pick kernels from another's field (Deut. 23:25), but according to Jewish oral tradition they could not thresh it (rub it between their hands to separate the grain from the chaff) on the Sabbath.

7. In response to their question, Jesus refers to an incident from David's life (1 Sam. 21:1–6).
a. What point is Jesus making by referring to what David and his men did? (vv. 3–4; Note that the bread they ate was the Sabbath bread prescribed in Leviticus 24:8.)

- b. How does Jesus' next comment show that he alone has the authority to determine what is appropriate on the Sabbath? (v. 5; 📖 Mt. 12:1–8; Note: "Son of Man" is a messianic title.)
- 8. Once again Jesus confronts the Pharisees' misunderstanding of the law and, in particular, the purpose of the Sabbath.
 - a. What are the Pharisees and teachers of the law doing on the Sabbath? (vv. 7, 11)
 - b. What is Jesus doing? (vv. 8–10)

c. What point is Jesus making by his actions? (Keep in mind verse 8, "Jesus knew what they were thinking." 🛄 Mk. 3:4)

Reread Luke 5:33—6:11.

9. It is easy to sit in judgment on those who questioned Jesus. But our hearts, too, gravitate to legalismgive me a set a rules to follow, some things I can do, or some spiritual list I can check off either to earn God's approval or to make me feel like I'm a "good Christian." Does the "old wine" really taste better to you?

Prayerfully consider if there are any ways that you are seeing your relationship with Jesus as governed by rules instead of by

love, the enjoyment of what he has done, and the intimacy he has made possible.

Jesus' emphasis on relationship with him.

In each scenario in this week's passage Jesus is concerned with the people around him: in the first, the friends of the bridegroom; in the second, the disciples' in their hunger; and in the third, the suffering man with the shriveled hand. The law of love triumphed over all other laws and reinterpreted them.