

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MARK 1-2

The video technology used at last year's Super Bowl allowed us to watch our beloved Falcons' epic collapse from an almost infinite number of camera angles.

We would've never believed an NFL team could blow a 25 point lead, had we not seen it with our own eyes.

In contrast, God used a mere four camera angles to cover the most important life ever lived. The four Gospels represent four angles - at each corner of the action. The Gospels cover the same person, many of the same events - but from four unique perspectives.

Matthew wrote to *Hebrews*. He was a Jew, writing to Jews, addressing Jewish issues. Matthew contains 129 references from the Hebrew OT. He proves the *Messiah of the OT* and *Jesus of the NT* are the same.

Luke wrote to *Greeks*. The Athenian philosophers had a lofty view of man. Thus, Luke emphasizes Jesus' humanity. He become hungry, perspired, he wept, had compassion. Luke depicts Jesus as the perfect human.

John wrote with *the whole world in mind*. He turns the spotlight on Jesus' deity. Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer. John called Him *the Word* - or Logos - a philosophical term for *the reason behind reality*. Jesus was Almighty God. The last Gospel emphasizes how the Hebrew Messiah is also the Savior of the world.

But Mark wrote with Romans in mind. Romans were action-oriented people - a Type-A culture - quick-paced people who placed a premium on performance.

The Romans valued the ability to **get-R-done**. And Mark emphasizes that this is where Jesus excelled.

It's been said, "**Mark is a Gospel of deeds.**"

Compared to the other three Gospels, Mark contains little dialogue. He records nineteen of Jesus' miracles, but only five of His parables. One author writes of his book, "**Mark's style is brief and blunt, pertinent and pithy, short and sweet. Jesus is not adorned with words and narrative, but He is stripped and girded for action.**"

Mark is the perfect Gospel for rushed, and hurried, and busy Americans. It's been said, "**America is the only nation with a monument named Rushmore.**"

Mark portrays Jesus as the man on the move. His favorite word is "**immediately**" - it occurs 36 times. Mark is **the on-the-go Gospel** for on-the-go people.

In Mark, Jesus is the ultimate handyman. He's the prototypical servant. Jesus is a can-do guy. He lived at full throttle - yet never spun out of control. **Jesus got things done without coming undone.** Hey, if "*busy*" is your middle name, Jesus Christ is the Savior for you.

A baseball player can't score unless he touches all four bases, and you can't fully appreciate Jesus without all four Gospels - *including Mark's perspective.*

Let me mention one more introductory point. Mark was Peter's disciple, and some believe Mark's Gospel was

actually Peter's reflections. This was the belief of the early church. In 180 AD, Irenaeus wrote, "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed down in writing the things which his Master proclaimed."

Mark is a glimpse of Jesus through Peter's eyes...

Compared to the other Gospels Mark opens abruptly, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Matthew starts with a genealogy that proves Jesus is King of the Jews. A king needs a pedigree, but a servant's role has nothing to do with His background or lineage. It has everything to do with his behavior.

That's why Mark jumps straight into the action...

He begins with Jesus' ministry, *and its advance man.*

"As it is written in the Prophets..." Here's one of the few times Mark quotes from the OT - in Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight."

If the President were to visit our church next Sunday he wouldn't arrive unannounced. Secret service agents would show up ahead of time to check the area and tighten security. This was John the Baptist's mission.

He came on the scene to *pave the way* and *prepare the hearts of the people* for the coming of Jesus.

Verse 4, "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

John's baptism was not Christian baptism. It was *preparatory*, whereas Christian baptism is *celebratory*.

The baptism of John demonstrated a person's desire to repent of their sin - and ready himself for the Savior.

Whereas, Christian baptism is more - it illustrates that now *by faith* we share in the results of Jesus' death and resurrection. We're dead to sin, and alive to God. We have a clean slate and a brand, new start!

“John came baptizing...” verse 5 adds, “And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” Literally, *John made a splash...*

One commentator summarizes John's ministry, “Without gimmicks or gadgets, without a mailing list or even a miracle, the crowds flocked to John. What he did possess was a dedicated life, a humble attitude, a message from God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The church today could learn from John's example.”

Verse 6 describes John's appearance, “Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist and he ate locusts and wild honey.”

John was *the original hippie*. He wore a camel's skin coat, and a leather belt. He was into organic food. He had trail mix in his pocket - locust dipped in wild honey.

Tradition says John's coat was actually the mantle worn by the Prophet Elijah - which had been stored in the Temple in Jerusalem. It was retrieved by John's father, Zacharias, a priest who served in that Temple.

When the angel announced the birth of Zacharias' son, he said he would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." John began preaching near the spot Elijah was taken to heaven - on the banks of the Jordan River.

"And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose." In ancient Israel a disciple performed lots of menial tasks for his teacher.

Except one... Loosening dirty sandals was done only by a slave. In relation to Jesus, John felt less than a slave. He wasn't worthy to unbuckle His sandals.

For "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." John knew his water baptism was only a first step in a person's relationship with God. It taught *repentance - the desire to change*.

But the desire alone can't effect the changes. Only the baptism Jesus offers - *of the Spirit* - can do that!

And I'm convinced too many church-goers today know only John's baptism. They confess their sin, and hope to overcome it, but the temptation is too strong. It doesn't take long for the person to get pulled back in.

They confess their sin on Sunday, and resolve to do better - but by Friday night they're trapped again.

Unless I have a power stronger than the power of the temptation I'm destined to stay defeated. This is why repentance alone is not enough. I also need the power that comes with the Spirit's baptism. He overwhelms us with God's

love, joy, and peace - graces greater than my temptation. His power breaks the chains of my sin.

John paved the way, but Jesus is the way! This is why the focus now shifts off John and onto Jesus...

“It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Every so often a book comes out that speculates on what Jesus did during the 30 or so years, between His birth and the beginning of His ministry. *We don't really know what He did...* but it doesn't stop the speculation.

I believe He worked in Joseph's carpenter's shop.

But whatever He did we know it pleased His Father.

For just before He began His ministry the Father in heaven spoke and gave Jesus His stamp of approval, ***“You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”***

Jesus was sinless. He always pleased His Father.

Verse 12 is interesting, ***“And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.”*** Jesus was still dripping wet, when the Holy Spirit drove Him to be tempted...

Realize, Jesus was riding a spiritual high. The Father had spoken - the Spirit had descended - truly, Jesus is the Messiah. But immediately, He's ejected from this holy revelation and thrust into an unusual temptation.

“And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan...” Often when we’re tempted we assume we must’ve made a wrong turn and stepped outside of God’s will. But that’s not necessarily true...

Here, it’s the Spirit of God that drove Jesus into this temptation situation. God sets this up, not Satan. God uses temptation to test us, and toughen up our faith.

And notice what Mark adds - *he’s the only Gospel writer who mentions this* - Jesus “was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.” The first man, Adam, was tempted by an fallen angel, “Lucifer.”

His sin created a hostility between man and animals.

But Jesus’ encounter with temptation reverses those effects. *The last Adam*, as the Bible calls Jesus, is able to reconcile humans with both animals and angels.

This is a preview of life in Jesus’ future Kingdom.

Verse 14, “Now after John was put in prison...” John the Baptist spoke out against King Herod’s adultery. And the evil king *locked him up* to try and *shut him up*.

But with John out of commission, Jesus stepped up.

“Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” The term “*kingdom*” is a compound word. It combines “*king*” and “*domain*” - *the king’s domain!*

Jesus came to bring God's reign to earth. **First in the hearts of men, and one day over the entire planet.**

And to be part of God's kingdom two steps have always been required: ***“repent and believe in the gospel.”*** Don't think you're living under the Lord's domain if you don't turn from sin and trust the Savior.

Verse 16, ***“And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”*** Notice, Jesus took their natural occupation and gave it spiritual significance. ***If you like to fish I'll let you fish for men. This is how He calls us...***

He redeems our ordinary ambitions. If you play music, or you're athletic, or good at business... He'll employ your interests and redirect them in ways that bring Him glory. ***Like to sing... you can sing His praise!***

Jesus found Peter and Andrew *fishing*, but notice He finds James and John *mending* their nets. Verse 19, ***“When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”*** If Peter and Andrew became *fishers of men*, could it be James and John became **menders of men?**

It's true! Peter was an evangelist - but John was more a pastor. He was known as "*the apostle of love.*"

John's letters encouraged the Church to grow spiritually and love one another. Jesus calls people to be both *fishers of men*, and *menders of men*.

"Then they went into Capernaum, (a city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee) and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

Capernaum will serve as the Galilean headquarters of Jesus' ministry for the next three years.

And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The scribes deferred and appealed to the precedent of others. Jesus taught, "*But I say to you...*"

"Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit." You can visit the site of this synagogue even today. **"And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!"** It's interesting that often the demons recognized Jesus' true identity even before the Jews did. Demons believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

"But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they

obey Him.” Even the demons were under the dominion of this new King. The people were amazed! When Jesus flexed His muscle even the powers of hell backed off.

Verse 28 tells us the result, **“And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.”**

“Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once.” It’s always a shock to our Catholic friends to discover Peter was married. Roman Catholicism supposes Peter was the first pope. If he was, then the first pope was married; for Peter had a mother-in-law.

And on top of that, the old girl was sick with a fever.

I love what’s going on here! First, Peter doesn’t just go to synagogue with Jesus, he brings Him home. *Do you bring Jesus home from church?* And when Peter does he points to their problem. It’s a fever. *Is there an infection in your family you need to turn over to Jesus?*

For when they do, **“He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.”** Notice, the woman was healed to serve. She was *lifted up* so she could *lift a hand*. With Jesus’ help, Peter has a servant for a mother-in-law. *Imagine, what He can do in your family!*

And of course, this is the reason Jesus heals us all...

We all suffer an infection called selfishness. Jesus comes to drive out that fever and turn us into servants.

Verse 32, “Now at evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door.” A huge crowd gathered.

“Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.”

Jesus proved His power over Satan... And He didn't want devils handling His public relations, so He muzzled them. He didn't want them testifying of Him.

But notice what all has happened in just 34 verses...

In rapid-fire Mark covers Jesus' forerunner, baptism, temptation, preaching, the call of His first four disciples, exorcising a demon, and the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. What chews up eight chapters in Matthew, Mark reels off in 34 verses. *Jesus is the man on the move!*

Here's the picture of Messiah that Mark reveals...His ministry is a whirlwind of activity, but it revolves around a calm and peaceful center. **Jesus got things done without becoming undone.** *And for two reasons...*

First, verse 35 tells us, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”

Most pastors sleep in on Monday mornings, but after a busy day of ministry Jesus rose before sunrise and spent time with His Father in prayer. He found a private place to refuel His spiritual tanks. Jesus filled up in the morning, and ran off

high-octane fellowship all day long. ***You and I run down because we don't fill up.***

Understand, the busier Jesus got the more important it was for Him to spend time with His Father.

And second, Jesus refused to let other people dictate His schedule. *Divine priorities* not *public pressure* guided Him. Verse 36, “**And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”**”

But He said to them, “**Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.**” Jesus got His marching orders from God, not man. Rather than cater to the fickleness of followers, Jesus pleased His Father in all He did.

Here are two vital lessons that help us thrive spiritually despite a busy life: Fill up daily by spending time with God - then focus on His priorities for your life.

If you fill up and focus in; you'll never fizzle out.

Verse 39, “**And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. Then a leper came to Him...**” Leprosy in the ancient world was a dreaded and loathsome disease.

A white patch became an ulcerated sore that ate away flesh and caused brutal deformities. Lepers lost ears and noses - fingers and toes – feet became nubs.

Its side-effect was the inability to feel pain. Leprosy numbed the nerves so a leper could burn a hand, and not feel it. Rats would nibble at his feet while he slept. Medical missionary,

Paul Brand, use to do plastic surgery on lepers. As a post-op procedure he sent the patient home with *a cat - just to chase away the rats.*

But the worst effect of leprosy was its emotional pain. Lepers were quarantined from other people. If a healthy person came near, it was the leper's duty to shout, "*Unclean, unclean*" - and warn the person away.

But this leper came "*imploring (Jesus), kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." And Jesus, moved with compassion, put out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."* The word translated "*touched*" in verse 41 means "*gripped.*"

It was a deliberate embrace - perhaps a hug. Jesus' holiness doesn't keep Him from touching the unclean...

Jesus didn't have to touch this leper to heal him, but the love He showed by doing so, *healed the leper emotionally, even before it healed him physically.*

We're told in verse 42, "*As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.*

And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Here's the one command of Jesus you and I are not required to keep.

The leper was to keep his miracle to himself to help control the swarming crowds around Jesus. You and I need to shout our miracles from the rooftops so all can hear... *Which is*

what this leper did anyway. Verse 45, “But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every quarter.”

And even today, people are flocking to Jesus from every quarter. He’s still “*moved with compassion.*” He still says to us, “*I am willing; be cleansed.*” Jesus is still on the move, and He wants to move in our world today!

Chapter 2, “And again (Jesus) entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was *in the house.*” The word got out, ***Jesus is in the house!***

“Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.” The place was jam packed. Everyone wanted to hear Jesus.

The homes in those days were tiny. Imagine, fifty people crammed into a space the size of your dining room. Another forty are on the front porch. A hundred or so are milling outside. It’s hot and humid. The crowd is thick and impatient. Everyone has their own agenda.

And here come four buddies determined to get their sick friend inside to see Jesus... Galilean houses had flat roofs consisting of timbers two or three feet apart.

The beams had sticks and thatch in between them. The roof was topped off with a foot or so of packed dirt.

Imagine, these men clawing their way through the roof. I’ll bet Peter blew a gasket when he first saw the hole. Before he

could stop them they were lowering their paralyzed friend down on a wicker stretcher.

That's the scene we find described in verses 3-4, "Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying."

Verse 5 tells us, "When Jesus saw their faith..." Notice, what initially caught Jesus' attention was not the crippled man's faith, but the faith of his friends.

Their faith is **determined**, and **daring**, and **digging**.

Faith meets obstacles, thus it has to be **determined**. It also has to be **daring**. Faith breaks with convention. *If a door isn't available, how about a roof?* And it keeps **digging** through the spiritual mud until a light appears.

And if you have a friend with this kind of faith - and he's willing to intercede for you - you have a great gift!

Verse 5, "When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And let me suggest, this was actually a *letdown* for the fellows who had just *let down* this crippled man. The pressing issue in their minds, wasn't their friend's sin, but his disability.

And in this regard these friends are so much like us.

We get preoccupied with a the person's physical situation - *the illness, or job loss, or financial distress, or relational conflict*. We're fixated on the surface issues - whereas, Jesus

looks deeper. We worry about symptoms, while Jesus wants to deal with root issues.

What good is it for our body to be healed, if our spirit goes to hell? Jesus realizes “**first things first.**”... **The spiritual always takes precedent over the physical.** *Forgiving his soul was more vital than healing his body.*

Verse 6, “**And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** The Jews rightly understood only God can forgive sins. And they realized that by claiming to forgive the man’s sins Jesus was claiming to be God.

“**But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves,**” He said to them, “**Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?**” At that moment it seemed more difficult to heal a man’s paralysis, than to forgive him of his sins. *Of course, in time the opposite proved true.*

Jesus healed the man’s paralysis by speaking a word. It’ll take His crucifixion to gain his forgiveness...

Yet on that day... Jesus said, verse 10, “**But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins**” - He said to the paralytic, **I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go your way to your house...**” Jesus is saying, *the proof is in the pudding!*

His ability to heal supported His authority to forgive.

Verse 12, “Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” *The miracle blew them away!*

“Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.

As He passed by, He saw Levi (who’s name will later be changed to *Matthew*) the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office.” The name “*Levi*” spoke of the Hebrew tribe to whom this man belonged. The Levites were responsible for serving in the Temple. This shows us how far *this particular Levite* had strayed from his roots. Instead of serving God - Levi hustled for Rome.

At the time Israel was under Roman occupation. A tax collector was a traitor. He was sleeping with the enemy. Levi’s family was ashamed of him. His neighbors despised him. *The only person who loved this man, Levi, was Jesus.* And Jesus offers to Levi a better way to live... “He said to him, “Follow Me.”

And in verse 14 Levi responds, “So he arose and followed Him.” This is so beautiful. Levi never says a word. He asks no questions. This tax collector simply rises from his money table, leaves all, and follows...

There is something about Jesus... *an air of authority, an allure of love, a tug of truth...* that makes men want to follow. Levi didn’t hesitate. He knew He would never regret it. He left all that stood in his way and followed.

“Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.” Levi first *opened his heart* to Jesus; then he *opened his home*. He invited his friends to a party! Since no self-respecting Jew would be seen with a tax-collector, Levi hung out with prostitutes and rebels. His wild parties would make a rock star blush.

But after he gave his life to Jesus, Levi threw another party. He invited his normal guests, but now with the hope of them meeting the Man who'd changed his life.

Perhaps God wants you to throw *a Levi party!*

Why not *invite* some friends who aren't Christians over for dinner with the point of *inviting* them to Jesus. That's what Levi did. He didn't want to follow Jesus and leave out his peeps without inviting them to join.

The surprise in this story is not that Levi's friends also followed Jesus - *they admired what had captured Levi's heart*. The surprise, at least to the religious crowd, was that Jesus came to the party in the first place. He socialized with tax collectors, and sinners.

Verse 16, “**And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"**” Jesus understood a truth about God that the religious folks had forgotten...

God loves sinners! Too often religious people look down their noses - and grow judgmental - and convey a holier-than-

thou attitude. *How dare people act that way!* Christians turn away from sinners, *but not Jesus.*

Mark tells us how Jesus answered the stuck-up Pharisees, "When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." People assume if Jesus were here today He'd hang out in religious crowds. *But I don't think so!* Jesus will spend eternity with the righteous - it's the unrighteous that need Him now.

Jesus came to *hang out* with the *low down*. Yet what about us? Do we share His preference? Do we have His heart for sinners? *Don't forget we use to be one!*

Sadly, after we're converted most Christians spend all their time with other Christians. We avoid contact with lost people. We need to have a Jesus' attitude.

In verse 18 we're told, "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to (Jesus), "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

The Pharisees fasted from food to *show off* their self-righteousness... John's disciples fasted to *cast off* the things of this world... **But the disciples of Jesus enjoyed the buffet!** Jesus' men *passed on the fast...*

And in verse 19 He explains why... "Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom

will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.”

For a working class couple their wedding feast was the happiest week of their lives... No one wanted to spoil their fun. In fact, the rabbis said that a wedding feast was the one time when Jews were, “relieved of all religious observances which would lessen their joy.”

They were exempt from fasting and mourning...

In essence, the disciples 3½ years with Jesus, was their wedding feast... Ordinarily, fasting is a fast track to God. Proper fasting is a way to fatten your soul.

Fasting foregoes a legitimate pleasure to pursue a higher calling. You say “no” to food to say “yes” to God.

But while Jesus was with them the disciples lived in God’s presence. Why fast to communicate with God, when they sat next to Him at dinner each night?

In verse 21 Jesus continues to explain the difference between Judaism and life as His disciple, “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.” Put a patch on some well-worn Levis. When the jeans are washed the patch shrinks. The jeans though don’t, and it pulls the patch loose.

In other words, what existed and served a purpose in the past isn’t always able to accommodate the new.

Jesus continues, “no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled,

and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.” Pour new wine into a dry, brittle flask - when the wine ferments and expands it bursts the flask, and spills the wine.

This why you put new wine into new wineskins!

You need a new container that’s supple and pliable - that can accommodate the vitality of the new wine.

On one level, Jesus is comparing Judaism to an old wineskin. The new wine of the Spirit made the Jewish traditions and rituals obsolete. The Law restrained the individual. The Spirit empowers us. The new wine of God’s grace will never fit in the brittle bottle of legalism. A new wineskin is needed... *Christians live by faith!*

But these words also have an broader application.

God still does new things, and when He does we have to be flexible, and willing to change our approach!

If we're stuck in a rut, the Spirit will move past us. He'll work through others! Recall the last words of a dying church, "We've always done it that way." When God does a new thing we have to replace brittle ways of thinking with the new, and flexible approaches.

And the chapter closes with an example of this kind of change in thinking... Verse 23, “Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

When God gave the fourth commandment, He made it simple. Exodus 20:8, "**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**" This was a broad, general principle intended to be applied to each heart by God's Spirit.

God designed one day, each week, for people to rejoice and rejuvenate. The Sabbath was a whole day to worship and play - it brought balance to the work week. In essence, the Sabbath day was a reminder of you of why you worked the other six days of the week.

Instead, the Pharisees applied this Law with a heavy hand. The Jewish Talmud had 24 chapters on how to keep the Sabbath holy. It was a full-time job just to keep all the rules. Jews looked forward to the end of the Sabbath, to rest from the rigors of trying to obey it.

And one of their stipulations was you couldn't grind grain on the Sabbath - *not even between your palms*. That was work... and a violation of the Sabbath law.

This was the infraction used to incriminate Jesus.

Yet here's the irony... another of the Sabbath rules was that a person couldn't travel more than 3000 feet from his home on the Sabbath. The fact the Jews were in the fields watching Jesus indicates they'd broken their own laws to spy on Jesus and His disciples.

Well, Jesus responds to their accusation, "**But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the**

priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?”

Jesus points to Jewish history to show there are times when other concerns take precedent over the letter of the Law.

When David's men entered the tabernacle and ate the sacred bread - *the only bread available* - it was either eat the bread, or David would die of starvation...

Jesus is saying that *human need* takes precedent over *religious ritual*. *Compassion trumps tradition*.

Verse 27, “**And He said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**”

God invented the idea of a day of rest not to make life *burdensome and bitter* - but *better and blessed*.

If your neighbor has a heart attack on Sunday, would you tell him it's your day of rest, and God doesn't want you to exert yourself... “*Wait until Monday and I'll drive you to the hospital.*” *No way! His need is your priority.*

The Sabbath was intended to help us, not hinder us.

Jesus says in verse 28, “**Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.**” Sadly, some peoples' Christianity is nothing but adhering to rules and rituals.

But real Christianity is more! It's following a person.

Jesus is the “**Lord of the Sabbath.**” He *sets the rules and lifts the rules*. He is greater than the rules. In fact, the rules were only intended to help us walk with Him.